

Water Plan

1 **Context; Objectives and Benefits**

1.1 There is a need to acknowledge the extra demand that environmental, societal and economic pressures will place upon water quantity and quality in the future, and ensure that that the Greater Brighton City Region is prepared. Developing a collaborative plan for water management across Greater Brighton could support greater climate resilience for the region into the longer term, contribute to sustainable economic growth and a healthy population. The plan would focus on the City Region's core development and growth areas to ensure the appropriate infrastructure is in place to support sustainable growth for the area. Water issues can be grouped into three themes:

1.1.1 **Water Supply – demand management, water infrastructure, water security and provision of alternative water systems.** The Government has set out a policy framework for how it is going to support the water industry in securing longer term water security given future anticipated challenges and avoiding imbalances between water supply and demand. At regional and local level there is a need to ensure that development projections for our City Region is fully accounted for within the detailed delivery plans of the 25-year water resources and drought strategies of both our local water companies Southern Water and South East Water. There is a need to ensure that water is managed in the most sustainable way, to review capacity and performance of existing water infrastructure in view of future trends, and to mitigate water insecurity and water poverty. Water companies undertake statutory consultation on a regular basis to inform their 5 year business plans (the next consultation is for 2020-25) and these deliver against their strategies. More effective partnership working and a coordinated Greater Brighton response to this consultation could support more sustainable outcomes for water management in the region. Working together could support a more consistent approach to informing local plans and strategies, in terms of promoting sustainable use of water, and result in reductions in local per capita demand across all sectors – domestic, agriculture and industry.

1.1.2 **Wastewater - water quality and water treatment, water drainage infrastructure** Declining ground water quality is responsible for failures under the EU Water Framework Directive and increases in the economic and energy cost of drinking water treatment. There is a an opportunity for delivering a more collaborative approach across the Greater Brighton City Region, such as working closely with stakeholders in supporting sustainable land management practices, and joined up approaches to pollution control (e.g. through the CHAMP groundwater project, a priority project for the Biosphere Delivery Board). Maintaining good quality bathing water could also safeguard and support the region's visitor economy. A regional plan would benefit from existing partnerships and work that have informed the development of Catchment Management Plans (CMPs). The objectives of CMPs closely align with that of a regional plan and consider scale in a similar way. They aim to facilitate a collaborative approach by working with stakeholders to identify and deliver good practice initiatives in water management at a catchment scale. Development of a regional plan could benefit from giving due consideration to how the CMPs can help to inform and shape the content, approach and outcomes of a regional water plan. This could be achieved through close consultation and engagement with the Environment Agency (lead authority for oversight of CMPs), other management authorities and groups that support CMP implementation.

1.1.3 Flood risk management – surface water flooding, sustainable urban drainage, coastal flooding and flood defences Adopting more sustainable and natural flood management solutions for creating resilience to future extreme weather events (heavy rainfall and prolonged drought) is necessary to sustain growth and reduce adverse costs to key infrastructure and development sites. There are already plans in place that deliver flood management in our region, including the Catchment Flood Management Plans for Ouse¹ and for Adur², the subsequent individual Flood Risk Management Plans of the local authorities across Greater Brighton and the Shoreline Management Plan³. Collaboration at a regional level between the lead Local Flood Authorities (BHCC, WSCC and ESCC), the Environment Agency, the water companies, and other local authorities could secure greater resilience of our future development sites, safeguard homes and the economy, particularly in vulnerable flood-prone areas. There is already a rethinking of traditional approaches to water and flood management, moving away from expensive hard engineering, where possible, to more innovative sustainable, nature-based solutions. Pooling of resources, expertise and sharing best practice in planning at a regional level could support greater innovation, policy guidance and more cost effective solutions for designing and engineering our urban and rural landscapes, and for future-proofing new developments.

2 Scoping

2.1 Through consulting GBEB and the Biosphere Delivery Board, initial scoping could identify what level of support could be provided by members whether financial, information or capacity. This would also help to identify any gaps in capacity and where technical expertise/consultants are needed. A scoping exercise on key issues and priorities could provide direction for the Plan brief.

3 Governance

3.1 Subject to approval the plan would be owned by and report into the GBEB. Brighton & Hove City Council would take the client and co-ordination role on behalf of the GBEB. Much of the content and the specialist data and knowledge would be provided by key stakeholders on the GBEB and Biosphere Delivery Board. Other potential stakeholders include the Environment Agency, Southern Water and South East Water.

4 Potential Deliverables

4.1 Development of a Water Plan for the Greater Brighton City Region could:

- Offer an approach for sustainable management of water across the City Region's key development sites and areas of growth
- Support longer term collaboration across all regional authorities responsible for water management, utilities and the Environment Agency

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ouse-sussex-catchment-flood-management-plan>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adur-catchment-flood-management-plan>

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69206/pb11726-smpg-vol1-060308.pdf

- Support climate resilience of these development sites and the region as a whole
- Provide an opportunity for mainstreaming innovation in water management across the region and modernising water infrastructure to ensure it is fit for purpose
- Stimulate growth in the local market and expertise in sustainable water management solutions
- Support water security across the GBEB region
- Strengthen the region, making it more attractive to business and investors

5 Examples of good practice in plans elsewhere

- 5.1 The East of England Water Partnership⁴ has been established for the purpose of joining together spatial and water planning processes for more effective management of water resources in the region, considering the environment and quality of life of people whilst helping to steer the growth agenda. A main focus of the Partnership is helping to deliver the Water Resources East Anglia (WREA) project.

⁴ <http://www.sustainabilityeast.org.uk/water-partnership/>

