



Meeting of the

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 5 June 2007 at 7.30 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA

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If you require any further information relating to this meeting, would like to request a large print, Braille or audio version of this document, or would like to discuss access arrangements or any other special requirements, please contact:

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Agenda Item 11.2

Committee	Date	Classification	Report No.	Agenda Item No.
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	5 th June 2007	Unrestricted		
Report of: Sara Williams Assistant Chief Executive		Title: Report of the Hostels Strategy Scrutiny Working Group		
Originating Officer(s): Afazul Hoque Acting Scrutiny Policy Manager		Ward(s) affected: All		

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report submits the report and recommendations of the Hostels Strategy Scrutiny Working Group for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Endorse the draft report of the Hostels Strategy Scrutiny Working Group
- 2.2 The Service Head, Scrutiny & Equalities be authorised to agree the final report before its submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for Living Well.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Background paper

Name and telephone number of and address where open to inspection

Scrutiny Review File held in Scrutiny Policy Team

Afazul Hoque
020 7364 4636

3. Background

- 3.1 The Working Group was established in December 2006 to review the Hostels and Move-On Strategy. The intention of the investigation was to review the hostels strategy focusing on how it will improve access to hostels for residents in Tower Hamlets.
- 3.2 The Working Group made a number of visits to hostels to gain a better understanding of the working of hostels where they had the opportunity to speak to service users and service providers. They also held a meeting with the Supporting Peoples Team and Housing Homeless Advice Team to gain a strategic overview of the hostel sector in Tower Hamlets. Finally, they held a roundtable discussion with service providers and local referral agencies to understand their perspective on some of the issues facing them.
- 3.3 The report with recommendations is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.4 Once agreed, the working group's recommendations will be submitted to Cabinet for a response to their recommendations.

4. Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services)

- 4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Any legal considerations arising from the resultant Action Plan will be addressed at that point.

5. Comments of the Chief Financial Officer

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications arising from the resultant Action Plan will be addressed at that point

6. Equal Opportunity Implications

- 6.1 The report makes a number of recommendations to improve access for local people and in particular BME communities.

7. Anti-Poverty Implications

- 7.1 The report considers important issues in reducing homelessness and increasing access for local residents.

8. Sustainable Action for a Greener Environment

- 8.1 There are no direct actions for a greener environment arising from the report.

9. Risk Management

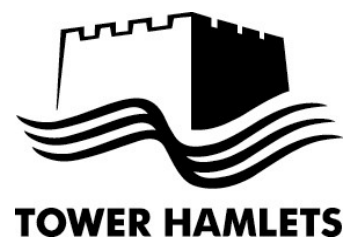
- 9.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from the report or recommendations.

Appendix 1 Report of the Hostels Strategy Scrutiny Working Group

Tower Hamlets Hostels and Move On Strategy

Report of the Tower Hamlets Hostels Strategy Scrutiny Working Group

Tower Hamlets Council
May 2007



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Acknowledgements

The Working Group would like to thank all the officers and partners that supported this review. The views and perspectives of everyone involved have helped to shape the final recommendations of this report. We want to thank especially the hostel users and service providers who participated and who so willingly shared their experiences with us. We hope this report goes some way to responding to the many important issues they raised.

Working Group Chair:

Councillor Abdul Aziz Sardar (Labour)

Working Group Members:

Councillor Timothy Archer (Conservative)
Councillor Louise Alexander (Liberal Democrat)
Councillor Shamim Chowdhury (Respect)
Councillor Marc Francis (Labour)
Councillor Alex Heslop (Labour)
Councillor Bill Turner (Labour)

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Vernon Simpson – Assistant Director, Housing Management
Jackie Odunoye – Head of Housing Strategy and Development
Colin Cormack – Head of Housing and Homeless Advice
Barbara Disney – Service Head, Commissioning and Strategy
Carrie Kilpatrick – Supporting People Manager
Paul Wishart – Supporting People Manager (Interim)
David Baker – Strategy Manager, Homeless and Housing Advice
Zakia Anwar – Strategy Officer, Homeless and Housing Advice

Scrutiny and Equalities:

Afazul Hoque – Scrutiny Policy Officer
Alan Steward – Scrutiny Policy Manager
Michael Keating – Service Head

External:

Aldgate Hostel

Mark Phillippo – Centre Manager

Dellow Centre

Mary Kneafsey – Assistant Director Providence Row Housing Association
John Beswick – Centre Manager

Drapers City Foyer

Louise Joseph – Manager, East Thames Housing Association
Maureen Mead – Deputy Manager, East Thames Housing Association

Hopetown Hostel

Terri Holdroyd – Hostel Manager
Pat Omoregie – Assistant Hostel Manager

Riverside House

Andrew Southcott – Deputy Manager

Booth House

Captain Howard Russell – Centre Manager

Chair's foreword

No-one who lived through the 1980s and 1990s will forget the shocking images of homeless people in 'cardboard city' under London Bridge and huddled in doorways on The Strand. Thankfully, over the past ten years the Government's Rough Sleeper's Unit and rough sleeping strategy has drawn thousands of homeless people, including even some of the most hardened rough sleepers, in from the cold. This has resulted in a sustained three-quarters reduction in the number of people forced to sleep rough on the streets, including here in Tower Hamlets.

At the same time, recent legislative reforms have strengthened the safety net for statutory homeless households i.e. those found to be vulnerable and in priority need. The Borough achieved the Government's target of ending the long-term use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for homeless families with children ahead of schedule and is now making good progress towards halving the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation by 2010.

However, as in most other inner-London authorities, much less progress has been made towards improving outcomes for single homeless people i.e. those not deemed as being vulnerable and in priority need. Of course, this must be seen against the backdrop of intense pressures on social housing and the rapidly increasing unaffordability of privately rented accommodation. Nevertheless, this situation leads to hostels becoming 'silted up' with residents who are ready to move on, but have nowhere to go to.

In these circumstances, the experience of those single homeless people facing fairly prolonged periods in a hostel can and must be made less damaging. We are therefore pleased to note that the Council has taken the initiative to put together a *Hostels and Move On Strategy*, and will be looking to implement this in partnership with local stakeholders from 2007 onwards.

This report follows a three month long inquiry by the Scrutiny Review Group in which we visited a number of the hostels in the Borough, talked to staff and residents, and questioned officers from the Homeless Services and Supporting People Team. The visits and discussions were interesting and informative, and at times inspiring. We would like to thank all those staff and residents who have participated in this inquiry and helped inform our recommendations.

The conclusions and recommendations outlined in the report are intended to improve access and the quality of our hostels. We hope all the parties involved will take the opportunity to address the issues highlighted in this report.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Councillors who participated in this review and Paul Wishart (Supporting Peoples Team) and David Baker (Homeless and Housing Advice Service) for their continued support throughout the course of the review.

Cllr Abdul Aziz Sardar
Scrutiny Lead, Living Well

Recommendations

The Working Group recommendations focus on six areas that require consideration and action by the Supporting Peoples Team and Homeless and Housing Advice Service in partnership with local service providers. They are intended to support the findings and recommendations outlined in the Hostels and Move-On Strategy and further improve access to and quality of hostels in Tower Hamlets.

Quality of Hostels

- R1** That the Supporting People Team work with all the hostels to explore the potential for further infrastructure improvement. Specifically the Council should work with Look Ahead Housing Association to develop proposals for improving the Aldgate hostel with the minimum possible loss of bed spaces and consequent funding.

Referral Mechanisms

- R2** That the Providence Road Housing Association (PRHA) Hackney Road service should be opened up to achieve direct local access by LBTH based agencies. In partnership with PRHA the Council's Cabinet should make representations to DCLG to this effect.
- R3** That research should be undertaken to understand the perception and cultural issues affecting BME residents around accessing hostels leading to an Action Plan being developed to improve BME access.
- R4** That the HOST team works in partnership with local agencies to deliver a more joined up services, centred on delivering a personalised service tailored to individual clients.

Housing Benefit

- R5** That the Council should publicly backs the Foyer Federation's campaign to persuade the Department of Work & Pensions to waive the 16-hour rule for residents of foyers.
- R6** That the Council should support Citizens Advice and Shelter's campaign to scrap the Single Room Rent Restriction and Shared Room rate of LHA.

Evictions and Abandonments

- R7** That the Supporting People Team develops in partnership with service providers a strategic response to work with clients to reduce evictions and abandonments. That the response ensures that referral and assessment work is undertaken, support needs are accurately identified and assessed, there is some choice for clients in terms of hostels allocated and that hostel staff have detailed plans to support clients.

Move-On – Private Rented Sector

- R8** That the Supporting People Team work with hostel providers to explore the potential for further expansion of second stage accommodation.
- R9** That the Supporting People Team work with service providers to ensure clients are not forced to move into private rented sector and are adequately prepared to live in private rented accommodation, including providing help with Rent Deposits, Housing Benefit /

Local Housing Allowance, and if necessary, Discretionary Housing Payments to cover benefit shortfalls.

- R10** That the Supporting People Team explore the potential for specific floating support service be made available to clients moved from hostels to private tenancies.

Mental Health and Drugs / Alcohol Services

- R11** That the Living Well CPAG reviews the decision to withdraw the HHELP service from hostels and specifically examines the effectiveness of its proposed replacement service in reaching hostel residents. Furthermore the Living Well CPAG considers how the Supporting People Programme can be incorporated into the wider partnership so that they are consulted and involved about important changes to service delivery and development.

- R12** That the Council should examine the possibility of increasing its support for the Drug Action Team to ensure it has the capacity to provide satellite services in local hostels.

Introduction

Background

1. The Working Group was established in December 2006 to review the draft Tower Hamlets Hostels and Move-On Strategy. The intention of the investigation was to review the hostels strategy focusing on how it will improve access to hostels for local residents who are in housing need and might benefit from them. The Working Group set the following objectives for the review:
 - To gain an understanding of the number of hostels and their geographical location;
 - To gain an understanding of use of hostels in the borough, focusing on BME communities and young people;
 - To seek users and service providers views on hostels in the borough;
 - To identify ways access to hostels can be improved.
2. The Working Group agreed to investigate these issues, and hoped to make recommendations that would help improve local access to hostels, particularly for certain groups of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) residents and young people. The Group established was politically balanced, comprising seven Councillors chaired by Councillor Abdul Aziz Sardar, Scrutiny Lead for Living Well.
3. A key issue noted by the Working Group is that the majority of hostel users are not from Tower Hamlets, and the local authority does not make significant use of them in comparison to voluntary sector referral agencies. The Hostels Strategy proposed that as a local authority we should be making better use of hostels for our local residents. Hostels should be a key local service, involved in a network of service provision. They should be a central part of a multi-agency approach to re-integrating people into economic and social inclusion. This would help to meet many of the aims of the Community Plan, helping make Tower Hamlets a better place for living well, living safely, education and achievement and excellent public services.
4. The Working Group first made a number of visits to hostels which included Hopetown Hostel, Dellow Centre, Aldgate Hostel, Drapers City Foyer, Booth House and Riverside House. These visits and discussion with service providers and service users were interesting, informative and at times inspiring. They provided the Panel with an insight into some of the issues facing service users and providers and proved to be an invaluable way to start the review.
5. In February 2007, the Working Group met with the Council's Supporting People Team and the Homeless and Housing Advice Service. This provided a strategic overview of the hostel sector in Tower Hamlets and the key documents behind the Hostels and Move-On Strategy which included the Supporting People Strategy and Homelessness Strategy.
6. The Working Group next held a roundtable discussion with service providers and referral agencies to gain their perspective on some of the issues raised by service users and also the issues facing them in referring and working with homeless people. The meeting provided the Panel with a useful insight into some of the barriers facing services providers and referral agencies. Officers from Homeless and Housing Advice Services also held an informal discussion with members of the Hostels User Group to seek their views about access to hostels and areas for improvement.

7. In taking this review forward the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider the Working Group's report and recommendations. The Council's Cabinet will then respond to the report and its recommendations. All of the organisations and individuals that participated in the review will be sent a copy of the report and Cabinet's response.

Hostels and Move-On Strategy

8. The East End has a long history of providing a refuge for those who have become homeless and destitute. The charitable and voluntary sector has formed the bedrock of that support, with many homeless hostels being developed in the late 19th Century to provide a roof over someone's head. Sometimes that was just for a night but often it was for much longer. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets itself has offered financial support and advisory support for most of these institutions, to help ensure they can continue to shelter vulnerable homeless people from life on the streets.
9. The Hostels and Move-On Strategy provides a framework for an area of service provision which previously has not had the structure in place to operate as an integrated sector. It seeks to bring hostel services within the borough's Community Plan objectives, demonstrating their values across a whole range of social policy objectives. The strategy provides an in depth analysis of supported accommodation services for single homeless people in Tower Hamlets. The Strategy has been developed by a multi-agency development group and an action plan is already being delivered where possible, and will form a work programme for 2007-08 and beyond.
10. The vision for the hostels strategy is that hostels reduce homelessness and help more people into settled homes, meeting both local and cross authority needs. Further through a partnership approach address the multiple causes and effects of homelessness and social exclusion, supporting people into independent living within a package of positive employment, training, health and social outcomes. The Strategy has five key aims which are:
 - Providing excellent public services;
 - Improving access to hostels;
 - Increasing move-on options;
 - Developing capacity to support the most vulnerable;
 - Making economic and social inclusion the key focus.
11. A key aim of the Strategy is to better manage access to hostels to focus resources on those who would benefit most, giving particular regard to the local community. It is proposed that the level of local access would be increased to over 50% of total referrals from local agencies. The Review Group has chosen this aspect of Strategy as the focus of this investigation.
12. A January 2006 'census'¹ of all Tower Hamlets hostel users showed that 53% of referrals are from outside the borough with Westminster and Camden the two most significant referral locations. Only 33% of hostels residents had a last 'settled address' in Tower Hamlets and only 38% were actually homeless in Tower Hamlets immediately prior to entering the hostel. Therefore, the majority of people who use hostels in Tower Hamlets are not from the local area, and the local authority does not make significant use of the hostels within the boundaries. The ethnic background of hostel users is diverse with over 46 different ethnic backgrounds. The most significant point about diversity in comparison

¹ Hostels Census undertaken as part of the development of the Hostels and Move on Strategy during January 2006

with Tower Hamlets' local population is that Black African and Caribbean service users (36%) are over-represented by a factor of 6, while Bangladeshi and other Asian service users (6%) are under-represented by a factor of about 6.

13. The vast majority of the hostels are located around Local Area Partnership (LAP) 1 and LAP 2. The table and map attached at Appendix 1 and 2, provides an overview of the capacity and geographical spread of the key services. The clustering of hostels around LAP 1 and LAP 2 is an area of concern highlighted. The Working Group recognises that this is more of a historical factor rather than planned. However, it suggests that in future development of hostels, specific efforts be made to ensure that other parts of the borough are considered. The clustering of hostels also raises the issue of community integration of the hostel sector within the wider community. Members noted that some work had been undertaken to develop this, but felt this needed to be more of a strategic aim to ensure that the diverse residents of this borough are able to live and integrate with each other.
14. The Working Group supports the key findings and recommendations of the Strategy, which has set out the direction of travel for this important sector. The Group hopes the implementation of the Action Plan would see significant improvement in the quality of hostels and ensure users receive excellent services. Furthermore, it is hoped that the cycle of homelessness can be broken and more preventative work can be undertaken to reduce the number of people becoming homeless.

Supporting People (SP) Programme

15. SP is a national programme aimed at promoting independence and quality of life for vulnerable people. By providing housing-related support services that enable people to live successfully in their accommodation, SP has brought about a comprehensive change in the way the needs of vulnerable people are met. Launched on 1 April 2003, the programme has introduced a radically different system of providing and commissioning services – led by local needs, focussed on the development of partnership working, and supported by a robust review and monitoring system.
16. Tower Hamlets Council is responsible for administering the SP Programme for the borough. The Council has developed a SP Strategy which is aimed at providing a clear direction for SP services over the five years. The vision of the Strategy is to 'deliver accessible, high quality and needs led services that promote choice, independence and social inclusion and enable vulnerable individuals to live successfully within the community'. From this vision five key aims have been set to achieve the vision and include;
 - To provide effective services which have a positive impact on the lives of our most vulnerable residents;
 - To ensure services meet the need of diverse community and enable equality of access for all;
 - To ensure a partnership approach that delivers local and national strategic priorities;
 - To ensure the provision of high quality housing related support services which are value for money;
 - To increase Service User involvement in service provision and service development.
17. At present the SP programme spends in total £7.0m per year on services for single homeless and rough sleepers. This is mostly hostels with some supported move-on accommodation. This is 48% of the total Supporting People budget and pays for around

1000 units of first and second stage hostels, of which 255 have an allocated specialism and 133 units in a range of supported move on-accommodation for former homeless people. A comparison of costs with selected inner London boroughs shows that Tower Hamlets provides good value for money for the number of hostels it manages. This also suggests that Tower Hamlets is relatively under funded compared to Camden. This anomaly might in part be explained by homeless people in Camden having much more intensive support needs than those in Tower Hamlets, but this is unlikely to be the whole story. The Working Group would therefore be keen to see how funding is allocated and seek comment from the Council’s Cabinet as to the lobbying efforts that have been made to persuade the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to address this situation.

Selected inner London Boroughs	Number of hostel units	Approx. annual spend (£)
Camden	1005	12m
Tower Hamlets	1003	7m
Westminster	911	7m
Hammersmith and Fulham	650	4.5m

- 18. The Group recognise that the cost of SP nationwide was significantly in excess of original estimates, and understand why the HM Treasury has cut back funding in the last two years. However, these cuts now risk forcing the closure of a number of crucial services for homeless people and therefore the Working Group strongly support the campaign by Homeless Link, Shelter and the National Housing Federation for inflation-linked increases in the SP budget in the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

Findings

Improving Access to Hostels

- 19. A key aim of the Working Group is to improve local access to Hostels and in particular for BME residents and young people. The Group heard from the Supporting People Team about a number of initiatives they have adopted to improve access for local people, BME communities and young people.
- 20. The main ways that local access is being improved is through setting out priority referral routes for Tower Hamlets based organisations and formalising this arrangement into SP contracts. Local access is also monitored and any issues or concerning data are discussed through the SP contract monitoring process. A further initiative is through managing low occupancy or ‘voids’ closely to ensure maximum use from the available resources.
- 21. The SP Team also work closely with other boroughs who refer into SP services and discuss longer term issues to manage this appropriately. This includes ensuring move on stays the responsibility of the referring borough where possible, discussing development of local provision with boroughs who may be referring large numbers of people to particular services. The SP Team has also been working closely with central government to revisit the access to local provision which has been restricted in the past and this includes Hackney Road.

22. Increasing move on options remains a key issue when considering access. Demand for move on accommodation is estimated to be 4 times supply and so the focus needs to be on making best use of all available options, including move-on outside the borough. From the Hostel census, it is estimated that 27% of residents in hostels have been there longer than 2 years.
23. In meeting the needs of BME communities, the SP Team have held detailed discussions with service users and specifically users from BME communities. Furthermore, diversity is a key element of SP systems and the Council has set a target in this area for all SP services to meet a 'B' level in diversity by March 2008. The B level requires specific targets to be set for hard to reach and BME groups and progress against these to be measured. Some services have taken this area forward actively, whilst others are receiving more support and guidance from the SP Team.
24. The main ways that access for young people is being improved is through continued focus and joint work by the SP team and the Homeless and Housing Advice Service to significantly reduce numbers of young people in Bed and Breakfast, linking directly with SP providers working with young people. Further, linking young people who approach the Housing Advice Team into options in the private rented sector such as the Rent Deposit Scheme. Monitoring of services and developing links with young people's organisations and referral agencies. This includes care leavers referrals for example into Drapers Foyer.
25. A key issue raised by young people at Drapers Foyer in discussion with Members was the waiting time and lack of space to accommodate the number of young people that are seeking a placement. Members noted and supported the idea that capacity for schemes such as the Foyer model needs to be increased to ensure we are able to help as many vulnerable young people as possible and prevent future homelessness and the associated issues that would arise. Members also noted the positive community environment that exists within Drapers City Foyer. The Working Group believes that, in part, this is a reflection of the size of the foyer, which is still small enough to ensure that most residents know each other. It was also noted that the larger foyers are not always able to replicate the supportive community environment of Drapers City and recommend that size is a factor that should be considered in any expansion of the foyers in Tower Hamlets.

Quality of Hostels

26. The Working Group's visits included tours of the newly-rebuilt Hopetown Hostel and Riverside House, both managed by the Salvation Army, and the recently-refurbished Booth House again managed by the Salvation Army and Dellow Centre, managed by Providence Row Housing Association. All four of these hostels were a world away from the stereotype dormitory hostel common as recently as the 1980s and 1990s. Some have been completely rebuilt with Approved Development Programme funding, while others have been substantially refurbished under the £90 million Hostels Capital Improvement Programme run the by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The Panel pays tribute to both the Housing Corporations and DCLG for their preparedness to invest significant resources in these schemes, and strongly support continued HCIP funding in the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.
27. The one hostel the Group visited which does not appear to have benefited from major refurbishment is the Aldgate Hostel on Dock Street, managed by Look Ahead Housing Association. This hostel has around 150 bedspaces, and as it takes referrals of street

homeless people and is open to direct access, it provides a roof over the heads of many with chaotic lifestyles, including those with serious drug/alcohol problems. The rooms and amenities are basic and do not compare well with those in other refurbished or newly-built hostels.

28. Modernisation of Aldgate hostel to bring it up to the standard of Booth House may well involve the loss of a number of bedspaces for homeless people. This would cause problems enough when the need for hostels bedspaces remains so stubbornly high. From the discussion Members held with Look Ahead Housing Association it was noted that any reduction in bedspaces would also lead to reduction in funding and rental and compromise the hostel's financial sustainability.
29. The Working Group therefore believes that some targeted work needs to be undertaken through the SP Programme to support hostels with smaller rooms and basic facilities to improve the quality their accommodation. In particular SP Team should undertake discussions with DCLG and the Housing Corporations to seek external funding to improve the quality of hostels in the borough.
30. This has also been recognised in the Hostels and Move On Strategy and consultation with service users about accommodation standards revealed that there were concerns about the size of the room, users wanted a staged approach to move-on and improved security at hostels. Accommodation standards therefore can be seen in the wider context in terms of providing a positive environment to help make changes and creating a sense of belonging and respect for the facilities. The Working Group has therefore recommended that further work be undertaken to improve accommodation standards.

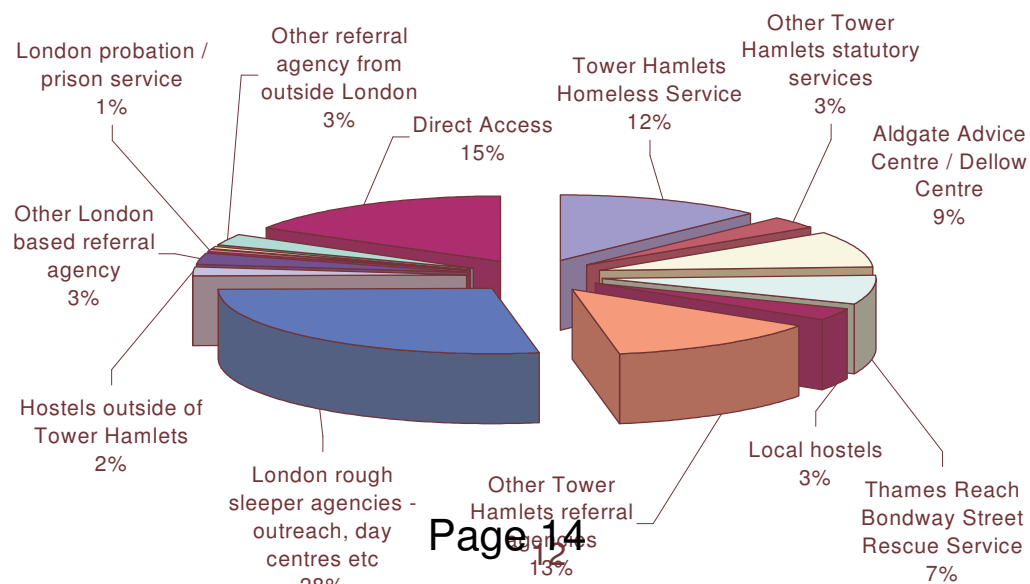
Recommendation 1
 That the Supporting People Team work with all the hostels to explore the potential for further infrastructure improvement. Specifically the Council should work with Look Ahead Housing Association to develop proposals for improving the Aldgate hostel with the minimum possible loss of bed spaces and consequent funding.

Referral Mechanisms

31. The following graph shows the referral routes into hostels as reported in the hostel census. This suggests that 47% of referrals were from agencies within Tower Hamlets. The vast majority of the 15% of direct access is at Queen Victoria Seamens Rest. The Working Group noted that local people are not maximising the use of hostels and work needs to be undertaken with local agencies to increase local referrals.

Referral routes into Tower Hamlets hostels – January 2006

Source: Hostels and Move On Strategy

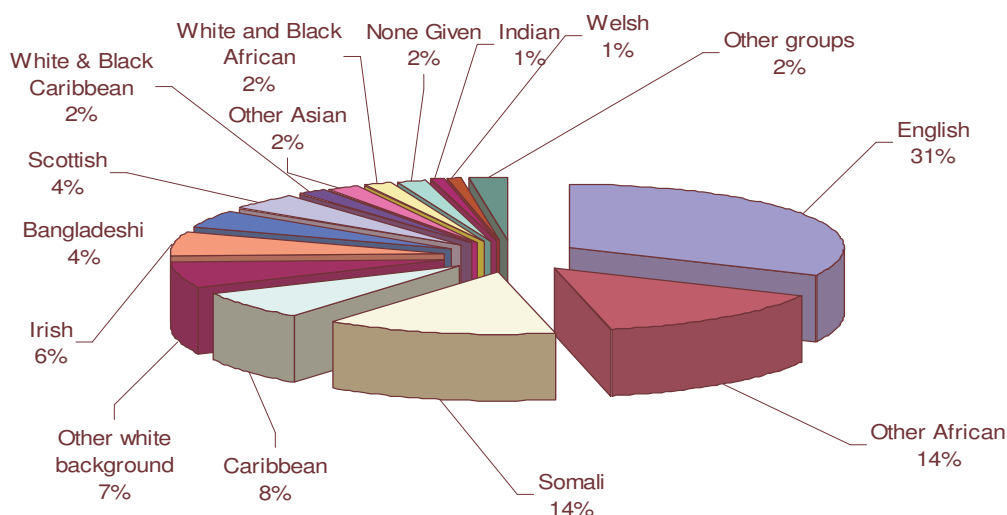


32. A key recommendation in the Hostels and Move On Strategy is to increase access by local agencies to over 50%, and as part of this for Hackney Road service to be opened up to local access. The Working Group fully supports this recommendation and is keen to see it taken forward as a priority. The Working Group also noted that the current referral mechanism to Hackney Road does not give any adequate direct local access and is keen that representations be made to DCLG and other relevant bodies to this effect. The Working Group also supports the recommendation to allow referrals from the Local Authority Housing Options Team with an additional focus on referrals from the PRHA Probation Housing Advice services which currently has severe difficulty accessing local hostels. The Service could also be opened up for clients with complex needs. The Working Group noted that some discussion have taken place locally and has recommended that this be pursued further to obtain local access.

Recommendation 2

That the Providence Road Housing Association (PRHA) Hackney Road service should be opened up to achieve direct local access by LBTH based agencies. In partnership with PRHA the Council's Cabinet make representations to DCLG to this effect.

33. The hostels population is extremely diverse with 48 different ethnic backgrounds identified in the hostels census. The most significant point about diversity in comparison with Tower Hamlets' local population is that Black African and Caribbean service users (36%) are over-represented by a factor of 6, while Bangladeshi and Asian service users (6%) are under-represented by a factor of 6. White British and Irish service users (42%) are represented at a very similar level to the borough as a whole. The graph below shows the ethnic profile of hostel users as at January 2006.



Source: Hostels and Move On Strategy

34. The Hostels and Move On Strategy noted that very small number of Bangladeshis use hostels perhaps because of strong family and community ties, making single homelessness a less likely outcome and also due to the fact that they are not a refugee community. Furthermore, both from discussion with service users and service providers the Working Group noted that some BME residents such as Bangladeshis have perceived stereotypes about hostels and their users and this formulates a negative perception about hostels within this community. The Hostels and Move On Strategy also recognises this and has recommended further research be undertaken. The Working Group welcomes this and asks that an Action Plan be also developed to address the issues facing this community. Part of this may be around better integration within the

community and promoting better understanding of the role of the hostel sector within the wider community.

Recommendation 3

That research should be undertaken to understand the perception and cultural issues affecting BME residents around accessing hostels leading to an Action Plan being developed to improve BME access.

35. The Review Group was asked to look in details at proposals for a Housing Options and Support Team, based in the Homeless and Housing Advice Service. This model is based on best practice in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and is designed to ensure that single homeless people have full and appropriate assessment of their housing needs. This will provide a different assessment model to the present system for priority or non-priority homelessness. Instead it will focus on assessing support needs and making referrals to appropriate hostels or other supported housing scheme. It is anticipated that the team will make between 250 and 300 referrals per year, of whom about 125 would already have been assessed as in priority need. Agreements would have to be made with hostels on the numbers they would be likely to accept through this route.
36. The benefits of such a model are principally about increased partnership working between statutory services and the supported housing sector, providing better outcomes for single homeless people. It also provides the potential for much better use of services and resources by acting as a gateway for SP services. Thirdly, with the development of this approach it will be easier to monitor outcomes and show the benefits of hostels for Tower Hamlets. Other benefits include better assessment of needs, better homeless prevention and better strategy and commissioning.
37. To refer 300 people per year through this route would double the number coming through statutory agencies and would help take the level of Tower Hamlets referrals to over 50%. However there are some issues which needs to be developed to ensure effective joint working and this include an agreed assessment and referral process. This was an issue raised by a number of service providers during a meeting held with them. In particular they expressed concerns about the experience and quality of the assessment undertaken by the existing Housing Options Team and felt that the final referral /acceptance decision should rest with the service provider or a Panel.
38. While it is difficult for the Working Group to comment on the likely effectiveness of the HOST model, there is a clearly demonstrated need for a more joined up approach, centred on delivering a personalised service tailored to the individual. Also if HOST retains responsibility for each client, it will be much easier to keep track of their progress. However, the Working Group is keen to highlight that the Homeless and Housing Advice Team liaise closely with service providers to agree upon a referral mechanism and also staff recruitment and development for the HOST.

Recommendation 4

That the HOST team works in partnership with local agencies to deliver a more joined up services, centred on delivering a personalised service tailored to Individual clients.

Housing Benefit

39. The Working Group were concerned to note the problems facing young people in foyers, whose reliance on Housing Benefit to pay the high rent and service charges means they

are restricted to a maximum of 16 hours training each week. This restriction is completely at odds with the Government's aim of tackling social exclusion by helping young people into employment, education and training. This issue was particularly highlighted to the Working Group by a number of young people during their visit to Drapers City Foyer.

40. The Working Group is keen to ensure that residents from the foyer are encouraged to develop themselves and be equipped to find a better life through education and training. The current welfare system does not help these vulnerable people and will in some cases increase homelessness through eviction. The Working Group therefore recommends that the Council backs the Foyer Federation campaign to waive the 16-hour rule for residents of foyers. Since the campaign was launched in November 2005, almost 100 Members of Parliament have backed the Foyer Federation's call for Work and Pensions Ministers to deal with this problem. Despite this, minister remains opposed to change housing benefit regulations to help young people in foyers.

Recommendation 5

That the Council should publicly backs the Foyer Federation's campaign to persuade the Department of Work & Pensions to waive the 16-hour rule for residents of foyers.

41. The Working Group were further concerned to note impact of the Single Room Rent (SRR) restriction on Housing Benefit has on the ability of vulnerable young people to sustain an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in the private rented sector. The SRR limits Housing Benefit payments to those under-25 years old to the average of a room in shared accommodation. As a result, many young people are left with benefit shortfalls that mean rent arrears rapidly accrue and they are left facing eviction and homelessness all over again. The Department of Work and Pension is introducing the flat-rate Local Housing Allowance to replace Housing Benefit in the private sector. The early indications are that the average benefit shortfalls are not much less than they are currently. Shortfalls under the new Shared Room Rate of LHA for under-25s remain particularly unsustainable. The Working Group therefore recommends that the Council supports the campaign run by Citizens Advice and Shelter to scrap Single Room Rent restriction and Shared Room Rate of LHA.

Recommendation 6

That the Council should support Citizens Advice and Shelter's campaign to scrap the Single Room Rent Restriction and Shared Room rate of LHA.

Evictions and Abandonments

42. The 2005/06 performance indicators show there were 1016 new hostel users in 2005/06 with a similar number leaving over the same period. This is an overall turnover rate at 123%. The Hostel Census and exit survey show that a very significant number of service users leave hostels before they have been there for 6 months. In fact 61% of these departures are evictions or abandonments. This is an area of significant concern which the Hostels and Move On Strategy examines in detail. The Strategy includes recommendations around improving quality and undertaking sufficient risk assessments and support planning. The Working Group noted that has been some improvement in reducing evictions abandonments from 75% when the hostel census was undertaken to 61% currently. In particular the Working Group commended the excellent work undertaken by Aldgate Hostel to reduce this to 50% despite working with a very difficult client group.

43. The most common reason for evictions is arrears (45%) followed by threatening or abusive behaviour (22%) and for abandonments, the most common reason suggested is arrears (23%). The Working Group concluded that the current support service to new users was insufficient. The Group was keen to ensure that support at this stage is effective to reduce the cycle of homelessness and ensure people are being set in the right direction from the first time they come into the hostel sector. The Working Group recognises that there will be some evictions and abandonments due to the complex nature of many clients' needs, but felt that 61% is a worrying figure. The Working Group therefore recommends that the SP Team develop a strategic response to reduce both evictions and abandonments, in particular working with those hostels where the departure is high to produce an Action Plan to address this issue.

Recommendation 7

That the Supporting People Team develops in partnership with service providers a strategic response to work with clients to reduce evictions and abandonments. That the response ensures that referral and assessment work is undertaken, support needs are accurately identified and assessed, there is some choice for clients in terms of hostels allocated and that hostel staff have detailed plans to support clients.

Move-on Private Rented Sector

44. The Working Group noted that the demand for move-on accommodation is about four times the supply. The Hostel census found that about 27% of hostel residents require immediate move-on accommodation and this is expected to rise over the coming years. In number this equates to about 450 service users requiring move-on over the next year with basic annual supply of move-on about 110 units. This is leading to a severe silting up of hostels which is also affecting access to hostels.
45. In terms of the type of move-on required, most require self-contained accommodation, either with no support (57%) or with floating support (24%). From the census the Working Group also noted that only 62% of service users gave Tower Hamlets as first choice for move on. Furthermore, where service users have come from outside the borough they are less likely to want move-in the borough. Although referrals come all over London, move-on is still primarily organised on a borough basis.
46. The fact that consultation showed that only 14% of hostel users would consider living in the private rented sector as a move-on option suggests a considerable amount of work needs to be done to make this option more attractive. Amongst those factors worrying service users is the affordability of the private sector and the possibility of getting ripped-off by landlords. The Working Group agrees with the key strategic aim of the Hostels and Move-on Strategy to reduce the dependency on social housing as the primary move-on option and change the culture around staying in hostel to obtain a flat rented from the Council or Housing Association.
47. The Working Group also supports a better balance of first stage and second stage and hostel accommodation. The excellent second stage units in Hopetown and Riverside offer residents experience of accommodation much closer to independent living. In particular the Group endorsed the move of Daniel Gilbert House from first stage to second stage. This was very strongly emphasised to the Working Group Members by hostel residents during their visits. Users also felt that they need to feel as if they are making progress out of the hostel even if this means going through the stages with more independence as they move along.

48. The Working Group retains some concerns about increasing the use of private rented sector as a move-on option. Many hostel residents may in fact have become homeless after being evicted from private rented accommodation. However, the Group recognises that in light of the demand for social housing within the borough, this is an option which must be used to help hostel users move-on and increase access. The Group is keen to ensure that targets for individual hostels referring clients to Private Rented accommodation should be avoided and also increase support to users who have been referred to private rented accommodation. The Working Group has therefore recommended that the private rented sector should not be forced upon hostel residents. The Group also recommends that on-going support services be provided to users to ensure they are able to cope with the demands of life in the private rented sector and have assistance on hand when required.

Recommendation 8

That the Supporting People Team work with hostel providers to explore the potential for further expansion of second stage accommodation.

Recommendation 9

That the Supporting People Team work with service providers to ensure clients are not forced to move into private rented sector and are adequately prepared to live in private rented accommodation, including providing help with Rent Deposits, Housing Benefit / Local Housing Allowance, and if necessary, Discretionary Housing Payments to cover benefit shortfalls.

Recommendation 10

That the Supporting People Team explore the potential for specific floating support service be made available to clients moved from hostels to private tenancies.

Mental Health and Drugs/ Alcohol Services

49. The Working Group visit to the various hostels also highlighted the various support needs of service users and in particular reliance on those support needs. An area that was highlighted to the Panel was the withdrawal of the HHELP team offering specialist mental health support within hostels. This issue was also highlighted to Members at the meeting with service providers.
50. The lack of consultation with hostel service providers about the withdrawal of this important service was of grave concern to the Working Group. The needs of hostel users are very complex with a high number of users with mental health issues. The service provided at hostels was a convenient way to ensure this group accesses the necessary help. This also highlighted the lack of involvement of the hostel sector within the wider Tower Hamlets Partnership. The Working group has therefore, recommended that the Living Well Community Plan Action Group (CPAG) considers this and works with East London and City Mental Health Trust to provide a similar service which meets the needs of service users in consultation with hostel providers. The Working Group has also recommended that the Supporting People Programme be incorporated into the wider partnership to ensure they are consulted and involved about important changes to service delivery and development.
51. The Review Group noted that almost a third of hostel residents suffer from drug or alcohol dependency, any may have intense support needs as a result. We welcome the acknowledgement in the Hostels and Move-on Strategy that the existing hostel system is

not adequately equipped to cope with the level and complexity of the needs which are now evidence, and that there is an under-supply of specialist services. The Group therefore strongly support the proposals to increase the provision of specialist drug/alcohol treatment services and help Look Ahead HA expand its Substance Misuse Unit at the Aldgate Hostel.

Recommendation 11

That the Living Well CPAG reviews the decision to withdraw the HHELP service from hostels and specifically examines the effectiveness of its proposed replacement service in reaching hostel residents. Furthermore the Living Well CPAG considers how the Supporting People Programme can be incorporated into the wider partnership so that they are consulted and involved about important changes to service delivery and development.

Recommendation 12

That the Council should examine the possibility of increasing its support for the Drug Action Team to ensure it has the capacity to provide satellite services in local hostels.

Conclusion

52. In conclusion the Working Group noted that Tower Hamlets has a long history of providing a refuge to homeless people. The hostel sector in the borough is one of biggest in London, with dedicated staff and volunteers ensuring that vulnerable homeless people have a roof over their head and access to some of the support and training they need to turn their lives around. However, the Council and local organisations are not utilising this facility fully with hostel users coming from around London. It was noted that although there are central government restrictions on imposing local targets, much better use could be made of the hostel sector to help local homeless people.
53. The development of the Hostels and Move-On Strategy has set out the future direction for the hostel sector. The Working Group fully supports the strategy and the recommendations contained within it. It is hoped that the implementation of this strategy will increase local access and also improve the quality of hostel in providing a more effective service to address the multiple causes and effects of homelessness and social exclusion.
54. The Supporting People Programme contributes a significant amount of its annual fund to the hostel sector. The hostel sector provides good value for money in comparison to some other London boroughs. The Working Group is therefore keen to see that the Council's Cabinet lobby the Department of Communities and Local Government to increase funding for the Tower Hamlets Supporting People programme.
55. The Supporting People Team have already introduced a number of initiatives to improve local, BME and young people access to hostels. The Working Group hopes these initiatives and the recommendations outlined in this report help to address some of the issues for local people in accessing hostels.
56. The Working Group noted that work has begun in improving the quality of hostels. In particular the physical infrastructure of some hostels was an area that needed to be further developed. This was highlighted as an issue by a number of users to Members as an issue which has helped them to settle into the hostel and also look at their future

development. The Working Group was therefore keen that work be undertaken with specific hostels to improve their infrastructure.

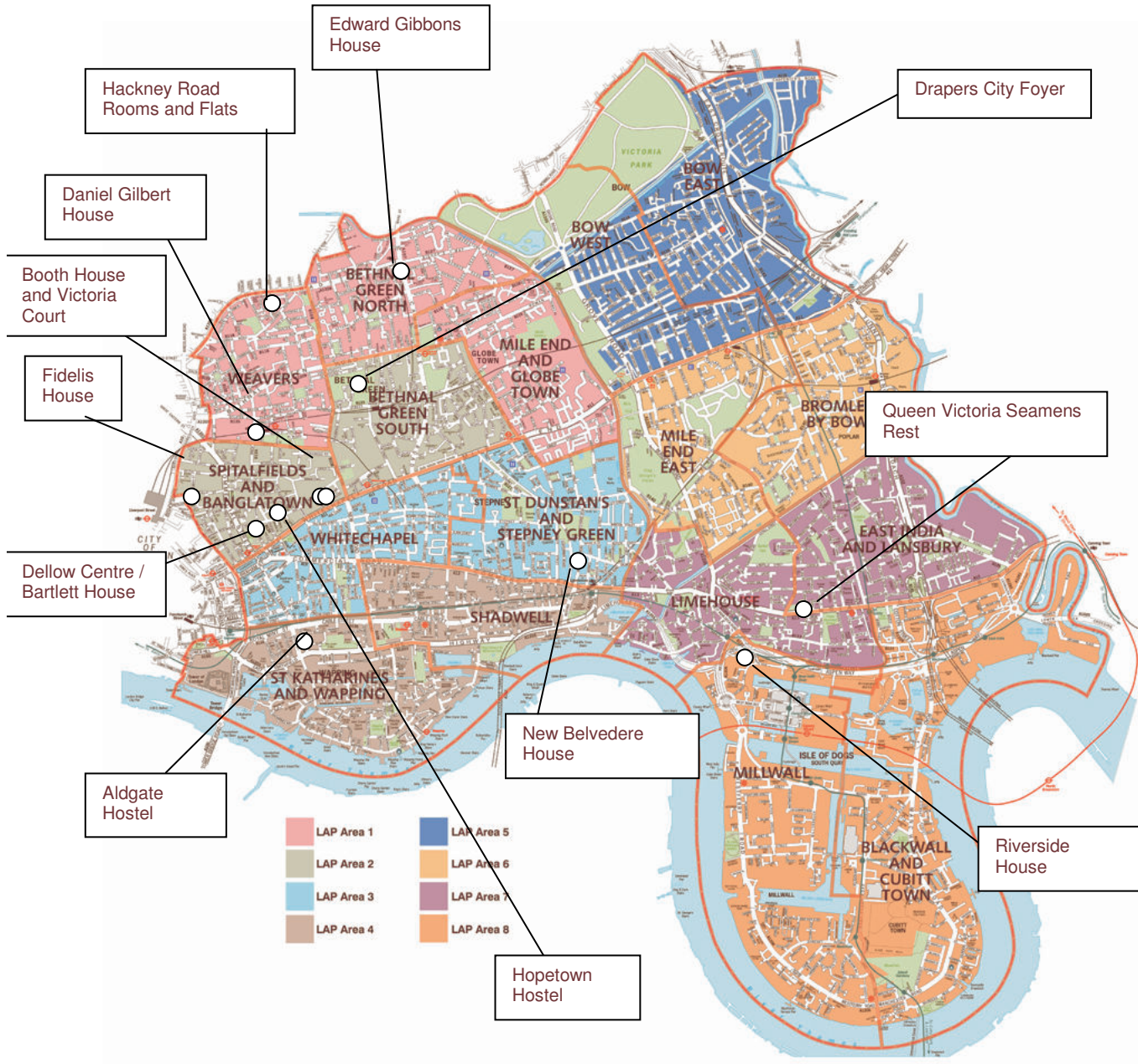
57. The report contains a number of recommendations around referral routes. The Working Group is keen to ensure that local access be increased to ensure it better responds to the needs of the local community. The Working Group has made two recommendations to support campaigns to help young people living in hostels. These would help users improve themselves and reduce the cycle of repeat homelessness. The Group noted from Council Officers that representations could be made to central government to pilot reforms to the benefit system along these lines.
58. The Working Group was concerned about the high percentage of evictions and abandonments. Although it was noted that there has been some recent improvements this is an issue which needs to be further improved to reduce people coming back into the system. It was felt that the initial assessment and support to users is an important element in improving this.
59. There are three recommendations about use of private rented sector as a move-on option. The Working Group is keen that hostel users are adequately prepared and supported in moving into this sector. Finally, the Working Group considered the issue of support services to hostel users and the role of the Supporting People Programme in the wider Tower Hamlets Partnership.
60. The Working Group welcomes the recent work that has been undertaken to improve the hostel sector and fully supports the Hostels and Move-On Strategy as providing a coherent and ambitious plan of action to deliver real improvements to the lives of single homeless people in Tower Hamlets in the years ahead.

Appendix 1

Hostel and supported move-on accommodation in LBTH (Extract from Hostel Strategy)

Service	Total Units	Comprising			Including specialist provision					
		First Stage	Second Stage	Move On	Drugs	Alcohol	Women Only	Young People	Ex-service	Other
Aldgate	158	158	-	-	14	-	18	-	-	-
Booth House	150	106	44	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Daniel Gilbert House	95	38	57	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
Dellow & Bartlett	48	30	18	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
Drapers City	41	35	6	-	-	-	-	41	-	-
Edward Gibbons House	35	30	5	-	-	35	-	-	-	-
Fidelis House	23	23	-	-	-	-	23	-	-	-
Hackney Road	35	10	25	-	35	-	-	-	-	-
Hopetown	118	50	18	-	-	-	68	-	-	-
New Belvedere House	57	53	4	-	-	-	-	-	57	-
QVSR	174	174	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Riverside	51	-	51	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	1003	707	228		49	35	117	46	57	4
		76%	24%	0%	5%	4%	13%	5%	6%	0%

Map of hostels in Tower Hamlets



700

600

Scrutiny and Equalities in Tower Hamlets

To find out more about Scrutiny in Tower Hamlets:

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Agenda Item 11.3

Committee	Date	Classification	Report No.	Agenda Item No.
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	5 June 2007	Unrestricted		
Report of: Sara Williams Assistant Chief Executive		Title: Report of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Working Group		
Originating Officer(s): Afazul Hoque Acting Scrutiny Policy Manager		Ward(s) affected: All		

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report submits the report and recommendations of the Sustainable Communities Working Group for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Endorse the draft report of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Working Group
- 2.2 The Service Head, Scrutiny and Equalities be authorised to agree the final report before its submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for Living Safely.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Background paper

Name and telephone number of and address where open to inspection

Scrutiny Review File held in Scrutiny Policy Team

Afazul Hoque
020 7364 44636

3. Background

- 3.1 The Working group was established in September 2006 to explore recycling, waste management and related environmental issues to develop member knowledge and expertise and provide robust critical friend challenge to the boroughs new recycling contract
- 3.2 The working group met three times including a meeting with environmental volunteers, a tour of the recycling facilities across the borough and a visit to the sorting plant. The last meeting of the group took the format of a challenge session, which was extended to all front-line councillors. Representatives from Recycling and Planning presented and responded to questions and observations from the review group
- 3.3 The report with recommendations is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.4 Once agreed, the working group's recommendations will be submitted to Cabinet for a response to their recommendations.

4. Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services)

- 4.1 The Council has power under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area. The Council has certain statutory obligations in relation to recycling wastes; the adoption of the recommendations in this report will assist the Council in meeting those statutory obligations. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, any legal considerations arising from the resultant Action Plan will be addressed at that point

5. Comments of the Chief Financial Officer

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications arising from the resultant Action Plan will be addressed at that point

6. Equal Opportunity Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct equal opportunity implications arising from this report.

7. Anti-Poverty Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct anti-poverty implications arising from this report.

8. Sustainable Action for a Greener Environment

- 8.1 This report focuses on the new integrated recycling contract and the wider issues of recycling and waste management.

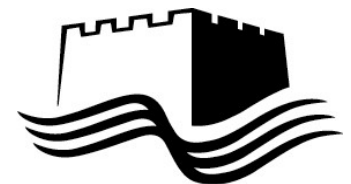
9. Risk Management

- 9.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from the Working Group's report or recommendations.

Improving Recycling

Report of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Working Group

Tower Hamlets Council
May 2007



TOWER HAMLETS

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Acknowledgements

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Councillor Azizur Rahman Khan
Councillor Abdul Aziz Sardar
Councillor Shafiqul Haque
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Councillor Peter Golds

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Scrutiny and Equalities

Michael Keating, Service Head
Alan Steward, Scrutiny Policy Manager
Shanara Matin, Scrutiny Policy Officer
Natalie Errington, Scrutiny Policy Officer

The Working Group would like to thank the Environmental volunteers for their contribution to this review. The group would also like to thank the people involved in the recycling tour including the staff at Northumberland Wharf Reuse and Recycle Centre, Adam Saunders and Chris Hodges from Veolia, and the staff at Grosvenor.

Chair's Foreword

Climate change has now reached political prominence and is rightfully on the agenda at all levels of government. I therefore feel it is timely to present this report into recycling in Tower Hamlets as we work towards developing sustainable communities and reducing our carbon footprint. Recycling is a key priority for the Council and for local people as expressed through resident surveys. Recycling is also becoming an ever more political issue with environmental and financial implications. While Tower Hamlets has recently made significant improvements in its recycling figures and a number of initiatives have been introduced, targets have not been reached and there is a lot of work to be done.

It is for these reasons that the working group wanted to discover more about recycling in Tower Hamlets and elsewhere, to better understand the challenges and barriers, to investigate the measures the Council has introduced and are looking to introduce in the future and feed into the introduction of a new integrated waste contract in 2008.

Tower Hamlets has a very diverse and changing population and faces considerable challenges in the quest to recycle more. 86% of our population live in high rise properties with limited storage space and properties with gardens (and therefore garden waste) are rare. To encourage participation and increase our figures the basics need to be right and need to work alongside innovative ways of improving the take up of recycling across geographical areas and property types across our diverse population.

I believe the recommendations contained in this report will build on the work Tower Hamlets Council is already doing and increase awareness and participation in recycling. There are already schemes running and in the pipeline to encourage waste minimisation, for example the furniture reuse programme and the real nappy scheme. Outreach work encourages the take up of recycling and the pilot composting schemes encourage community involvement. Residents, schools, organisations, businesses, markets, health centres and hospitals should all be encouraged and facilitated to play a full part in recycling in Tower Hamlets and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.

I would personally like to thank the councillors on the working group for their commitment; the Environment Volunteers for sharing their experience and suggestions; all the officers involved, especially John Palmer and Fiona Heyland for encouraging our work and answering all our questions and the representatives from Veolia and Grosvenor who added a further dimension to our work. Finally I would like to thank the scrutiny team of officers – especially Alan Steward, Shanara Matin and Natalie Errington for their excellent support in producing this report.

Cllr Clair Hawkins
Scrutiny Lead, Living Safely

Recommendations

Recycling is a currently a contentious issue with national debate focusing on the merits of direct charging for residual waste, compulsory recycling and alternate weekly collections. All these methods are aimed at compelling residents to recycle. The recommendations for this review are more focused on educating, facilitating and incentivising people to recycle, whilst strengthening the Council's ability to penalise organisations that act as a barrier to waste minimization.

- R1 The review commends the work being undertaken with the private sector to reduce the amount of waste entering the municipal waste stream. Increasing recycling of market waste must be a priority, including food waste.
- R2 The Group welcomes the planned work to increase recycling within hospitals, and other institutions, and suggests that the Tower Hamlets Partnership is a good channel to deliver these changes through. All efforts should be made to ensure that the necessary funding is secured for the expansion of the service to take place. The Group would also suggest that all Council buildings, including the Idea Stores and leisure centres are doing their best to minimise waste.
- R3 Whilst the group understands the importance of recycling plastic in order to achieve targets, there is concern about the pollution of China with these recycled plastics and the wider issue of excessive packaging. The review group would therefore support the Local Government Association's calls for tougher laws and serious fines for excessive packaging. At a local level, the group would like to raise the awareness of this issue locally, including the merits of buying products in alternative containers and recycling their plastic bags. It is suggested that this should be pursued through the Tower Hamlets Partnership.
- R4 A key concern for the review is the current state of the bring sites. More work needs to be done to make sure that these sites are well managed and are a more attractive part of the local landscape. Improvements would need to include making the sites more attractive, that they are emptied more frequently and that they are in the best location. Improvements should also be made to the signage of the bring sites.
- R5 Whilst the review commends the service offered at Northumberland Wharf reuse and recycle centre, it also notes that it is only accessible by car, which excludes the majority of Tower Hamlets residents. The group would therefore like to see the introduction of smaller collection points across the borough to compliment some of the services offered at Northumberland Wharf.
- R6 An area of grave concern for the group is the lack of appropriate recycling facilities and access to facilities in new housing developments. The group understands that planning is able to penalise developers via a breach of condition notice. It therefore recommends that there should be a more joined up approach, between the recycling team and planning to monitor new developments and enforce action. The working group expresses concern that the Council does not have the resources to check new housing developments for breach of contract (including for recycling facilities) and sign them off as compliant, especially with the large number of developments under construction. Additional resources need to be considered to make sure that enforcement is given greater priority. This is vital in safeguarding the quality of the borough's environment.

- R7 This review recognises the decision for the new contract to cease door to door collections in high rise accommodation, based on the increased value for money of the near entry approach, and suggests the following provisos:
- a wide range of consultation is undertaken to ensure that the majority of high rise residents are supportive of adopting the near entry approach.
 - If the consultation is positive and the near entry approach is adopted that effective communication is undertaken to explain why it has been introduced and the benefits of the changes
 - That this change must not make it harder for people living in high rise accommodation to recycle, with particular emphasis on how the recycling is moved from the home to the communal facility.
- R8 The review group would expect the new contractor to use the results of recent waste analysis to help develop a service based on the recycling needs particular to Tower Hamlets. The Review would therefore welcome the re-investigation of the option to introduce food waste recycling. Whilst the group is aware that the majority of London Authorities providing this service only do so for street level properties, the review would welcome an innovative approach as to how food waste recycling could be rolled out to all properties.
- R9 The review would encourage the contract proposal to make reference to the recent national policy guidance on recycling and regional London-wide changes that might be introduced. Based on the evidence of this review, the group would welcome any changes that would stream line the approach to recycling and develop a more co-ordinated approach to waste minimisation across the capital, including the proposed London Single Waste Authority.
- R10 The group would support increasing publicity around recycling, particularly around what happens to the recycling when it is picked up. The group commends the new pamphlet explaining recycling in a range of community languages but would propose that other methods of communication are also utilised using a range of media. The Recycling team should have a presence at the boroughs wide range of festivals and community events to provide information and recycling facilities to residents. A regular page or column in East End Life, highlighting some of the more innovative approaches to recycling should also be considered. An estate recycling roadshow may be another option.
- R11 Schemes such as the community composting should be rolled out to all residents living in high rise accommodation, as well as schools. The Council should look at further ways to incentivise residents to recycle.

Introduction

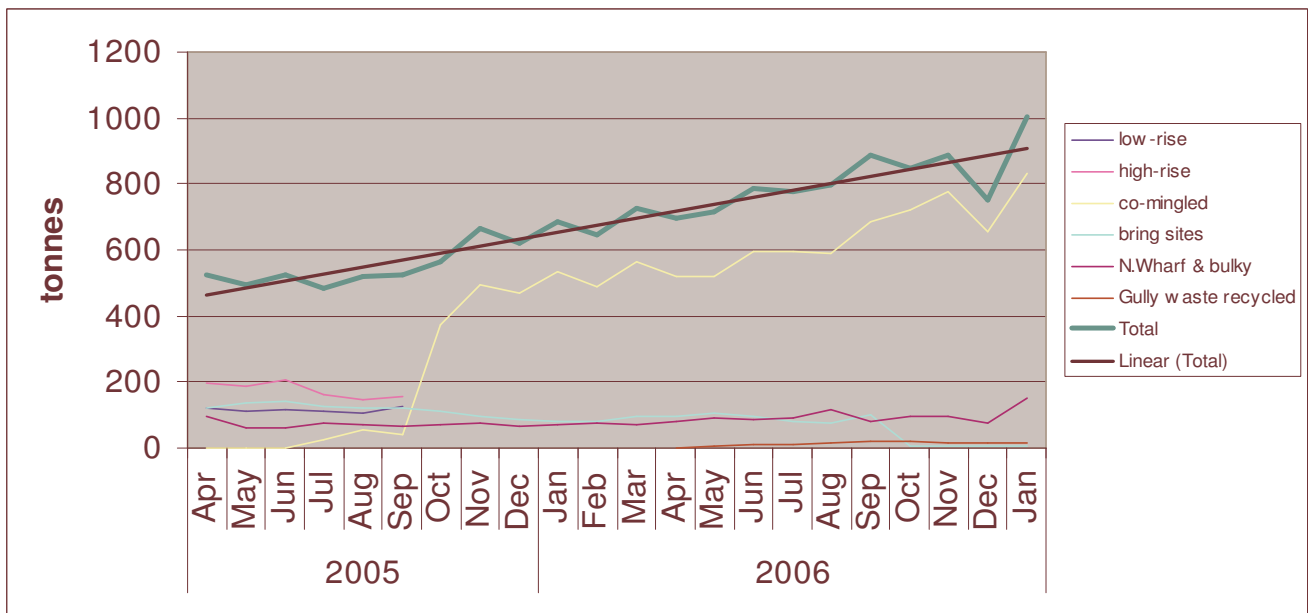
1. There are significant sustainability challenges in Tower Hamlets, as highlighted in the 2004/05. While there have been real improvements, doubling the recycling rates in the past two years to just over 13%, performance is still below the London average. The physical and demographic context of Tower Hamlets add their own challenges with services needing to be accessible to a high-density population with 86% of local people living in high-rise buildings. There is also a diverse and highly mobile population that poses a challenge to promoting and sustaining the importance of recycling.
2. The Council provides a range of services to residents including household collections, Local Recycling Points – or bring sites, the Reuse and Recycle Centre at Northumberland Wharf, home and community composting schemes, a free bulky waste collection service, and offers incentives for using washable nappies.
3. Recycling is often perceived by residents to be a complicated service to engage with. There are misconceptions about how recyclable waste is dealt with, raising questions about the value of taking part. Added to this there are difficulties in getting across messages about the adverse effect of low recycling levels such as increased levels of landfill tax due to the financial implications on consumers often being indirect.
4. A Working Group was established in September 2006 to explore recycling, waste management and related environmental issues to develop member knowledge and expertise and provide robust critical friend challenge to the borough's new recycling contract. The membership of the group was politically balanced and comprised of 7 councillors. The Chair of the Working Group was Councillor Clair Hawkins, Scrutiny Lead, Living Safely.
5. The review had four main aims:
 - Improve member understanding of recycling and waste management
 - Develop members' role as advocates for recycling
 - Provide opportunities to promote and support the recycling campaign
 - Tackle misconceptions about what happens to materials collected through recycling
 - Improve the new recycling contract
6. The Working Group was keen to hear the different views, experiences and concerns of local people championing environmental friendly behaviour within their communities. The group attended a workshop meeting of the environmental volunteers, a scheme involving local people in protecting both the built environment and open spaces. The workshop provided an opportunity to find out what the volunteers thought about recycling, including key issues, barriers and concerns.
7. In order to get a sense of the current facilities and processes, the review group were invited to attend a day long recycling visit. This included:
 - A visit to the Northumberland Wharf Reuse and Recycle Centre
 - Observing collections from high rise and low rise accommodation
 - Attending a local bring site
 - A visit to the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) where the recycling is sent

8. The last meeting of the group took the format of a challenge session, which was extended to all front-line councillors. Representatives from Recycling and Planning presented and responded to questions and observations from the review group
9. The recycling team highlighted four London Authorities that could be used for benchmarking, based on the make up of their housing. Benchmarking against Westminster, Islington and Camden and Lambeth was carried out. Authorities offering innovative or award winning practice and also examples highlighted by the environmental volunteers were also investigated.
10. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider the Working Group's report and recommendations. It will then be submitted to Cabinet for a response and action plan.

Recycling in Tower Hamlets

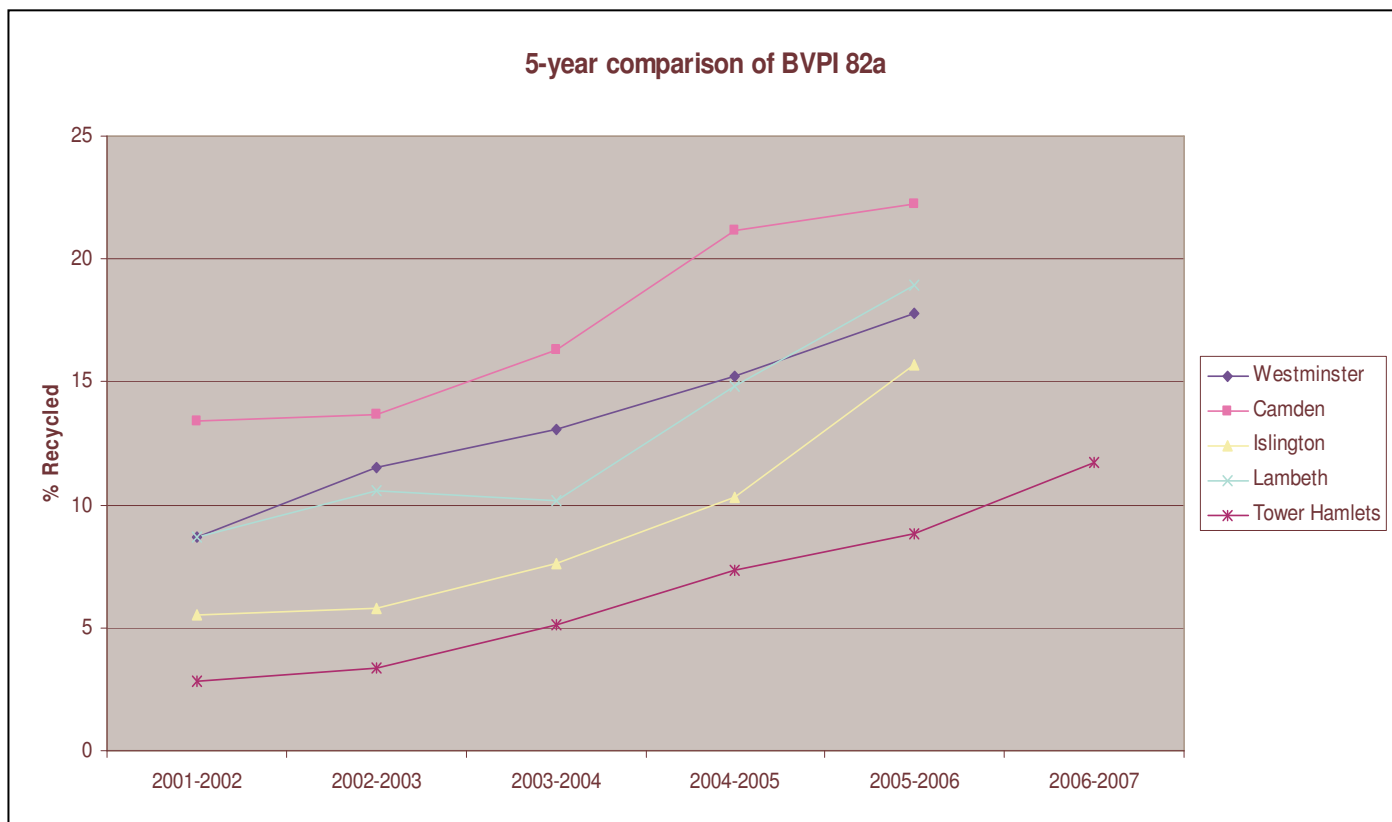
Current Performance

- 11. The most up to date figures for 2006-2007 indicate that out of the 84,390 tonnes of household waste produced, 9,864 tonnes has been recycled. Whilst the recycling rate for March was just over 13%, the recycling rate for the year was 11.67%.
- 12. The target for 2007-2008 is 22%. Whilst the recycling rate has doubled in the past two years, it would have to double again to achieve this target; the council could reasonably expect to reach 15% for 2007-08 by using more publicity, improving the reliability of the service and extending service to more domestic properties.
- 13. The service is currently serving 90,036 out of the 96,000 properties in the borough. It is thought the majority of the 6,000 missed properties are flats above shops and new developments. Trade waste recycling is also being promoted. Whilst it is not possible to include this waste in the recycling figures it does create a diversion from landfill, therefore reducing these figures.
- 14. The recycling Trend since Apr 2005



- 15. Another area in which the service could be expanded is in the variety of customers that the recycling services serve. Whilst residential and council run establishments are covered by the recycling service, recycling from a variety of other sources can be included in the municipal waste target that currently are not.
- 16. New Customers that could be targeted include; hospitals, charities, GP surgeries and health centres, places of worship, residential, care and nursing homes hostels, public halls and community centres. Even though this expansion of customers is included in the Recycling Improvement Plan 2007-2008 additional funding will be required to make a significant impact with these new customers.

17. When comparing Tower Hamlet's performance with other London Boroughs it is necessary to look at other authorities with similar proportions of flatted accommodation. These similar boroughs include Camden, Westminster and Lambeth, all of which are performing to a higher standard, so therefore are used as examples of best practice.
18. The table below highlights the performance against similar boroughs for BVPI 82a, percentage household waste (recycled)

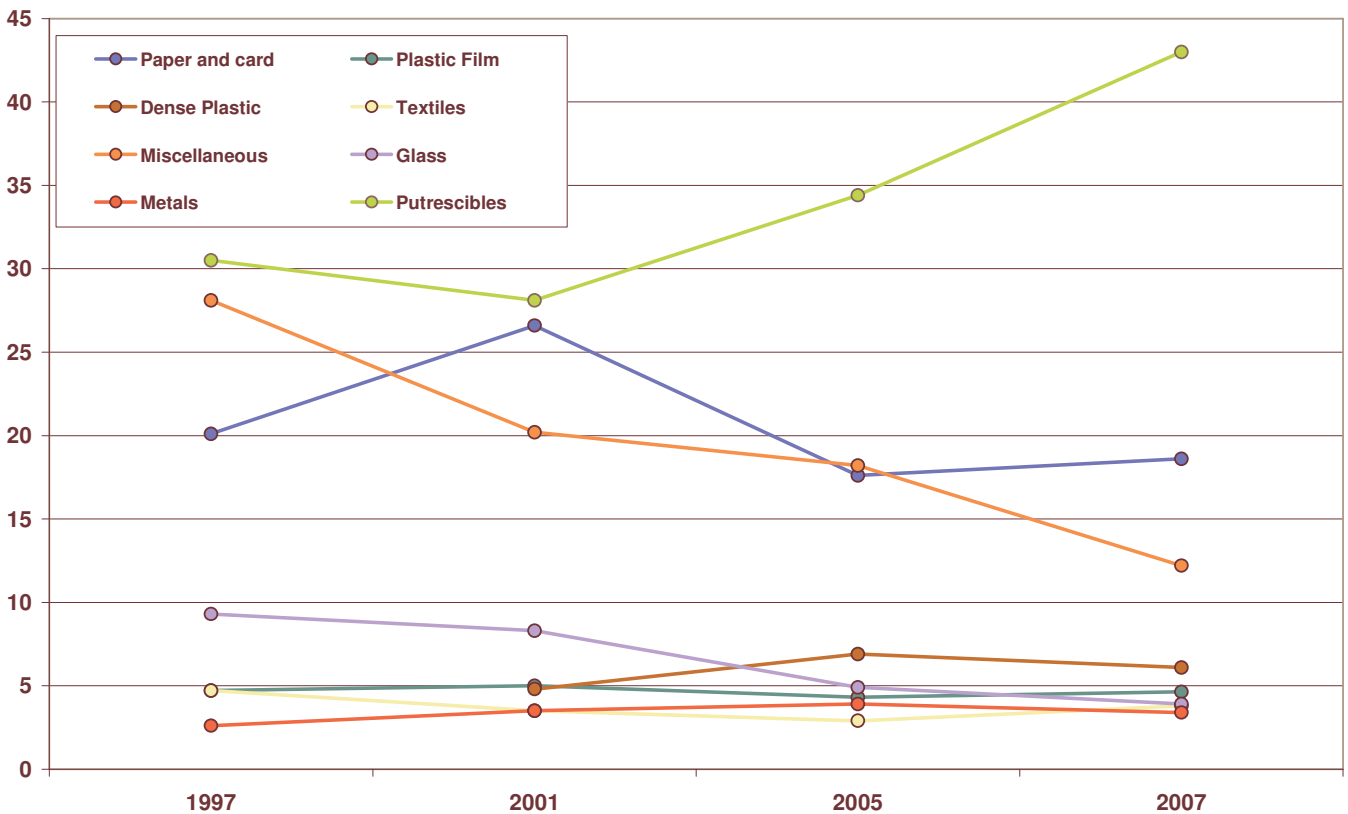


Current Contracts

19. In Tower Hamlets there is currently a 2-contractor collection system. The reason for having two contracts is historical and is no longer practical. The "High rise" contract is held by the Tower Hamlets Recycling Consortium (THCRC) with vehicles organised through the "Low rise" contract.
20. The "Low rise" contract is currently held by Veolia. The "Low rise" contract also includes the emptying of on-street bring-sites and the haulage and delivery of collected recyclables from all domestic collection. The Materials are taken by Veolia to the third contractor, Grosvenor in Crayford, Kent. All three contracts end in March 2008.
21. The current situation has led to Tower hamlets having one of the lowest performing and most expensive recycling services across London.

22. A waste analysis survey was carried out by MEL in February 2007, funded by Defra. The waste analysis sampled seven locations, the same sample as used in 2005 so it was possible to look for trends. In the residual waste stream, after recycling has been taken out by residents, putrescibles (kitchen waste) are the largest concentration followed by paper and cardboard. The paper and cardboard are mostly recyclable. Most glass and metals included are also recyclable. The plastics remaining in the waste stream are currently non-recyclable.
23. The analysis shows that most of the Tower Hamlets waste is biodegradable because of the high levels of putrescibles, paper and card. The analysis has therefore confirmed that there are plenty of recyclables still in the residual waste stream.

Waste analysis of residual waste stream



24. In the recycling sampled, capture rates of recycling were low overall, especially metals. There is a wide variation of capture rates between individual streets and materials. Contamination levels of recyclables vary. Higher contamination rates for specific flat complexes or streets are mainly due to one type of material or unsorted bags of household waste. The presumption is that a minority of households produce the contamination.

The Material Recovery Facility (MRF)

25. When Veolia’s refuse vehicles leave Tower Hamlets they deliver the recycling to Grosvenor Resource Management in Crayford, Kent. Grosvenor specialises in what they describe as resource management rather than waste. Its aim is to divert as much waste as possible away from landfill and into manufacturing. Grosvenor aims to extract high value products from low value input materials, which would otherwise be considered waste.
26. Grosvenor is a raw material supplier into industry and they have designed and built a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) (see below). This plant currently recovers and

ensures the recycling of 150,000 tonnes of dry recyclables, each year from both household and commercial collections.



27. The advantage of the MRF is that it can take almost any mix of recyclables, ranging from mixed cans and plastics, to fully co-mingled materials, including glass. How the material is collected, whether in bins, banks or kerbside collection, is immaterial to the efficiency.
28. Of the 200,000 tonnes of paper processed by Grosvenor, 50% is used in paper mills across Kent. The site also extracts 20,000 tonnes per year of glass bottles and jars from municipal recycling which is sold to a company based within the South East, and the metal, both steel and aluminium, is baled and sold to national clients.
29. There is currently no UK outlet for the plastic that is recycled. Plastic is being shipped to China and the Far East for use in the manufacturing industry. As this practice has a significant environmental impact efforts are being made to source clients within the UK.
30. Items including clothes and food which have been put into the recycling bags have to be sent to landfill, which is a very expensive option for Grosvenor. Quality control is essential throughout the chain if quality and therefore, higher value materials are to be sold to re-processors, guaranteeing the long-term sustainable recycling.
31. The recyclables sent from Tower Hamlets via the pink bags are regularly monitored to check that high levels of the content can be recycled. In a very extreme case the contract between Local Authority and Grosvenor could be terminated if the quality of recycling being delivered constantly has unacceptable levels of contamination. It is therefore key for the Local Authority to educate residents and collectors about effective recycling. This quality control makes it possible for Grosvenor to provide a detailed breakdown of the recycling arriving at the waste management site.

Recommendations

- R1 The review commends the work being undertaken with the private sector to reduce the amount of waste entering the municipal waste stream. Increasing recycling of market waste must be a priority, including food waste.
- R2 The Group welcomes the planned work to increase recycling within hospitals, and other institutions, and suggests that the Tower Hamlets Partnership is a good channel to deliver these changes through. All efforts should be made to ensure that the necessary funding is secured for the expansion of the service to take place. The Group would also suggest that all Council buildings, including the Idea Stores and leisure centres are doing their best to minimise waste.
- R3 Whilst the group understands the importance of recycling plastic in order to achieve targets, there is concern about the pollution of China with these recycled plastics and the wider issue of excessive packaging. The review group would therefore support the Local Government Association's calls for tougher laws and serious fines for excessive packaging. At a local level, the group would like to raise the awareness of this issue locally, including the merits of buying products in alternative containers and recycling their plastic bags. It is suggested that this should be pursued through the Tower Hamlets Partnership.

Provision of recycling facilities

Northumberland Wharf

32. The visit to Northumberland Wharf highlighted the scale of the recycling issue. Whilst 2000 tonnes of residual waste arrived on refuse vehicles every week, the main recycling centre for the borough received 234 tonnes for the month.
33. Northumberland Wharf is currently the only reuse and recycling centre in the borough. The facility recycles; cans, paper, textiles, plastic bottles, cardboard, mixed glass, carry bags, shoes, car batteries, engine oil, scrap metal, garden waste, paint, mobile phones, books, cooking oil, furniture, gas bottles, electricals, household batteries, white goods, fluorescent tubes and wood.
34. The furniture deposited in the furniture store is collected by Quaker Social Action. It is used by them in their Home Store project, a furniture-recycling project that provides quality second hand furniture for those on benefits. The wood skip collects about 5 tonnes a week and the wood waste goes for recycling. The green waste bay is popular, and the contents all go to compost. The shoe and textiles bins are collected by a third party, currently Barnados.
35. Fridges and electrical goods are collected by a local scrap merchant. The paint brought to the centre is for reuse so members of the public are able to choose paint from the paint store. The centre has to conform to changing legislation on recycling, for example they currently collect all electrical goods in one store, but new legislation from the European Union has real implications for this service.
36. The centre has height restrictions at the entrance; this is to stop vans and lorries from entering the site. The site cannot be used for commercial recycling, even if they are Tower Hamlets residents. The facility is open from 8-8 weekdays, which are extensive opening hours' for a recycling centre. The group commended the centre and the range of facilities offered to residents.
37. The reuse and recycle centre is only accessible by car. Members of the public have to bring their recycling to the centre, unless it is picked up by the bulky waste collections. The council offers a free collection service for bulk items. Each household can call on this service twice per year, with up to five items per collection.
38. The Northumberland Wharf Centre is also where all the refuse is delivered to. 2000 tonnes waste a week is collected by the dust carts. 30 crates are loaded onto the awaiting barges and six barges are filled every day. The Council currently disposes of its municipal waste by delivering it by barge to Mucking Landfill Site in Essex. The building and operation of new disposal facilities by Cleanaway at Rainham to handle all municipal waste are in the planning stages. These facilities have not been confirmed yet, but it is planned to use non-incineration technologies to treat waste, extract recyclables and produce a compostable product as well as generating electricity to help power the facilities.
39. Whilst the residual waste is delivered by barge, the recycling is currently delivered by road. In the future it may be preferable to look at sites close to the river although the current issue is that the metal, cardboard and green recycling are all sent to different locations, which are currently not located on the river.

40. The review group enquired as to whether it was possible to remove recyclables from the residual waste when it arrives at the waste transfer station. It was explained that due to the amounts of residual waste the process of transferring the waste from the refuse vehicles to the barges is all conducted by heavy machinery.

Bring Sites

41. The bring sites are an important recycling facility within the borough. There are currently over 50. There are no plans to reduce this service, even with the coverage of door to door recycling increasing. One of the advantages of the bring site is that they are accessible for pedestrians, unlike the recycling centre at Northumberland Wharf. One of the negatives, however, is that there is a huge issue with illegal dumping around these sites – and dumping attracts dumping. The frequency that the bins at the bring sites are emptied depends on the popularity of the site.

Community Composting

42. The Council is currently promoting community composts schemes, with two pilots up and running. The residents own the scheme but the Council promote home and community composting. It is one of the ways in which the Council is developing innovative schemes appropriate to the demographics of Tower Hamlets. The pilots were set up in estates where residents had contacted the department because they were interested in the composting project.
43. The group commended the composting project and supported further roll out of the scheme, and suggested one channel could be through the schools. Whilst this has not been included in the improvement plan it was agreed that it could be a future project. Schools have already signed up to the co-mingled recycling project but could be involved in this as well.
44. More estate schemes need to be set up, with more common ownership of the issue. Swan housing is an example of good practice. The residents use the compost they produce, mainly for communal gardens and window boxes. It is unlikely that that an estate would be able to produce enough compost to be able to sell but will reduce the overall levels of residual waste.

Planning and development

45. The recycling team now try to get involved at the planning stage of new developments, so that any recycling facilities/access to recycling can be included in plans at an early stage.
46. There is planning guidance for recycling/waste. In some cases developers agree to the guidance but in practice this is not adhered to. Within the guidance there is a set amount per head of storage. If the Planning service is made aware of any development in which the recycling facilities have not been adequately provided planning is able to penalise developers via a breach of condition notice.
47. The issue is that not all developments are visited following completion. This is a resource issue, especially with the number of new developments that are taken place within the borough at the current time.

48. There is still hostility towards recycling at the top end of the housing market. This is something that needs to be addressed. The group recognises this is an issue that needs further discussion, but it was agreed that planning and recycling services should work together to ensure that new developments are adhering to the guidelines and that residents are aware of their rights when it comes to making sure managing agents are providing adequate recycling facilities.

Environmental Volunteers experience

49. Environment Champions are volunteers that help the Council create a cleaner safe place to live. They respond to a range of environmental issues and concerns, including monitoring their local neighbourhood for cleanliness and safety. They also demonstrate environmentally friendly behaviour, such as recycling and encourage other residents to do the same.
50. The review group attended a regular meeting of the environmental volunteers to hear their experiences of promoting environmentally friendly behaviour, particularly around recycling. The discussion focused around some of the barriers facing increasing recycling in the borough, as well as a range of suggestions to further increase recycling rates.
51. Suggestions from environmental volunteers on how to improve the organisation of recycling in the borough included more street banks for recycling, particularly on high rise estates. The benefits of this would include allowing residents to move recycling out of their properties quickly and easily. The environmental volunteers did emphasize the importance of making sure these bring sites are well maintained and emptied on a regular enough basis.
52. When discussing the street banks (bring sites) the importance of high visibility was also raised. All sites need good directions and sign posting so that people can easily identify where they are and what they can recycle there. The volunteers asked the Council to consider widening the range of items that could be dropped off at the bring sites. The volunteers also encouraged the introduction of dual street bins, one side which is for waste the other for recyclables.
53. The environmental volunteers supported the introduction of organic household waste collection, similar to the service in Hackney. The Blue Bin Scheme in Hackney allows residents in street-based properties to collect Kitchen scraps for composting. A small caddy is provided to keep in the kitchen and is used to transport the scraps to a larger bin kept outside. The blue bin is then collected weekly at the same time as recycling and the food waste is converted into compost and used in Hackney's parks and green spaces. The volunteers argued that composting is not a solution in an authority like Tower Hamlets due to the lack of gardens in the borough but it could be put to good use in parks, flower beds etc.

Recommendations

- R4 A key concern for the review is the current state of the bring sites. More work needs to be done to make sure that these sites are well managed and are a more attractive part of the local landscape. Improvements would need to include making the sites more attractive, that they are emptied more frequently and that they are in

the best location. Improvements should also be made to the signage of the bring sites.

R5 Whilst the review commends the service offered at Northumberland Wharf reuse and recycle centre, it also notes that it is only accessible by car, which excludes the majority of Tower Hamlets residents. The group would therefore like to see the introduction of smaller collection points across the borough to compliment some of the services offered at Northumberland Wharf.

R6 An area of grave concern for the group is the lack of appropriate recycling facilities and access to facilities in new housing developments. The group understands that planning is able to penalise developers via a breach of condition notice. It therefore recommends that there should be a more joined up approach, between the recycling team and planning to monitor new developments and enforce action. The working group expresses concern that the Council does not have the resources to check new housing developments for breach of contract (including for recycling facilities) and sign them off as compliant, especially within the Development and Renewal Directorate - especially with the large number of developments under construction all the time. Additional resources need to be considered to make sure that enforcement is given greater priority. This is vital in safeguarding the quality of the borough's environment.

Contract proposals

54. All three contracts (low-rise, high-rise and MRF) end in March 2008. This was designed in order for the Council to instruct a more integrated approach to recycling following this date. The current structure, in which the high rise and low rise contract were awarded separately is historical, rather than by choice.
55. The timetable for the new integrated contract is set out below:

Proposed contract re-letting timetables	
Consultation with members and GLA	April/ May/June 2007
Issue OJEU notice	July 2007
PQQ period	July/August 2007
Invitation to tender to be issued	Sept 2007
Evaluation of bids	Nov 2007
Award preferred bidder	Dec 2007
Final contract negotiations	Dec 07/Jan 08
Standstill Period	End Jan 08
Award contract	Feb 08
Integrated Contract to commence	Apr 08

56. The Recycling Service has made an assessment of the key areas that the new contract must address. The first is to achieve the statutory recycling targets. The target for 2007/08 is 22%, the 2006/07 rate being 11.67%. Whilst the new contract must increase performance at the same time it will need to ensure that the service delivers value for money. It is recognised in previous contracts that the contract has not firmly tied the contractor into performance and this will need to be remedied in the proposed contract.
57. Tied into the increasing performance will be the need to restore public confidence in the service, particularly for residents living in high-rise accommodation, who have the issue of storage when it comes to recycling. They will be the people that are likely to be those most affected by the proposed changes in the new contract arrangements.
58. The new contractor will need to be able to provide a service that whilst restoring the public confidence also provides a clear message reducing the overlaps and confusions that are witnessed with the current setup. This will include removing the mixed collection ideology.
59. Finally, the contract will need to be able to cope with the needs of expanding the service to additional institutions, such as hospitals, as well as the increase in the number of homes in the borough over the next 10 years.
60. There are currently issues with the High Rise contract, currently held by the Tower Hamlets Recycling Consortium (THCRC) and this contract will be terminated by mutual consent during the summer. THCRC is a consortium of three local third sector environmental organisations. The THCRC collectors provide a door to door collection service, going inside the blocks of flats to pick up the recycling bags and bring them down to the roadside. Door to door collections in high-rise accommodation has a range of health and safety implications, for example on accommodation without lifts.

61. The associated benefits of a partnership between the Council and the voluntary sector included the provision of local jobs for local people, particularly those from black and minority ethnic communities. The high rise contract run by THCRC have an outreach team who have direct contact with the public, housing managers, and caretakers. If the contactor selected is from the private sector, it will be necessary for the outreach to be conducted by the Council as it is an essential part of the recycling process.
62. There is currently a move towards communal recycling sites within estates. It is becoming evident that some residents would prefer communal recycling facilities rather than the door to door service. The main reason for this is the lack of storage in high-rise accommodation of the full bags. With the communal facilities the need to store the recycle bags within the individual's home is greatly reduced.
63. In some instances managing agents approach the Council to request the communal sites, in others the Council suggests it, for example, where there are high cases of anti-social behaviour involving the recycling or if there are no lifts. In both cases it is the managing agent who makes the decision about installation.
64. Referring to London Boroughs with similar proportions of flatted accommodation, they all use the communal collection for high-rise services. In 2005/06 Camden had a recycling rate of 27.4% of which 16.15% was from the co-mingled collection service. They use a near entry/communal collection for high rise. For the same years Lambeth's recycling rate was 18.96% from co-mingled collections. The majority of flats are communal collections with door to door collections only trialled on two estates, due to high cost. This is significantly higher performance than that of Tower Hamlets.

Proposed Changes to main specification

65. In order to deal with some of the key issues the recycling team have proposed the following changes to the main specification
 - An integrated recycling contract with separate sorting contract
 - Near-entry (communal) bins for flats replacing doorstep collection
 - Contractor tied into delivering the required LBTH performance.
66. The rationale for having the separate sorting facility is that there are plenty of collection contractors in the business so there will be competition for the collection elements. However, competition in the sorting /MRF business is restricted at present, with only two providing a service that can process the mix of paper, card, cans, glass and plastic bottles that the co-mingles collections are made up of.
67. The aim of the new contract is to provide a value for money service achieving high performance against recycling targets. It is envisaged that when the core service is performing effectively there will then be the opportunity to expand into more innovative approaches to encouraging recycling. The review group recommended that as part of the contract proposal service providers were encouraged to use their expertise to design innovative approaches to recycling, particularly around food waste.
68. All high rise developments have a space for communal residual waste. The plan is to convert some of this space into recycling storage, therefore not increasing the space. There may be some circumstances where extra bins are put in if possible. An inventory of estate waste facilities is currently being undertaken across the borough. One of the other options being looked at is transforming one the rubbish chutes into a

recycling chute, in blocks which have this facility. This is currently being piloted in a couple of blocks.

Recommendations

- R7 This review recognises the decision for the new contract to cease door to door collections in high rise accommodation, based on the increased value for money of the near entry approach, and suggests the following provisos:
- a wide range of consultation is undertaken to ensure that the majority of high rise residents are supportive of adopting the near entry approach.
 - If the consultation is positive and the near entry approach is adopted that effective communication is undertaken to explain why it has been introduced and the benefits of the changes
 - That this change must not make it harder for people living in high rise accommodation to recycle, with particular emphasis on how the recycling is moved from the home to the communal facility.
- R8 The review group would expect the new contractor to use the results of recent waste analysis to help develop a service based on the recycling needs particular to Tower Hamlets. The Review would therefore welcome the re-investigation of the option to introduce food waste recycling. Whilst the group is aware that the majority of London Authorities providing this service only do so for street level properties, the review would welcome an innovative approach as to how food waste recycling could be rolled out to all properties.
- R9 The review would encourage the contract proposal to make reference to the recent national policy guidance on recycling and regional London-wide changes that might be introduced. Based on the evidence of this review, the group would welcome any changes that would stream line the approach to recycling and develop a more co-ordinated approach to waste minimisation across the capital, including the proposed London Single Waste Authority.

Promoting and encouraging recycling: engaging residents and businesses

69. One of the key messages that came out of the meeting with the environmental volunteers was the necessity for better promotion and publicity of recycling facilities and the different options available. Volunteers suggested that promotion should be aimed at people who want to recycle, but are not sure how to. This will produce bigger initial gains, it will then be necessary to tackle those who are less likely to recycle.
70. Increased outreach and promotion are a key part of the Councils Recycling Improvement Plan 2007-2008. Firstly a new booklet on waste prevention and recycling in English, Bengali, Somali and Vietnamese has been produced. Whilst the new booklet is commended by the review group it was noted by the environmental volunteers that whilst the address is given for the reuse and recycle centre no map is included.
71. As well as focus groups with residents living in flats on attitudes to recycling, Intensive face to face canvassing has been planned. Canvassing of all low rise properties is planned for May-August 2007, and in high rises which currently have near entry systems by March 2008. The Council will be delivering this project in association with WRAP, through the Behavioural Change Fund.
72. During the tour of recycling facilities the review group visited a bring site. With only one main recycle centre at Northumberland Wharf the bring sites play a key role. However, since September there has been a decrease in the tonnage collected at the bring sites. Whilst during this period there has been a rise in co-mingled rubbish collection, the bring sites could be used to collect recyclable that are not collected through the co-mingled process.
73. The review group felt that the bring sites were very unappealing places to attend, with high levels of fly-posting and vandalism and that the services that were offered at the sites could be increased. An example of best practice can be seen in the London Borough of Lewisham. Piloted originally in New Cross Gate area, recycling bins designed as cows were introduced, including a colourful and attractive back drop. The trial scheme boosted recycling by 61% in three months. Incidents of vandalism and fly-posting were also reduced. Lewisham has expanded the service and Hackney has recently ordered 200 of the cow bins.



74. The bring sites could also be used as a space in which achievements in recycling could be celebrated, with indications of how much had been recycled locally. The environmental volunteers also suggested that it was important to find ways of making recycling with local benefit. One of their suggestions was to plant a tree for every tonne of material collected.
75. Looking at communication, East End Life has become a useful source for promoting recycling services and increases in the recycling figures. The review group discussed the inclusion of a regular section on recycling, specifically focusing on environmental champions and residents who were using the more innovative approaches to recycling, including community composting, wormeries and the real nappy scheme. The environmental volunteers were keen to highlight the importance of using other channels of communication such as radio stations, billboards and podcasts.

Working with businesses

76. Businesses generate a high level of rubbish that can be recycled. Office based businesses and shops can recycle cardboard and paper, while restaurants, cafes and fast food shops can recycle glass and cans. It is beneficial for a company to practice good waste management. Not only does it raise the company's profile - it can also reduce costs. By focusing on thinking of waste as a cost to the company it is hoped that the businesses themselves will go back through their own supply chains in order to minimize the waste.
77. Links have been made with the small business network to provide outreach work and breakfast seminars on the issue of trade waste. Business men and women need the confidence to be able to ask suppliers to change their processes. A Fast Food Litter Strategy has also been launched to reduce the amount of fast food litter on the streets. As well as providing more bins this strategy also focuses on encouraging local businesses to take responsibility. This has been integrated into a broader anti-litter campaign which will tackle litter problems through improved enforcement, awareness raising and education campaigns, and the provision of on street recycling bins.
78. Trade waste does not count towards the recycling target, as the target is only related to household waste, but recycling trade waste will count towards the Landfill reduction target. It was pointed out by the Environmental volunteers that as well as waste left by traders there is also a lot of litter associated with the market. They would therefore suggest an overall strategy for encouraging recycling at markets. The review group enquired about the possibility of recycling organic waste from markets. This is currently not done due to storage and collection of the waste being problematic.
79. One particular sector that could make an impact on recycling within the borough is the letting agencies and estate agents. The huge rented market in Tower Hamlets could be used to the Council's benefit by working with the agencies to make sure that people that are renting accommodation are given all the information about recycling they need. These are often the residents that are missed by conventional means of promotion because they may be more transient than home owners.

- R10 The group would support increasing publicity around recycling, particularly around what happens to the recycling when it is picked up. The group commends the new pamphlet explaining recycling in a range of community languages but would propose that other methods of communication are also utilised using a wide range of media. The Recycling team should have a presence at the boroughs wide range of festivals and community events to provide information and recycling facilities to residents. A regular page or column in East End Life, highlighting some of the more innovative approaches to recycling should also be considered. An estate recycling roadshow may be another option.
- R11 Schemes such as the community composting should be rolled out to all residents living in high rise accommodation, as well as schools. The Council should look at further ways to incentivise residents to recycle.

Conclusion

79. The Working Group welcomes the progress made in improving recycling figures in Tower Hamlets. There are however a number of areas where services could be improved further
80. At a strategic level, the Council's policy needs updating through the completion of the Council's waste management strategy. It is important that this reflects national developments as it provides the framework for all recycling and waste management services in the borough. The integrated recycling contract will need to support this.
81. The recycling service currently offers a wide range of choice for recycling which is to be commended. The downside to this range of choice is that it can lead to overlaps and confusion in the service provided. Every effort must be made to make sure that recycling is as straightforward as possible, and that this is communicated effectively.
82. Whilst the Review Group welcomes the contract focusing in the short to medium term on the co-mingled collection services, consideration must be given to promoting other channels of recycling, especially food waste.
83. Much greater consideration also needs to be given to incentivising recycling and making sure that recycling becomes the norm in all households across the borough.

Scrutiny in Tower Hamlets

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