

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Monday, 8 January 2024 at 6.30 p.m.
Council Chamber - Town Hall, Whitechapel**

Supplemental Agenda

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES (PAGES 3 - 8)

To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 November 2023

7. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG

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LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 19:33 ON MONDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2023

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present in Person:

Councillor Musthak Ahmed	
Councillor Bodrul Choudhury	Scrutiny Lead for Children & Education
Councillor Ahmodur Khan	Scrutiny Lead for Adults and Health Services
Councillor Abdul Malik	Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety
Councillor Marc Francis	
Councillor Asma Islam	
Councillor Shafi Ahmed	
Councillor James Kings	

Members In Attendance Virtually:

Councillor Sabina Khan

Co-optees Present in Person:

Jahid Ahmed
Halima Islam

Officers Present in Person:

Steve Halsey	(Chief Executive)
Robin Beatie	(Director of Strategy, Transformation & Improvement)
Sarah Valleley	(Corporate Research Lead)
Martin Roberts	(Senior Research Officer)
Kelly Duggan	(Head of Youth Justice Service)
Susannah Beasley-Murray	(Director Children's Social Care)
Chris Leslie	(Head of Strategic and Corporate Finance)
Lisa Fraser	(Director of Education)
Afazul Hoque	(Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities)
Craig Mobey	(Strategy and Policy Lead)
Daniel Keer	(Strategy and Policy Lead)
Thomas French	(Democratic Services Officer (Committees))

Officers Present Virtually:

Christopher Boylett (Head of Revenues and Benefits)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Abdul Mannan and Maisha Begum gave apologies. Councillors Shafi Ahmed and James King attended as Substitutes.

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST AND OTHER INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were received at the meeting.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

The Chair **Moved** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 October 2023 and 23 October be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE SPOTLIGHT

STEVE, WITH ROBIN, MARTIN AND OTHER OFFICER

Steve Halsey, Chief Executive gave a presentation on the Annual Residents' Survey, the People First Strategy and the findings of the recent Local Government Association Governance Review, with Robin Beatie, Director of Strategy, Transformation & Improvement, Sarah Vallely, Corporate Research Lead and Martin Roberts, Senior Research Officer.

The committee made the following comments and questions:

- There is a positive perception of Tower Hamlets as a place to live, especially with residents who class themselves as service users.
- Some indicators on resident satisfaction, including "how the council is doing compared to a year ago" are worryingly low, can officers explain? Officers reflected on how residents have engaged with the annual survey, including a trend in residents answering with "don't know". An area that needs improvement is how easy it is to reach the council via phone on a range of services and work will be urgently done to ensure staff are engaging with their softphones more. Furthermore, an annual survey is not enough, and the council will be doing more engagement across the year. Officers will bring back plans for resident engagement to the committee.
- Will bringing the leisure services back in house see an improvement on resident satisfaction on these services? Officers confirmed that the transition team will be looking at the infrastructure of the leisure centres to see what needs improvement, but generally, bringing these services

in house will allow greater council control to respond to resident concerns.

- The LGA report on the recent governance review should come to this committee for member discussion.
- The issue of trust was raised during the LGA governance review, between officers and members, and also, between members. What as officers are your initial thoughts on this? Officers highlighted the initial discussions around how officers can ensure members understand officers are undertaking their duties. And how officers can support members as we are only one year into a new administration. The clear aim is to work towards officers and members working together as one council.
- Coming out the of LGA governance review, concerns were raised about the lack of diversity within the decision-making process. Officers stated that making changes to diversity within the workforce is not a quick change, however, there are around 7 senior positions currently being recruited for, with a view to see the borough represented in these new positions.
- What will the council be doing to build trust back up between residents and the council, as this was an issue in the recent residents' survey. Officers confirmed that trust is an issue, and more work needs to be done to look into this issue, as it does not seem to be an easy fix after the initial look through the results.

RESOLVED

The committee noted the presentation.

5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

5.1 Youth Justice Annual Plan

Kelly Duggan, Head of Youth Justice Service, Susannah Beasley-Murray, Director Children's Social Care and Lisa Fraser, Director of Education, presented the Youth Justice Annual Plan.

The committee made the following comments and questions:

- The chair stated that it is hard to correctly scrutinise this report, as it was published only hours before this committee meeting.
- Will nutritional skills be a part of the health offer? Officers confirmed that this will be a key area of the plan and will help children transition into adulthood with healthy habits.
- With the recent legislation changes to Nitrous oxide, what support will be offered to children and parents within the borough? Officers stated that the council will be working very closely with the police and materials have already been made available in residents hubs, which have proven popular with children.

- What is the parenting support that the council offers to parents in the borough? Officers highlighted the range of classes and 1:1 support that can be offered.

RESOLVED

The committee noted the report.

5.2 Council tax discounts and premiums for empty properties and second homes.

Chris Leslie, Head of Strategic and Christopher Boylett, Corporate Finance, and Head of Revenues and Benefits presented the report on Council tax discounts and premiums for empty properties and second homes.

The committee made the following comments and questions:

- Can officers confirm how this report will affect short term rentals, like Airbnbs? Officers stated that the council is trying to work out this area, but it seems like these will be classed as second homes and will be within scope of the policy.
- How many empty homes do we have in this borough? Officers confirmed around 14,000 homes were viewed to be empty, with around only 800 being empty for a year. There are not many homes in the borough that remain empty, but more can be done to increase the speed of homes being occupied.
- How much income will this generate for the council? Officers reported that it could generate upwards of £600,000 of income, however this will depend on how many properties remain empty.
- Money raised from this policy should be considered for building new homes in the borough.

RESOLVED

The committee noted the report.

6. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

6.1 Community Engagement Strategy

Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities, and Craig Mobey, Strategy and Policy Lead gave a presentation on the Community Engagement Strategy.

The committee made the following comments and questions:

- The joined-up approach detailed in the draft strategy is a good idea to bring together all the work that is happening across the borough.

- The recent engagement events at the town hall, how are officers capturing the feedback and how will the engagement be continued afterwards? Officers stated that there has been good feedback on the recent events, at the town hall and across the community and it is being developed further along with the strategy.
- The strategy needs to find something to replace the “ask the Mayor” feature, as residents still need a way to engage with the Mayor, face to face.

RESOLVED

The committee noted the presentation.

7. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS

The Committee agreed to submit Questions to Cabinet on the following items:

- 6.1 Single Homeless Hostels – Contracts
- 6.2 Tower Hamlets Young People’s Supported Housing Pathway Contract Extensions
- 6.7 Review of the Major Events Policy, Victoria Park

8. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG

Members asked for an update on performance indicators on waste and recycling.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the action log.

9. VERBAL UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY LEADS

RESOLVED:

Members noted the Update

10. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

RESOLVED:

Members noted the forward plan.

11. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

12. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items

13. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

As the agenda circulated had no exempt/confidential reports and there was therefore no requirement to exclude the press and public to allow for its consideration

15. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items.

16. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items.

17. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL) CABINET PAPERS

Nil items.

18. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 20:52

Chair, Councillor Musthak Ahmed
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Reference	Action	Assigned to	Scrutiny Lead	Due Date	Response
19.06.2023	1. OSC requests the service to provide clarity on the £24 million being sent to GLA from the right to buy receipts and provide the committee with the source of this claim.	Karen Swift Rupert Brandon	OSC Chair	24.07.2023	In terms of financials, the council physically returned the below amount to DLUHC (MHCLG at the time): (includes 24 Million plus Interest) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018/19 - £2.2m • 2019/20 - £18.7m • 2020/21 - £5.5m
	2. OSC requests action being taken by LBTH to support businesses and traders in Roman Road Market	Simon Baxter Ellie Kershaw	OSC Chair	24.07.2023	We have a borough-wide training/grants programme, which isn't aimed specifically at Roman Road, but businesses and market traders located there are able to participate. <i>Any business or market trader located in one of our high streets, including Roman Road, can benefit from a support programme aimed at supporting high street businesses and market traders to establish new income streams and improve their performance. The programme is managed by the High Streets Team and involves businesses participating in a tailored training programme, a combination of 1-2-1 bespoke support and online training, followed by an opportunity to apply for a small grant upon completion of the training. The programme is currently in delivery, and to date 22 businesses have participated in the training</i>

					<p><i>programme, of a target of 65. The target number of grants to be distributed is 55.</i></p> <p>In addition, we have a planned weeklong training course for new Market Traders in October. Once the traders are trained and ready to start with will launch a cohort of them at one of our Markets with Roman Road being one of those offered.</p>	
Page 10	24.07.2023	1. OSC requested a note on 25% recycling was stated a previous achievement but 2017 that figure was identified and considered not accurate. OSC recollects that there was 5% drop so wants clarification what went on and what led to this happening.	Simon Baxter Director of Public Realm	OSC Chair	16.08.2023	See appendix 1
		2. OSC requested a note on the details of financial support available for business traders and market traders in roman road and details on uptake	Ellie Kershaw Simon Baxter	OSC Chair	16.08.2023	<p>Of the 22 businesses who have participated in the business training and grant program to date, 6 are located in Roman Road East town centre.</p> <p>In addition, The High Streets Team ran a food hygiene training programme. Since May 2022, 1 business located in Roman Road East town centre has benefitted from the support.</p> <p><u>Eligibility Criteria</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The business must be a registered UK business or sole trader with a high street business with a retail frontage (i.e., not an office-based or online business located within a high streets) within the borough's

					<p>designated high street locations, or a council market trader trading at one of the borough's 10 street markets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The business must have been trading for a minimum of 6 months.• The business must have less than 50 employees.• The business must not exceed Subsidy Control Allowance (formerly State Aid) threshold of £335,000 over 3-years.• The business cannot be in difficulty i.e., in administration, insolvent or subject to striking off notice.• The business cannot use the grant to support existing business as usual activity. E.g., buying stock• The business must commit to completing the tailored business support programme and take part in evaluation of the programme in advance of receiving the grant. <p><u>Award Criteria</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grants will be distributed in line with Mayoral manifesto and strategic plan 2022 – 2026 Priority 4 and it is planned the award criteria and appraisal of businesses addresses the following points (including but not limited to):<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The distribution of grants will take a 'whole borough' approach and reflect the size and makeup of each high street location. The number of grants awarded in each high street location will reflect the total number
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					<p>of retail units, as well as the type of businesses to avoid a concentration of funding for one sector or in one high street.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The grant will enable the business to adapt their business model by developing an existing or establishing a new income stream. Examples of this may include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">● To purchase or upgrade equipment. E.g., purchase a new coffee machine.● To upskill and gain accreditation to authenticate the service offered. E.g., Barista training for staff.● To deliver a new healthy or sustainable product line.● The grant appraisal will account for the impact of Covid-19 on the businesses i.e., previous access to Government or Council support or the sectoral impact on the business.● The grant's impact will be assessed over 6-12 months with a preference for measuring additionality i.e., new jobs created or saved, new healthy products, increase in income, business continuity and confidence.● An EIA will be completed to assess the impact of the grants and ensure the number and type of beneficiaries reflect the borough profile. <p>A marketing campaign will be carried out to ensure there is awareness of the programme and businesses have equal opportunity to</p>
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					participate. The marketing campaign includes proactive recruitment to every business on the 9 key high streets, and all council market traders. The campaign will include a mix of online and in-person communication methods to ensure the beneficiaries are reflective of the borough's high streets and the impact of the funding is maximised. Underrepresented groups in our business community i.e female traders will be specifically targeted. Application will be via a simple online form and support to overcome language and accessibility barriers will be provided by the Council.
18.09.2023 Page 13	1. The committee requested an update on the homelessness services and the 1 or 2 on-going investigations into housing options.	Karen Swift Director of Housing	OSC Chair	17.10.2023	Circulated to Members offline
	Agenda Item 6.1 – Q1 Performance Report 2. There are a number of measures in the Q1 report which do not have performance data. Can you explain why that is and when this will be provided?	Stephen Bramah Head of Corporate Strategy and Improvement	OSC Chair	19.10.2023	See Appendix 2
09.10.2023	Mayor's Community Grants Programme 1. The committee requested information on advice and ask of the Kings Counsel and if the response can be shared with the Committee.	Janet Fasan	OSC chair	19.10.2023	The information requested is subject to legal professional privilege and is therefore considered to be exempt from disclosure at the present time.

	The OSC requests update on NCIL budget monitoring reports	Jennifer Peters	OSC chair		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on the breakdown of grant approvals by NCIL area – Ready by mid-November Report on the allocations made affordable housing and capital projects. Will be made through the next Capital Programme scheduled for Jan/ Feb Cabinet
23.10.2023	<p>Missed Bins</p> <p>1. Why are we changing missed collections metric?</p>	Communities Directorate	OSC chair	23.11.2023	<p><u>Response from Communities Directorate</u></p> <p>The service is still unable to report on the measure and have a provided a briefing note about this. The service will update the lead member about performance directly.</p>
Page 14	2. Assurance there will be data in Q2 (and can the Q1 data be reported at this stage too?)	Communities Directorate	OSC chair	23.11.2023	Not able to report on this measure possibly until the next financial year. We can provide alternative data on performance in the narrative
	3. Can you come back with this information please?	Communities Directorate	OSC chair	23.11.2023	A response will be provided following a meeting with the service this month.
	<p>Recycling</p> <p>1. This was the information provided in the (updated) Q2 reporting, which addresses the issues around recycling</p>	Communities Directorate	OSC chair	23.11.2023	<p><u>What the data shows?</u></p> <p>a. The overall recycling rate as of Quarter 2 2023-24 is 15.64% (provisional). This is a downturn in our rate in Q2 2022-23 (19.0%). The target for 2023-24 is 22%. 22,562 tonnes of household waste was collected, and 3,529.13 of this was recycled, reused, or composted. This shows a 3% decrease in the total household waste collected and a 19.99% decrease in the recycling collected compared to Q2 2022/23.</p>

					<p>BENCHMARKING DATA: This is work in progress to find up to date info.</p> <p><u>Why is this below target?</u></p> <p>b. The main aspects affecting our recycling rate are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Strike action taken by the staff in waste the waste operations team between the 18th and 27th of September 2023. This caused severe delays in the collection of residual waste and a decrease in the collection of dry recycling and organic waste. We are expecting higher tonnages of residual waste in October as part of the catch-up plan after the strike action.2. The overall contamination rate in our dry recycling was 27.27% compared to 22.32% in 2022-23.3. Increase in overall dwellings in the Borough has a direct impact on the amount of household residual waste generated. The total number of dwellings given by WasteDataFlow in 2023-24 is 144,240, whereas, in 2022-23 this number was 140,210. This represents a 2.87% increase from last year.4. Infrastructure for recycling services has not kept pace with the rate of property growth and growth in waste arisings. This affects the amount of recycling
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					<p>collected which has led to some properties being under capacity for recycling.</p> <p>5. Government regulations for the disposal of upholstered seating containing POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants) has established that these items cannot be recycled and must be disposed of by incineration. Estimated loss of 115 tonnes per month diverted from recycling to the residual waste stream.</p> <p>6. Since June 2022, street litter collected from parks has been deemed unsuitable for recycling due to high levels of dog excrement (Estimated 65 tonnes per month diverted from recycling to residual stream).</p> <p><u>Actions taken?</u> The main projects that the service is working on that will help increase the recycling rate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will carry out targeted communication to encourage participation in the kerbside food and garden waste service and encourage kerbside properties (with storage) to order wheeled recycling bins.• Route optimisation for the dry recycling collections: This project aims to create more efficient collection routes that will help crews to improve their performance. This will reduce current contamination problems
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					<p>and is expected to increase the amount of dry recycling collected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flats project: This project aims to improve infrastructure at blocks of flats and on estates (e.g. the number of bins, location of the bins, signage etc) and provide educational information for the residents. Site surveys have been taking place at several blocks, and conversations are in progress with relevant managing agents. New infrastructure is rolling out and will continue to do so over the course of the year. We expect that this will encourage residents to recycle more and reduce contamination.• A new contamination campaign was launched in January 2023. The main purpose is to encourage residents to recycle more and contaminate less. Communication messages from the campaign will continue to be used in 2023/24• We will continue to encourage recycling and waste minimisation through a programme of engagement activities and events throughout the year. <p>The current measures will take some time to effect change and we forecast that the recycling rate will remain low for the rest of 2023/24. However, we anticipate that the actions taken will improve performance and</p>
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					positive results will start to show in 2024/25.'
	Street Cleanliness Measures 2. Why is the street cleanliness measure not reported? I understand this was reported previously	Communities Directorate	OSC Chair	23.11.2023	Response from Communities Directorate This measure was last reported on two years ago. We had a contract with an external provider grading streets as the data source for this measure. We no longer have this contract and street grading is undertaken by the service. This measure is reported in the PR operational performance report. Not sure what we can do about this in Q3. Will pick this up for reporting in the next financial year.
27.11.2023					
11.12.2023	<u>Strategic Performance Delivery Report Q2 2023/24</u> 1. What are the current stats on recycling cross contamination? 2. Has there been any improvements, if not what is the strategy to improve results? 3. What is being done to educate residents on proper disposal of recycling waste?	Simon Baxter			Up to and including October 2023 the average rate of contamination in the dry mixed recycling for the year to date was 28.4%. Assessment of the report for November has yet to be finalised. Since the start of the financial year there has been a small decrease in the contamination rate in the dry mixed recycling as April and May figures were approx. 30%. There are many causes of contamination in the dry mixed recycling, and we are developing and implementing a comprehensive action plan that will target the main causes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with landlords and managing agents to ensure recycling bins are not abused or used for the disposal of non-recyclable waste. Working with managing agents to improve the quality of the recycling facilities at

					<p>blocks of flats so there is enough recycling capacity and good signage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing Caretaker training to ensure Caretakers know what items can and can't be recycled and how to manage the recycling bins better. • Working with community and faith groups to continue to assist residents to understand what items can and can't be recycled. <p>Using social media platforms to push out recycling messages to residents. These social media messages include short clips showing how to recycle correctly.</p>
	<p><u>Strategic Performance Delivery Report Q2 2023/24</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many URS trucks are there and how many are in reserves? 2. What is the contract for URS trucks maintenance? 3. Has there been a new URS truck ordered if not when is it that expected? 4. Where is the route optimisation process at? 5. What are the current strategies to improve recycling? 6. What is the total tonnage of recycling contaminated during the waste strike? 				See Appendix 3 for response
	<p><u>Budget Monitoring Q2 2023-24</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Why did they make the decision of reviewing the attendance threshold and 	Lisa Fraser			For EMA, the attendance threshold reduction option opened a significantly higher number of potential applicants to be awarded the scheme

<p>not explore extending it out to those children who are not eligible because of their household family income and attend school regularly and meet the 95 percent attendance criteria.</p> <p>This way the council can still spend the available funding instead of rewarding those who do not attend regularly.</p> <p>8. Will the council consider reviewing this further and award those children in the above category as there is some remaining funding available?</p>					<p>and was the quickest way to capture more applicants. This grant is to support those applicants from low-income households, hence why the threshold was set at £25k.</p> <p>The revised attendance target was in place for application round 2022/23 which is now closed.</p>
<p><u>Budget Monitoring Q2 2023-24</u></p> <p>9. How much of the £7 million variance could be attributed to the staffing issues there have been in the Housing Options Service over the past few months?</p>					<p>The overspend within the Housing Options service is not related to staffing. The forecast spend on staff is in line with budgets and no over or under spend is being projected. The budget pressure relates to the increase in T.A. numbers, increasing the use of expensive bed and breakfast accommodation and commercial hotels. This results in a large Housing Benefit Subsidy loss.</p>
<p>10. What is the overspend on the Temporary Accommodation, and what proportion of the overspend is due to Temporary Accommodation?</p>					<p>An adverse variance of £2.7m is forecast for Temporary Accommodation after budgeted reserve drawdowns and the use of one-off homelessness prevention top up grant. The overspend relates to increasing numbers in T.A. and the lack of move on options within the Private Rented market. This is resulting in an increased use of bed and breakfast and commercial hotel accommodation at greater</p>

cost. A high-level breakdown of the budget position is shown below.

Subjective Analysis	Variance – Adverse / (Favourable) £m
Staffing Costs	-
Accommodation Costs	4.5
Bad Debt Provision	1.5
HB Income on Placements	(6.6)
Variance from Core Activity	(0.6)
Housing Benefit Subsidy Loss	7.3
Variance before Reserve Drawdowns & Unbudgeted Grant	6.7
Homeless Prevention Top Up Grant	(1.5)
Drawdown from Reserves	(2.5)
Variance after Reserve Drawdowns	2.7

The Council incurs a Housing Benefit Subsidy loss on each placement in T.A. as the rents in Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs are above LHA rates. However, the Council can only claim back Housing Benefit Subsidy levels at 90% January 2011 LHA rates. Therefore the Council is spending more than it receives back from the Government on each placement. This is resulting in a pressure of £7.3m, which the service are partially mitigating within their core

					<p>activities and also using additional grant and reserves.</p> <p>The more people in TA the higher the subsidy loss will be. Staff in the service work incredibly hard to prevent homelessness and avoid residents having to stay in T.A. This work has become harder to achieve due to landlords wanting properties back and terminating tenancies and shortage in the supply of move on accommodation from T.A.</p> <p>A future review of business processes and staffing structures will assist in making sure that our working methods and practices are maximising opportunities to prevent homelessness and avoid costly temporary accommodation.</p>
	11. What % of our income comes from CT and from the 70% of the Business rate collection. Has the Business rate income gone down from last years?				See attached funding summary
08.01.2024					
10.01.2024					

Appendix 1

Background

This briefing provides an explanation of the drop (approx. 4%) in household recycling performance between 2016/17 (27.6%) and 2018/19 (23.2%).

Up until the end of September 2017 the council's waste disposal services were provided by Veolia. As part of the contract arrangement, some residual waste streams were delivered to a "dirty MRF" in Barking (run by McGraths) in order that recyclable material could be extracted and contribute to the overall recycling performance. Under the Veolia contract, the Council was provided with monthly reports that provided all of the relevant tonnage, compositional, recycling and energy recovery and end destination information in order that the WasteDataFlow reporting could be undertaken, and the Council's recycling performance calculated.

On 1st October 2017 a new waste disposal contract commenced with Cory Environmental, through which the same residual waste streams were delivered to the dirt MRF in Barking in order to continue recovering recyclable materials from the same residual waste streams as had been the case under the Veolia contract.

At the beginning of November 2017 Cory flagged up an issue in relation to the first monthly report that they were obliged to provide. Cory's report for the first month of the contract, October 2017, indicated that the amount of waste calculated as recovered for recycling from the residual waste streams amounted to approx. 10.3% (against the baseline figure of 16.2% at the end of the Veolia contract).

Information

As a result of this issue being flagged, a detailed analysis undertaken by Officers highlighted the causes for this drop were linked to changes in reported composition and tonnage of waste handled as part of the Waste Disposal Contract with Cory.

When combined with other issues experienced at that time, including poor recycling service delivery, lack of easy access to recycling facilities, increased property growth, increased waste growth and reduced levels of recycling participation there was a significant impact on recycling performance in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The key reasons for the change in recycling performance are set out below.

 Key reasons for change

Impact of new waste disposal contract	The Cory waste treatment and disposal contract deals with residual waste and operation of Yabsley Street Re-Use and Recycling Centre (RRC). The majority of residual waste is transferred via river to the Belvedere Energy from Waste (Efw) plant in Bexley. However waste from street cleansing, fly tipping, bulky waste, market waste and contaminated recycling is taken to the McGraths “dirty” Material Recycling Facility (MRF) in Barking.
Changes at the “Dirty” MRF	The McGraths “dirty” MRF recovers recycling from residual waste and whilst total residual waste inputs have remained constant, the level of reported recycling capture has reduced compared to when Veolia were using this facility.
Changes in Waste Composition	Detailed analysis and evaluation highlighted changes in the composition and reporting of recycling captured by the McGrath MRF. These changes, which had not previously been expected, have a significant impact on our reported performance.
More properties & waste but less recycling	The impact of increased housing growth, increased waste growth, limitations on current Veolia recycling contract performance, limitation to our recycling service offer and reduced levels of actual resident participation at the time all contributed to this drop in performance.
Change at Yabsley Street RRC	Tighter site controls introduced by Cory reduced the tonnage of non-household waste being accepted at this site from businesses. This led to a reduction in overall residual waste and recycling tonnage compared to when Veolia operated the site.

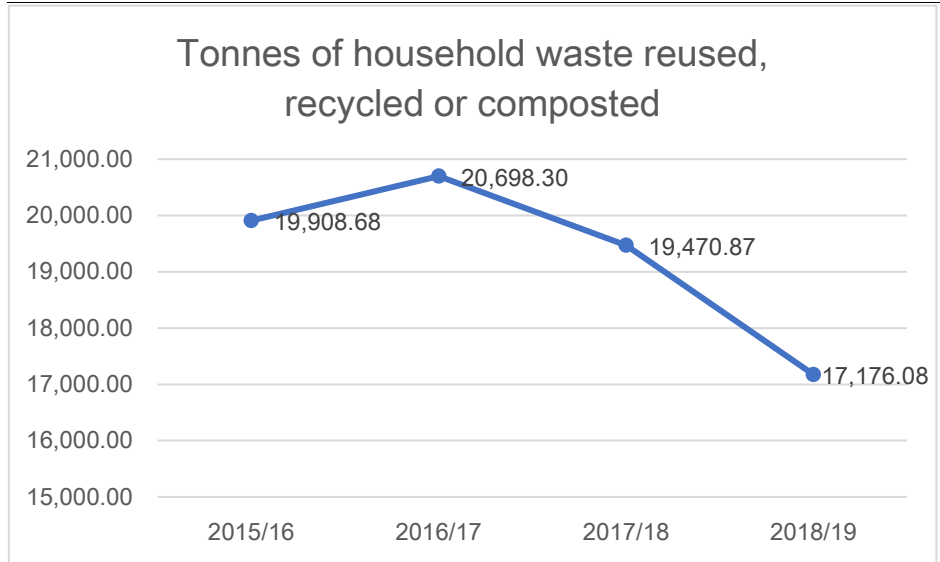
 Impact on recycling performance

23% household recycling rate in 2018/19	The recycling rate of approx. 23% in 2018/19 reflected the full year impact of the changes, including the previously unexpected impacts of changes to tonnage and composition of waste collected, processed and recycled as part of our new waste disposal contract. It set a revised baseline linked to delivery of service improvement and behaviour change initiatives starting in 2018/19
Less recovered via McGraths MRF	Whilst the overall tonnage of waste processed via the MRF has increased the tonnage of recycling recovered from street cleansing, fly tipping, market waste, bulky waste and contaminated recycling reduced from second half of 2017/18.
Change in waste composition to “Dirty” MRF inputs	Cory identified this change in early 2018, highlighting differences in composition of waste compared to previously reported data from Veolia. Following investigation and review action was taken to engage independent waste consultants to carry out composition analysis of inputs.
Results of composition analysis	Analysis of MRF inputs by Resource Futures highlighted reductions in the amount of recyclable content across all residual waste inputs from cleansing, fly tipping, market waste and contaminated recycling. This included significant reduction in the level of paper, card and cardboard in addition to an increase in food waste and non-recyclable waste.
Auditing and verification of results	Detailed analysis and auditing of waste data flow inputs was carried out to validate the changes in our 2017/18 performance. This led to a re-evaluation of expected performance in 2018/19 against the original forecast.
Revised recycling rate reflects reality	Our revised recycling rate of approx. 23% household recycling in 2018/19 reflected the reality of the position at that time. With increasing housing growth, increased waste growth, limitations on current Veolia recycling contract performance, limitation to our potential recycling service offer,

reduced levels of resident participation and increasing levels of contamination.

Recycling tonnage data

Total household recycling tonnage data from 2015/16 to 2018/19 shows impact on recycling performance



The table above shows the effect of the impacts described above on the annual tonnage figures of waste that was sent for reuse, recycling and composting.

Officers provided the Cabinet Member at the time with a Briefing Paper which set out the commentary given above.

Appendix 2

These are the 7 measures with missing data in the Q1 performance report along with comments from services as to the reason why and when the data is likely to be available.

Reference	Measure	Directorate	Q1 Outturn	Q1 Performance Commentary
KPI 003	Percentage of homelessness cases prevented or relieved	Housing & Regeneration	No data currently	This figure is reported in arrears as validated data for Q1 is set to be published by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in Q3.

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KPI 012	Number of primary school pupils in KS2 receiving council-funded FSM	Children's Services	No data currently	This figure is delayed for reasons that include staff absence (illness and training). It is anticipated that the data will be available by the end of September (29/09) at the latest.
KPI 013	% of primary school pupils in KS2 receiving council-funded FSM	Children's Services	No data currently	This figure is delayed for reasons that include staff absence (illness and training). It is anticipated that the data will be available by the end of September (29/09) at the latest.
KPI 025	Rate of first-time entrants to the Youth Justice system	Children's Services	No data currently	This data is published nationally by the Youth Justice Board and will not be available until end September 2023.
KPI 026	% of young people that re-offend	Children's Services	No data currently	This data is published nationally by the Youth Justice Board and will not be available until end September 2023.
KPI 044	Adults with substance misuse treatment need who successfully engage in community-based structured treatment following release from prison	Health and Social Care	No data currently	Not yet published by National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS) yet for Q1 2023-24. The reports are due to be published on the 28th of September 2023.
KPI 034	Number of missed collections per 100,000 households	Communities	No data currently	The waste service are not able to report on the missed collections per 1000,00 measure due to issues with Whitespace. Whilst our advice is that we revert back to the number of missed collections measure used in 2022/23 as it was previously approved by Cabinet, the service are of the view that this does not give an accurate reflection of performance.

Appendix 3

1. How many URS trucks are there and how many are in reserves?

We have a total of four URS vehicles. We operate two rounds from Monday to Friday, using two vehicles, while keeping the other two as reserves. It should be noted that the newest of these vehicles is 3 years old, two are 6 years old and the fourth is 12 years old. We expect to start procurement for 4 new vehicles in Jan 2024, with expected delivery by April 2025.

2. What is the contract for URS trucks maintenance?

We have a contract with Dennis Eagle who are a specialised waste vehicle manufacturer and maintenance provider. We conduct daily monitoring to ensure that waste operations have two vehicles available every day. In recent months, this has been successfully achieved.

Dennis Eagle also employs specialised crane contractors, who inspect the cranes more frequently than usual. This proactive approach helps us to promptly address any defects or damages.

3. Has there been a new URS truck ordered if not when is it that expected?

We are in the process of securing funding for four new URS vehicles. If successful, we can commence procurement in January 2024. We expect the new vehicles to arrive by the start of the 2025/26 financial year.

4. **Where is the route optimisation process at?**

All routes have been checked and reviewed by the service and sent to an external partner to make the changes to frequencies, provide draft outputs for the new routes (maps) and edit this data in a format which can be uploaded onto Whitespace. The final draft of the route optimisation plan is being drafted for early January with a phased rollout of new routes; completion is expected at the end of this financial year.

5. **What are the current strategies to improve recycling?**

At the Cabinet meeting in September 2023 the council's latest Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) was approved for the period 2023 to 2025. This document sets out the first phase of ambitious plans to deliver a clean and green future for Tower Hamlets. We are committed to delivering improvements over the next 5 years, with initial investment in service re-design, service delivery and community engagement.

Key elements focused on improving recycling from the RRP are listed below:

- We are investing £2.1M CIL to implement the flats recycling package of measures at blocks of flats and estates using best practise recommendations from ReLondon studies to improve infrastructure and communication across the borough.

The project will improve recycling bin provision at properties with shared recycling bins; and improve residents access to recycling facilities. It will also reduce contamination, by upgrading existing recycling bins to ones with lockable reverse aperture lids. Communications will be improved, with instructional signage going up around recycling and refuse bins, improved bin stickers, leaflets going out to residents, reusable recycling bags being made available and engagement with TRAs, crew, caretaking staff and managing agents.

- We are making other improvements to services including delivering recycling sacks to flats above shops and low-rise properties, and we have recently partnered with the charity TRAIID to offer on-request collection of textiles direct from residents' homes.

- Communication about recycling and waste reduction is continuous and content is regularly reviewed and refreshed. The “Let’s rethink it!” recycling campaign has been running during 2023, focussing on behaviour change to increase recycling and reduce contamination.

Tower Hamlets has also been taking part in the pan-London sustainable food campaign, which has a focus on minimising food waste and food waste recycling. We are also preparing to re-promote the kerbside food waste collection service in 2024, to drive up participation rates.

- We are delivering a programme of recycling and waste reduction engagement work which includes education sessions, community stalls, workshops and events. We are working with ReLondon to organise a managing agent (MA) engagement event in Quarter 4, with the aim of encouraging MAs to take more responsibility for improving recycling performance at the properties they manage.

We are working closely with schools in Tower Hamlets to ensure they have sufficient recycling bins to recycle as much as possible. In addition to providing a comprehensive package of education sessions to engage with pupils to educate them on the importance of reducing waste and recycling.

We are committed to working with community groups to further develop our recycling offer and waste minimisation offer. This includes working with a community group to deliver a community composting pilot.

Our Recycling Champions scheme has been running for two years and is a steadily growing a network of residents who help support objectives and bring an authentic community voice to recycling messages.

6. What is the total tonnage of recycling contaminated during the waste strike?

The waste services strike commenced on Monday 18th September and lasted through until 26th September inclusive.

Up to the point at which the strike commenced, the average tonnage of dry mixed recycling collected was approximately 270 tonnes per week.

During the strike only 5.42 tonnes of dry mixed recycling waste delivered to the Materials Recovery Facility.

The average monthly dry mixed recycling tonnage for the months April to August 2023 was 1158.25 tonnes. The following table sets out the total dry mixed recycling tonnage for September and October 2023.

Dry mixed recycling tonnage September	885.56 tonnes
Dry mixed recycling tonnage October	1296.42 tonnes

- September tonnage was short of the monthly average by 272.69 tonnes whereas,
- October tonnage was 138.17 tonnes above the monthly average.

As such, there appears to have been a net loss of 134.52 tonnes of dry mixed recycling across the two-month period.

The proportion of tonnage of dry mixed recycling across the 5 MRF gate fee bands for the months of September and October (shown as a percentage):

Month	Sep 2023	Oct 2023
Level 1: 0% to 5%	1.7%	0.5%
Level 2: 6% to 15%	24.5%	23.5%
Level 3: 16% to 25%	65.7%	65.2%
Level 4: 26% to 50%	5.6%	9.0%
Level 5: over 50%, rejected loads	2.5%	1.7%

Total	100%	100%
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The profiles for the two months are similar but higher proportion in level 4 in October than in September.

The average monthly contamination rates for September and October are as follows:

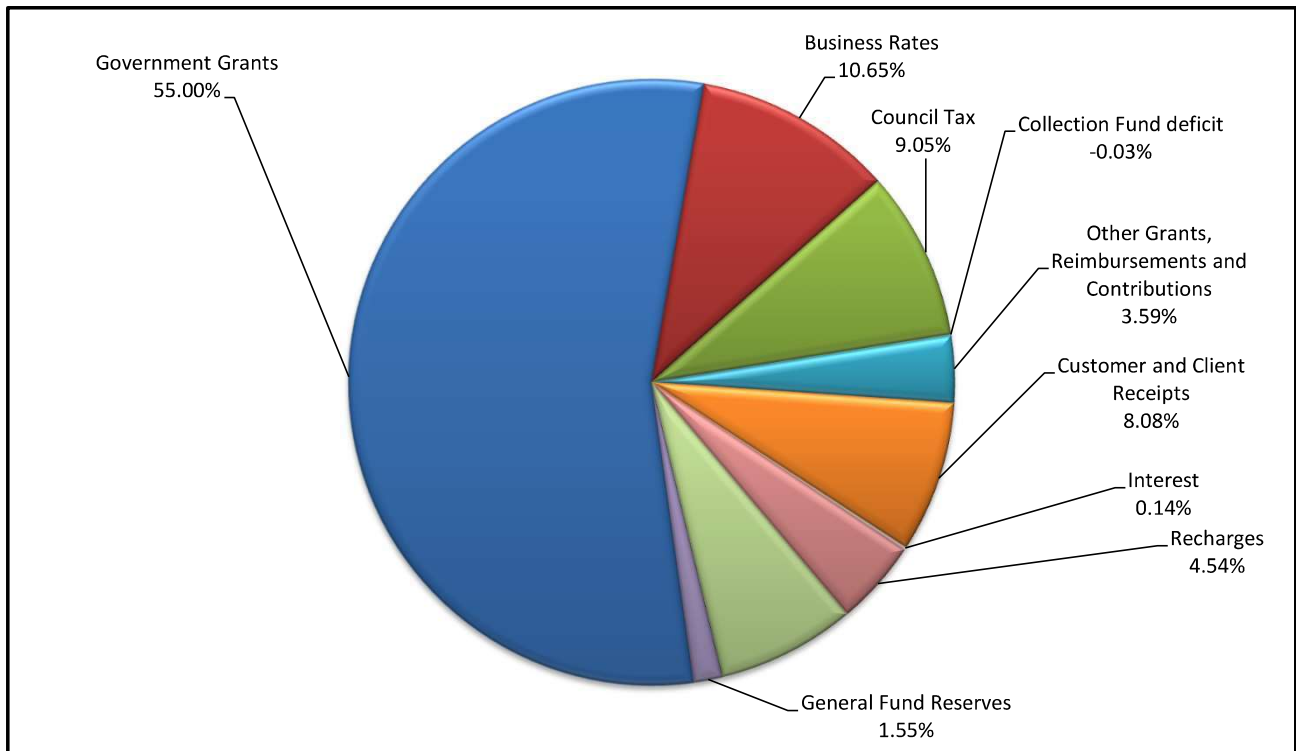
September 2023	26.53%
October 2023	29.52%

It is difficult to attribute a particular increase in the rate of contamination to the strike action, but it can be seen that October average contamination level is three percentage points higher than the level for September. The net loss of tonnage suggests that a quantity of recycling may have been too contaminated to be delivered to the MRF and was disposed of as residual waste or may have been placed in residual waste bins (by caretakers/residents) and therefore lost into the residual waste stream.

Sources of Funding Summary

FUNDING RESOURCES	Budget 2022-23	Budget 2023-24
	£000	£000
Income		
Government Grants	(772,287)	(787,822)
Locally Raised Income:		
- Business Rates	(129,286)	(152,596)
- Council Tax	(121,674)	(129,540)
- Collection Fund deficit	364	364
Other Grants, Reimbursements and Contributions	(43,392)	(51,403)
Customer and Client Receipts	(117,923)	(115,692)
Interest	(2,270)	(2,000)
Recharges	(59,921)	(65,069)
Housing Revenue Account	(90,356)	(105,721)
General Fund Reserves	-	(22,148)
GROSS INCOME*	(1,336,744)	(1,431,626)

*Restated Gross Income



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