

<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p><b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b></p> <p>1 March 2021</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> Sharon Godman Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Scrutiny Challenge Session Report:</b> How does the Council apply evidence-based and best practice to influence resident behaviour change to boost recycling rates?</p>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Filuck Miah Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate
<b>Wards affected</b>	All (All Wards);

### Executive Summary

This report submits the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's (OSC) Challenge Session examining how the council applies evidence-based and best practice to influence resident behaviour change to boost recycling. It makes a number of recommendations for consideration.

### Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the attached Environment Scrutiny Challenge Session Report and agree the recommendations; and
2. Agree to submit the attached report to the Mayor and Cabinet for executive response.

### 1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 This paper submits the report and recommendations of the former Scrutiny Lead for Community Safety and Environment for consideration by OSC List the reasons for the decision

### 2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the scrutiny challenge session provides a number of recommendations on behaviour change to boost council recycling rates for the council to consider and take forward.

### 3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 Tower Hamlets performs poorly in terms of recycling waste (23.2% of total waste is recycled) compared to other boroughs (Bexley 54.1%, Waltham

Forest 31.6%, Greenwich 33.4%, Hackney 27.9%, City of London 29.9%) with only Newham lower at 16.9%.

- 3.2 The Mayor set an ambitious target of 35% recycling by 2022.
- 3.3 OSC wanted to understand how the council has responded to the flagging recycling rates in the borough, with a particular focus on influencing resident behaviour.
- 3.4 The former Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety, Cllr Bex White decided to hold an Environment Scrutiny Challenge Session with the focus: How does the council apply evidence-based and best practice to influence resident behaviour change to boost recycling rates?
- 3.5 The Challenge Session was underpinned by the further core questions:
  - To what extent is evidence based and external research applied in how the council uses its resources to achieve behaviour change on recycling?
  - How is the council using outcomes of pilot projects to improve mainstream delivery?
  - How is the council maximising the influence/ residents including schools who are very committed to increasing recycling?
  - Can the council highlight any insights (behavioural change) on campaigns for resident engagement on recycling and the impact?
- 3.6 The Challenge Session was held virtually on 23 September 2020 - chaired by Councillor Bex White (former Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety) - commencing with a chair's overview, followed by a joint presentation from the former Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm, Cllr Asma Islam, supported by council officers. Resource London were also invited to the session - they are a London-wide partnership programme and the government efficiency resource body. Resource London works closely with Tower Hamlets Waste and Recycling Service and they have provided an external perspective on insights from research such as factors influencing recycling behaviour change.
- 3.7 The Challenge Session resulted in the development of a number of recommendations:

#### **Using Evidence and Research to Deliver Behaviour Change**

1. Take forward the case study brought by Committee Member of a development in their ward to see how the planning process has been working historically
2. Review the location of estate bins to minimise contamination by passers-by
3. Making changes to physical barriers to help influence positive behaviour change
4. Reconsider clear bag provision for flats as an intervention to aid behaviour change on recycling

### **Improving Mainstream Delivery through Pilot Project**

5. Investigate and application small grants programme for small private developments along the lines of the SME energy efficiency programme
6. Ensure the council's Waste and Recycling Service factors in the cost element for the Flats Recycling Package and demonstrate the value of the council's existing initiatives such as mixed-recycling-collection when undertaking cost-benefit analysis
7. Review the pilot of the food waste to flats scheme and the target audience. Develop plans so that council's Waste and Recycling Service is ready to go when this statutory duty comes in

### **Influencing Residents Behaviour Change to Increase Recycling**

8. Schools programme, working closely with the young mayor to improve engagement with young people and support behaviour change on recycling
9. Using Influencers of particular age groups (18-34) to engage, motivate and channel key messages to improve behaviour change on recycling

### **Media Campaigns to Support Resident Engagement with Recycling**

10. Improving recycling education messaging so there is a common framework of understanding from residents
11. Recycling performance targets to be more ambitious (stretched) not just realistic and resident contribution to be framed in how progress is being made a local level

## **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The challenge session considers equality and diversity issues specific to the demographics of Tower Hamlets and ensures that the applicability of evidence provided at the session has equalities in mind. It also gives consideration as to how language impacts people with council campaigns and how engagement might work with a second language.

## **5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
  - Best Value Implications,
  - Consultations,
  - Environmental (including air quality),
  - Risk Management,
  - Crime Reduction,
  - Safeguarding.
  - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

- 5.2 Recycling is a key part of the circular economy for reuse, reduce and recycle and bring about the following benefits including; conserving natural resources, protects the ecosystems and wildlife, reduces demand for raw materials, saves energy, cuts climate change carbon emissions, creates jobs (green economy) and is cheaper than waste collection and disposal. It also helps the local authority to reduce its landfill costs and improve its contamination rates.

## **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.
- 6.2 Any costs arising from the implementation of the recommendations from the Environment Scrutiny Challenge Session Report will need to be contained within the existing service budget or considered as part of the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 The Council has the legal function of both a waste collection and waste disposal authority. It is responsible for making appropriate arrangements for the collection and disposal of waste.
- 7.2 This report recommends various actions are undertaken to improve the uptake of recycling by residents within the borough. The Council has the legal power to undertake these activities if it so wishes.
- 7.3 Should the Council elect to undertake a small grants programme approval for the programme and associated applications will need to be granted by the Grants Determination subcommittee of Cabinet in accordance with the Council's constitution.

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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- List any linked reports
- NONE

### **Appendices**

- Scrutiny Challenge Session Report: How does the council apply evidence-based and best practice to influence resident behaviour change to boost recycling rates?

### **Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)**

#### **List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report**

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- NONE.

**Officer contact details for documents:**  
Filuck Miah - Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate