

<b>Cabinet</b>  28 July 2021	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director, Place	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>Service Action Plan – Environment Scrutiny Challenge Session, Recycling Behaviour Change</b>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Realm (Job Share)</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Richard Williams, Business Manager Operational Services Fiona Heyland, Environmental Services Improvement Team Manager
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	Impact on wards
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	1 June 2021
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	<b>Priority 2 – A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in</b>

### **Executive Summary**

This report submits the report and recommendations of the Environment scrutiny challenge session on how the council applies evidence and best practice to influence resident behaviour change to boost recycling and provides a service action plan for implementation.

### **Recommendations:**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Consider the report of the Environment scrutiny challenge on resident behaviour change to boost recycling; and
2. agree the service action plan in response to the report recommendations.

## **1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA) the council has a statutory duty to collect household recyclable waste.
- 1.2 The UK was required to meet an existing EU target of recycling a minimum of 50% (by weight) of its household waste by 2020. Additionally, the Mayor of London has set a target of 65% of London's municipal waste to be recycled by 2030.
- 1.3 Overview and Scrutiny held a Scrutiny challenge session to understand how the council has responded to low recycling rates in the borough, with a particular focus on influencing resident behaviour.
- 1.4 The challenge session noted that in 2018/19 the council's overall recycling rate was 23.3% compared with the highest performing boroughs Bexley 54.1%, Ealing 52.6% and Bromley 50.1%. With neighbouring boroughs performing at: Waltham Forest 31.6%, Greenwich 33.4%, Hackney 27.9%, City of London 29.9%, with Newham positioned as the worst performing London borough at 16.9%.
- 1.5 This report seeks the endorsement of the Mayor in Cabinet for the Environment scrutiny challenge session recommendations and the service action plan. Through the implementation of the action plan many of the issues identified in the challenge session will be targeted and improved.

## **2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the Environment scrutiny challenge session provides an evidence base to demonstrate that the council has drawn on and has applied best practice to the activities that have been undertaken to promote and influence positive recycling behaviours.

## **3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 The percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting remains a key strategic priority for the council.
- 3.2 The global picture shows waste volumes increasing rapidly - the World Bank estimates a 70% global increase in municipal solid waste up to 2025. Recycling is considered as an essential part in reducing the environmental impact of waste.
- 3.3 As part of the 2020/21 work programme of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) it was 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?

- 3.4 The challenge session was underpinned by 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/impact of 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?
- 3.5 The desired outcome of the session was to establish the extent to which the council is applying best practice and evidence-based approach with tackling its recycling rates and to map out the internal structures which guides our behaviour change work.
- 3.6 The challenge session took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 and was chaired by Councillor Bex White.
- 3.7 The session heard evidence from external experts and officers from within Public Realm, Corporate Communications and Strategy and the Performance Team.
- 3.8 The outcome report provides background and context to the challenge session and sets out the methodology and approach taken for the challenge session. The report also sets out the key findings from the evidence presented at the challenge session.
- 3.9 The report acknowledges that whilst there has been successful behavioural change for kerbside properties on recycling i.e. housing; a large proportion of the borough's flatted properties remains a key strategic challenge. This issue is further compounded by the fact that flatted properties only yield 50% recycling that the average kerbside. Given the physical size of the borough, future growth of the borough's housing development will largely consist of flatted type of properties. Currently, over 80% of the borough's population are living in flats and this is unlikely to change.
- 3.10 The report makes a number of recommendations for the council and its partners to consider and put into action to improve recycling rates. The report states the recommendations are also intended to support the council's focus on making the most of efficient use of resources, moving towards early intervention and prevention. The recommendations are grouped under four key themes, set out below. The full challenge session report is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.11 **Using evidence and research to deliver behaviour change:**

**Recommendation 1:** Take forward the case study brought by Committee Members of a development in their ward to see how the planning process has been working historically.

**Recommendation 2:** Review the location of estate bins to minimise contamination by passers-by.

**Recommendation 3:** Making changes to physical barriers to help influence positive behaviour change.

**Recommendation 4:** Reconsider clear bag provision for flats as an intervention to aid behaviour change on recycling.

**3.12 Improving mainstream delivery through pilot project:**

**Recommendation 5:** Investigate and application small grants programme for small private developments along the lines of the SME energy efficiency programme.

**Recommendation 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 for example mixed-recycling-collection when undertaking cost-benefit analysis.

**Recommendation 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 delivering food waste services becomes a mandatory requirement.

**3.13 Influencing residents' behaviour change to increase recycling:**

**Recommendation 8:** Schools programme, working closely with the young mayor to improve engagement with young people and support behaviour change on recycling.

**Recommendation 9:** Using Influencers of particular age groups (18-34) to engage, motivate and channel key messages to improve behaviour change on recycling.

**3.14 Media campaigns to support resident engagement with recycling:**

**Recommendation 10:** Improving recycling education messaging so there is a common framework of understand from residents.

**Recommendation 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.

**3.15** The service is required to develop a Service Action Plan as a result of the challenge session and more specifically in relation to the recommendations made in the report. The Service Action Plan is attached at Appendix 2.

**3.16** O&S Committee will be tracking the progress of this service action plan and the O&S Committee expects it to be brought back to be reviewed in 1 years' time.

## **4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The recommendations within the report and proposals in the service action plan will make positive impact on the environment of the Borough, which will be beneficial for all regardless of their background.

## **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 The recommendations and service action plans are made as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role in helping to secure continuous improvement for the Council as part of the best value implications.
- 5.3 Aligned to Recommendation 1 in the outcome report, the service has been developing a new Reuse, Recycling and Waste Supplementary Planning Document to assist architects and developers to implement the requirements of policy DMW3 in the Local Plan and to deliver an improved legacy from new developments in the borough. This SPD has undergone public consultation and is being presented to Cabinet under a separate report.
- 5.4 The council's waste management services contribute to the protection of the environment and protecting human health through the effective management of waste arising in the borough.
- 5.5 The recommendations and proposals in the Service Action Plan focus on moving waste up the waste hierarchy i.e. by ensuring a greater quantity of waste is re-used or recycled as opposed to being disposed of as residual waste, contributes to the council's efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change by reducing the carbon footprint of the council's waste management services.
- 5.6 The recommendations and proposals in the Service Action Plan are focused on improving access to recycling services and supporting residents to reuse and recycle more of their waste through targeting better communication and engagement activities. There are no specific risk implications arising from the proposals

- 5.7 Although effective waste management and recycling service can contribute to maintaining a clean and safe environment there are no specific crime reduction implications.
- 5.8 Whilst a number of the recommendations in the report and proposals in the Service Action Plan focus on engagement with residents and communities in the borough there are no specific safeguarding implications.
- 5.9 There are no data protection implications.

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

- 6.1 This report makes a number of recommendations following the Environment Scrutiny challenge session on how the Council applies evidence and best practice to influence resident behaviour change to boost recycling.
- 6.2 The cost of implementing the majority of the recommendations can be met from existing budget provision within the waste minimisation budgets. This includes costs associated with site visits, recruitment to a Technical Officer Development Control post and all costs of communications and engagement with residents.
- 6.3 However, there are two recommendations, which if implemented will result in additional cost above that of existing budget provision. These are detailed below.
- 6.4 Recommendation 2 - Review the location of estate bins to minimise contamination by passers-by. It has been estimated that the cost of rolling out the flats recycling package to all remaining blocks in the borough will cost £1.8m and take four years to complete. Funding options for this work are currently being considered, with CIL, LIF and capital funding being explored. The programme should not be rolled out until suitable funding has been identified and approved
- 6.5 Recommendation 4 - Reconsider clear bag provision for flats as an intervention to aid behaviour change on recycling. The provision of recycling sacks is a revenue cost within the waste operations team budgets. The preferred option is to continue with twice yearly distribution of single use sacks to low rose properties, to increase sack numbers available via distribution points to meet demand and increase distribution of re-useable sacks as part of encouraging a switch from single use sacks. It is projected that this option will increase costs by £216k for which there is no revenue budget provision. If this option is implemented the waste service will need to find compensatory savings elsewhere within its budgets to fund this additional cost.
- 6.6 The cost of all other recommendations will be met from within the existing waste minimisation budgets.

## **7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 This report is recommending that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider the scrutiny challenge on resident behaviour change and to agree the service action plan recommendations.
- 7.2 The Council's duty as a Waste Collection Authority in relation to the collection and disposal of household waste is set out in Section 45A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 ("the Act" EPA). The Waste Collection Authority has a duty to arrange for the collection of household waste from any premises. Any arrangements made, must include arrangements for at least two types of recyclable waste together or individually separated from the rest of the household waste, unless it is satisfied that–
- (a) the cost of doing so would be unreasonably high; or
  - (b) comparable alternative arrangements are available.
- 7.3 Paragraph 1.2. of the report states the recycling targets set by the Mayor of London. The strategy was published in May 2018 and includes waste collected from households as well as some business waste. Following the Action Plan recommendations should assist in achieving these targets and improving recycling rates.
- 7.4 The Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the public sector equality duty).
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### **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

#### **Linked Report**

- None.

#### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Environment Scrutiny Challenge Session Report: How does the council apply evidence and best practice to influence resident behaviour change to boost recycling rates?
- Appendix 2: Service Action Plan.

#### **Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012**

- None

#### **Officer contact details for documents:**

N/A