


Non-Executive Report of the: Overview and Scrutiny Committee 4 th April 2016	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Melanie Clay, Director of Law, Probity and Governance	Classification: Unrestricted
Challenge Session Report - Promoting a shared responsibility and removing barriers to improved recycling in the borough	

Originating Officer(s)	Kevin Kewin, Interim Service Head Corporate Strategy and Equality Vicky Allen, Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer, Corporate Strategy & Equality
Wards affected	All Wards

Summary

- 1.1 This report submits the report and recommendations of a recycling Scrutiny Challenge Session for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations:

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
- Agree the draft report and the recommendations.
 - Authorise the Interim Service Head Corporate Strategy & Equality to amend the draft report before submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The challenge session took place on 19th January 2016 as a result of concerns amongst some Members that the council and its partners were not doing all that they could to support residents to improve their recycling habits. Waste and recycling is a key service for local authorities and dealing with waste represents a significant expense for the council at a time continuous decline in council resources. Sending recyclable material to landfill and other waste facilities is both expensive and damaging to the environment. Reducing waste collection costs by increasing recycling rates and reducing contamination rates could save an estimated £500,000 per year which could help limit the impact of public sector cuts.
- 3.2 Whilst it is recognised that the Council is one of the best performing recyclers of dry recyclates in London it faces a particularly difficult and costly operational environment in relation to high rise food waste collection and severely limited operational opportunities to increase green waste recycling given the lack of private gardens. Notwithstanding this there was a concern that the borough's overall recycling rate is well below the London and England average, and significantly below the EU's 50 percent recycling target for the country by 2020.
- 3.3 Ensuring residents increase the amount of waste they recycle whilst reducing the amount of recycling that is contaminated is key to achieving the Council's sustainability objectives as well as the savings identified above. Whilst there are well researched barriers to recycling which create a real challenge, the council must nevertheless find ways to promote a sense of accountability amongst residents, landlords and landowners.
- 3.4 The aim of the challenge session was therefore to explore ways in which the council and its partners could influence residents to increase the amount of recycling and to 'recycle right'; and how social housing landlords and landowners can work together to facilitate this.
- 3.5 The session was underpinned by three core questions:
- a) What actions can the council and its partners take to inform residents of the importance of recycling and to encourage residents to increase the amount of recycling they do and reduce the amount that is contaminated?
 - b) How can landlords, landowners, managing agents, and developers improve recycling facilities on their estates and how can they facilitate residents to recycle more, and recycle right. And how can the council support this?
 - c) What financial opportunities can the council access to support recycling activities and what the options to use S106 planning obligations or the Community Infrastructure Levy are?
- 3.6 The report with recommendations is attached as Appendix 1. 12 recommendations have been made:

- **Recommendation 1:** Review the Local Reward Scheme running in the borough with a view to implementing it more widely.
- **Recommendation 2:** Promote and coordinate visits to the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) for residents and estates staff.
- **Recommendation 3:** Promote messages about recycling to residents through ESOL sessions.
- **Recommendation 4:** Improve communication and education campaigns by making the additional costs associated with dealing with contaminated recycling waste explicit. Include clear explanatory messages about issues such as food waste and using black bin liners.
- **Recommendation 5:** Promote recycling messages on paper communications from the council (e.g. envelopes).
- **Recommendation 6:** Improve the size, quality, quantity and distribution of bags provided for residents for recycling waste, for example:
 - Introduce smaller bags;
 - Increase the number of bags produced to meet demand; and
 - Increase the number of collection points bags can be obtained
- **Recommendation 7:** Introduce a re-balancing of general and recycling waste bins on estates in the borough
- **Recommendation 8:** Undertake a feasibility study to assess the suitability of a range of alternative service design improvements including re-use facilities in the borough.
- **Recommendation 9:** Promote the THHF public-realm sub group, encourage attendance and the sharing of good practice amongst Registered Providers.
- **Recommendation 10:** Amend Local Plan policy DM14 Managing Waste to provide more explicit guidance on waste and recycling facilities.
- **Recommendation 11:** Work with developers to incorporate innovative general waste and recycling waste management systems into the Isle of Dogs opportunity area, area planning framework where possible.
- **Recommendation 12:** Lobby Government to require packaging industry to include standardised recyclability messages on all recyclable material.

3.7 Once agreed, the Working Group's report will be submitted to Cabinet for a response to the recommendations.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 The report details in section 3.6 twelve recommendations for Cabinet to consider which are likely to involve additional cost in some cases to the Council. It is likely that some of those recommendations can be delivered through existing resources. However, the financial implications of the recommendations will need to be assessed and quantified and considered as part of the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy before they are considered for implementation.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Council is required by section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to have executive arrangements that ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with this obligation, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants. The Committee may also make reports and recommendations to the Full Council or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions.
- 5.2 Recycling and waste disposal are services supplied to all households in the borough. Increasing recycling rates and reducing contamination of recycling waste will have a financial benefit to the whole community through a reduced budget spend on waste disposal. The current cost of disposing of uncontaminated recycling waste is £17.85 per tonne compared to up to £129.05 for heavily contaminated recycling waste. Savings could potentially be diverted to other frontline services that residents rely on.
- 5.3 One of the aims of the challenge session was to look at best practice in positively influencing residents to recycle more and right. Recommendations have had regard to households who may be on low incomes as they relate to better communications and incentives rather than penalties.
- 5.4 When considering its approach to recycling and waste disposal, 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. A proportionate level of equality analysis is required to discharge the duty and information relevant to this is contained in the One Tower Hamlets section of the report.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 Recycling and waste disposal are services supplied to all households in the borough. Increasing recycling rates and reducing contamination of recycling waste will have a financial benefit to the whole community through a reduced budget spend on waste disposal. The current cost of disposing of uncontaminated recycling waste is £17.85 per tonne compared to up to £129.05 for heavily contaminated recycling waste. Savings could potentially be diverted to other frontline services that residents rely on.

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6.3 Recommendation three is aimed at supporting residents to recycle more, and to recycle right despite any language barriers they may face.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The recommendations in this report are made as part of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's role in helping to secure continuous improvement for the council, as required under its Best Value duty. Improving recycling amongst local people will contribute to increased efficiency.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

8.1 The recommendations in this report are aimed at increasing the borough's recycling rates and improving the quality of recycling waste through less contamination, and should therefore actively promote sustainable action for a greener environment.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

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

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct crime and disorder reduction implications arising from the report or recommendations.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Promoting a shared responsibility and removing barriers to improved recycling in the borough - Scrutiny Challenge Report

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.

- These must be sent to Democratic Services with the report

1. Presentations from:

- **Resource London.** The challenges to recycling in London
- **LBTH Planning and Building Control Service and Public Realm Service.** Tower Hamlets policy & practice in relation to recycling.
- **Local Green Points.** About the Local Green Points scheme.
- **Veolia.** About their communications, education and outreach team and how they support recycling in Tower Hamlets.

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Report authors should refer to the section of the report writing guide which relates to Background Papers when completing this section. Please note that any documents listed in this section may be disclosed for public inspection. Report authors must check with Legal Services before listing any document as 'background papers'.

Officer contact details for documents:

- N/A