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| <b>Cabinet</b><br>6 <sup>th</sup> September 2016  | <br><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b> |
| <b>Report of:</b> The Director of Law, Probity and Governance and Corporate Director Communities, Localities and Culture  | <b>Classification:</b><br>[Unrestricted]  |
| Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Promoting a shared responsibility and removing barriers to improved recycling in the borough Scrutiny Challenge Report |   |

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| <b>Lead Member</b>            | <b>Cllr Ayas Miah</b>  |
| <b>Originating Officer(s)</b> | Vicky Allen, Corporate Strategy and Equality, LPG Directorate ext. 4320      |
| <b>Wards affected</b>         | ALL  |
| <b>Community Plan Theme</b>   | <b>A Great Place to Live: Improve the local environment and public realm</b> |
| <b>Key Decision?</b>          | No   |

### Executive Summary

This report submits the report and recommendations of the challenge session on promoting a shared responsibility and removing barriers to improved recycling in the borough by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), and the action plan for implementation.

### Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Consider this report of the scrutiny working group and agree the action plan in response to the review recommendations.

### **1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 This report submits the report and recommendations of the challenge session on promoting a shared responsibility and removing barriers to improved recycling in the borough by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), and the action plan for implementation.
- 1.2 The challenge session took place on 19<sup>th</sup> 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. The Council's waste treatment and disposal costs could be reduced by an estimated £500,000 per year by increasing the amount of waste that is recycled and by reducing the levels of contamination in the recyclable waste that is collected which could help limit the impact of public sector cuts.

- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 Ensuring residents increase the amount of waste they recycle whilst reducing the amount of recycling that is contaminated is key to achieving the Councils' 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.
- 1.5 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.

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the proposed recommendations are strategic, measurable and attainable. A timetable for delivering the recommendations has also been agreed by Officers at the most senior levels of the organisation. The action plan is outlined in Appendix Two.
- 2.2 To agree some, but not all recommendations. As outlined above all of the recommendations are achievable at little additional cost to the organisation. Although the Scrutiny Review Group is confident all the recommendations will be addressed, there may be reasons for not accepting all of them.

## **3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 The challenge session took place on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2016 and was chaired by Cllr Denise Jones, Scrutiny Lead for Communities, Localities and Culture.

- 3.2 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?

3.3 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.

3.4 These recommendations will be considered as part of the Strategic Review of the Waste Service, at the contract specification stage, and as part of the Local Plan review. No additional resourcing implications have been identified by services involved.

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

4.1 The report seeks agreement to the draft action plan that focusses on promoting a shared responsibility and removing barriers to improved recycling in the borough.

4.2 In Appendix 1 of this report it highlight opportunities for the Council to reduce the waste treatment and disposal costs by an estimated £500,000 per year by increasing the amount of waste that is recycled and by reducing the levels of contamination in the recyclable waste that is collected. This is achievable from the cost per tonne differential in sending waste for recycling as opposed to sending waste for disposal which cost more, The actions proposed support a drive for residents behaviour change to increase recycling performance as a means of helping to mitigate the increasing cost of waste services thus reducing the pressure on the disposal budget.

4.3 It is likely that some of the recommendations and actions in the plan can be delivered through existing resources. However, the resource implications of some of the new initiatives in the recommendations and actions in the plan will need to be assessed, quantified and considered as part of the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy before they can be implementation.

#### **5. LEGAL COMMENTS**

5.1 The Council is a waste disposal authority and a waste collection authority by virtue of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 ('the 1990

Act'). The Council's functions as a waste collection authority include an obligation to arrange for the collection of household waste and As a waste collection authority the Council. The Council, as a disposal authority, has the power to make arrangements for recycling waste.

- 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 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.