

Appendix A

Frequently Asked Questions – New Recycling Initiatives

FOOD WASTE COLLECTIONS

Q. Why is the Council introducing separate food waste collections?

A. Analysis of rubbish in Tower Hamlets has shown that food waste makes up 40-50% by weight of everything thrown into dustbins by residents. It is extremely expensive to send all this food waste to landfill and it can represent a significant cause of air and water pollution as it rots down. In particular it produces methane which is a potent Greenhouse Gas, contributing to Global Warming. The Council has the lowest recycling rate in the country and collecting food waste will help lead to a major increase in recycling levels.

Q. Do other Councils collect food waste for composting?

A. Many London Boroughs provide a separate collection of food waste. For example Bexley, City of London, Greenwich, Hackney, Islington, Southwark and Waltham Forest.

Q. How often will the food waste be collected?

A. Collections will take place every week. For flats with a communal food waste collection container collections will be made more frequently.

Q. What types of food waste can be collected?

A. The scheme is for raw and cooked fruit and vegetables; raw and cooked meat and fish; bones; bread, rice and pasta; plate scrapings; tea bags; coffee grounds; egg shells as well as used kitchen paper towels.

We cannot collect plastic bags, glass, cans, paper or any packaging marked 'compostable' as this takes too long to break down.

Q. What will happen to the food waste?

A. It will be taken to a composting facility, mixed with woody waste and turned into a useable compost.

Q. What containers will be provided for the food waste?

A. All residents on the scheme will receive a small kitchen caddy and a regular supply of starch liners. Residents will also receive a larger 20 litre container in which to place the full bags. This bin has a locking handle and is placed out for collection.

Q. Where and when should containers be placed out for collection?

A. Containers should be placed close to the front boundary of your property by 7.00am on your collection day.

Q. Can I line the containers with carrier bags?

A. Only the biodegradable starch liners provided by the Council can be used in the bins. Other plastic bags will not rot down with the food. Collection crews will not empty bins that have food waste contained in any sort of plastic bags apart from those supplied.

Q. Which properties will be provided with food waste collections?

A. Initially, all street level houses will receive the service in September 2008 as well as 5,000 – 7,000 high-rise properties which will trial food waste collections. The Council is planning to bid for external funding from a new London Recycling Fund to extend food waste collections to all high-rise properties over the next couple of years.

Q. Won't the bins smell and attract rats?

A. The larger containers for storing the food waste outside have a locking lid to keep smells in and vermin out. To lock the bins simply lift the handle over to the front of the container and to unlock it, lift it over to the back of the bin.

Q. Will the containers need regular washing out?

A. The Council will supply the starch liners free of charge to residents using the service. Use of these will keep the containers clean. They may just need an occasional wipe using a kitchen disinfectant spray.