

Non-Executive Report of the: Overview and Scrutiny Committee	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Divisional Director of Public Realm, Place	Classification: Unrestricted
Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Promoting a shared responsibility and removing barriers to improved recycling in the borough Scrutiny Challenge Report	

Lead Member	Cllr Rachel Blake
Originating Officer(s)	<i>Fiona Heyland, Head of Waste Strategy, Policy and Procurement Oli Kapopo, Clean Team and Contracts Manager</i>
Wards affected	<i>ALL</i>
Community Plan Theme	<i>A Great Place to Live: Improve the local environment and public realm</i>
Key Decision?	<i>No</i>

Summary

This report follows up from the scrutiny challenge session on promoting a shared responsibility and removing barriers to improved recycling in the borough. The report and recommendations were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2016. An action plan was developed to address the recommendations. The report and accompanying action plan was endorsed by Cabinet in September 2016. This report reviews the progress against the original recommendations.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the progress of the recommendations from the scrutiny challenge session.

1. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The challenge session took place on 19th January 2016 and was chaired by Cllr Denise Jones, Scrutiny Lead for Communities, Localities and Culture. The aim of the challenge session was 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.
- 1.2 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, encouraging 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 facilitating 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 options are available to use S106 planning obligations or the Community Infrastructure Levy are?
- 1.3 The report (Appendix One) made twelve recommendations. Progress against each recommendation is recorded in the accompanying action plan (Appendix Two).
- 1.4 There has been progress on the majority of actions. Of the 30 actions developed by services in the scrutiny action plan, 19 were completed; the services have been working to complete the remaining 11 actions. The action plan (Appendix Two) includes a full update on the progress. Below are the key points of the update.

- **Recommendation 1:** Review the Local Reward Scheme running in the borough with a view to implementing it more widely.

Service comment at the action planning stage:

A decision to implement a reward scheme across the Borough cannot be taken in isolation from other policy decisions on waste. An options review of potential approaches to reward that can be effectively monitored (the main challenge with reward schemes) will be completed by the summer. The Executive Mayor in Cabinet will consider this as part of a comprehensive strategic review of the Council's waste policies when making his decision on how to proceed.

Update from the service:

Recycling data is being drawn together from across the borough and the service is reviewing reward schemes undertaken by other organisations in order to determine the most appropriate incentive scheme options to put forward for consideration and adoption.

- **Recommendation 2:** Promote and coordinate visits to the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) for residents and estates staff.

Service comment at the action planning stage:

The service is already doing this and a number of visits have taken place that included RPs and Members.

Update from the service:

The service continues coordinating visits to the MRF for residents and other stakeholders, including caretakers. The coordination of visits in 2017/18 was interrupted due to a fatal health and safety incident at the MRF. Visits to the facility were suspended by the contractor for a period. 2018 has visits planned by the Mayor, Members, Local Authority staff and RSLs. Three schools in the borough will be identified to participate in a council programme to promote recycling, which includes a tour to the MRF.

- **Recommendation 3:** Promote messages about recycling to residents through ESOL sessions.

Service comment at the action planning stage:

Veolia Education and Outreach team to devise a programme with Cultural Services that can integrate this messaging into ESOL classes

Update from the service:

The service is working with Idea Stores to devise a programme in which recycling can be incorporated into ESOL classes. Modalities of how this will be delivered will need to be discussed and also whether or not additional resources are required considering most classes take place out of normal working hours. A plan will be in place by March 2018 for delivery later in 2018.

- **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.

Service comment at the action planning stage:

The team launched a recycling campaign in November 2015. Titled 'Let's sort it!' it featured local residents promoting the use of the correct bin for recycling and highlighted the cost of placing food

waste, black sacks and other non-recyclable items in the purple recycling bins. The 'Let's sort it!' campaign was on bus shelters, billboards and on recycling vehicle sides. A detailed and pictorial leaflet was delivered to flats and properties and adverts have been in East End Life. The campaign was also supported by regular twitter feeds. This campaign is on-going and the campaign artwork and messages will continue throughout the year. It is hoped that the cost references associated with dealing with contaminated waste can be included in the next Council Tax leaflet. Where advice from communications indicates the appropriateness of the cost reference to securing engagement this will be included as a campaign reference where the opportunity arises

Update from the service:

The identified actions under this recommendation have been completed. Actions taken include: the 'Let's sort it!' campaign (Nov 2015-2016), a new recycling awareness campaign under the Love Your Neighbourhood umbrella brand (Sept 2017-), and Press releases in Bengali media as part of Recycling week launch (Sept 2017) and the Clean Streets launch (Oct 2017).

- **Recommendation 5:** Promote recycling messages on paper communications from the council (e.g. envelopes).

Service comment at the action planning stage:

The small cost associated with franking will be met within existing budgets.

Update from the service:

Staffing changes within the facilities management team has resulted in a delay to delivering this action. Work is being progressed between the waste management, facilities management and communications teams to agree a key message linking this to the ongoing campaign for clean streets and recycling. Completion is anticipated imminently

- **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

Service comment at the action planning stage:

Nil.

Update from the service:

The Council has been piloting collection of recycling bags 7 days a week for 8 weeks from October 2017 and that supply and demand has been managed satisfactorily, as such the Council will publicise

this in 2018. The Council will work with Housing Associations to support the wider distribute the clear bags. The storage of recycling in homes is a key consideration for the waste strategy which will be published in draft in 2018. A trial of re-useable bags has been undertaken with a view to offering re-useable bags to residents as an alternative option to the disposal bags.

- **Recommendation 7:** Introduce a re-balancing of general and recycling waste bins on estates in the borough

Service comment at the action planning stage:

This needs to form part of a wider review of containerisation for the future and ensure it meets the needs of waste reduction, recycling, avoidance and re-use in the long-term. This is not a decision that can be made in isolation from wider strategic waste policy decisions. This will be considered by the Executive in the context of the council's waste policy review linked to the procurement strategy for waste services.

Update from the service:

A review of waste and recycling bin provision against capacity requirements stated in the Council's supplementary planning guidance has been undertaken.

The work that will be undertaken to produce the inventory and action plan as part of the estates waste and recycling improvement project will be incorporated into the procurement strategy for the new waste, recycling and cleansing contract. The procurement strategy is currently in development and is due to be completed by summer 2018 in order that the procurement process can commence as scheduled.

- **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.

Service comment at the action planning stage:

Assessment of the effectiveness of current service design is already underway as part of the strategic review of the Waste Service. It is likely to involve a major review of waste capacity provision and must take into account future waste, population and contractual needs. Much of the critical infrastructure supporting effective waste and recycling is not owned or controlled or designed by the Council or its contractors. The review of waste service will consider how the Council can encourage developers and landlords to adopt more effective and consistent approaches to waste containment and recycling. This is unlikely to take the form of a feasibility study and is more likely to engage policy, relationship management, partnership development and planning guidance issues.

Update from the service:

A range of alternative service design improvements was/are being undertaken and evaluated. This include: reuse schemes at the council's Reuse and Recycling Centre, a pop-up Restart Party (residents bring broken or slow electrical appliances and volunteers from the Restart Project help fix them) and installations of small WEEE recycling bins in the borough including Idea Stores.

- **Recommendation 9:** Promote the THHF public-realm sub group, encourage attendance and the sharing of good practice amongst Registered Providers.

Service comment at the action planning stage:

The Mayor has recently met with the Local Strategic Partnership Executive to agree a programme to remodel and re-launch it. THHF have been clear about their ongoing support for the Local Strategic Partnership and see the THHF public Realm sub group as an important part of the Partnership Infrastructure.

Update from the service:

The council has been building relationships with the THHF. Lead Member and the Chief Executives of RPs had a series of meetings. Additional meetings are scheduled for the future.

- **Recommendation 10:** Amend Local Plan policy DM14 Managing Waste to provide more explicit guidance on waste and recycling facilities.

Service comment at the action planning stage:

DM14 encourages the development industry to demonstrate how a proposal will help minimise waste and maximise recycling. As part of the Local Plan preparation, there is a scope for this policy to be updated based on a new Waste Management Strategy, which has been commissioned by the Plan Making team with support from the council's Waste team. One of the main aims of this study is to help the council to develop options for efficiently managing waste collection in high density development, including looking into new technology. However, all the policy requirements set out in the new Local Plan is subject to a viability assessment. This is to ensure that the Plan is deliverable. In addition, it is for the Waste Team to further advise the Plan Making team whether or not a supplementary guidance will be a more effective tool to respond to the growing needs in waste.

The use of S106/CIL to help improve recycling facilities on estates is currently reviewed by Infrastructure Planning Team through its Draft Revised Planning Obligations SPD and Regulation 123 List. These two documents will be submitted to Cabinet for public consultation in April 2016.

Update from the service:

All the identified actions have been completed.

- **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.

Service comment at the action planning stage:

The Council is working in partnership with the GLA on the Isle of Dogs Opportunity Area Plan Framework (OAPF) and in other regeneration initiative areas such as the Housing Zone and in Whitechapel. The Mayor and the Lead Member for Strategic Development both sit on the Strategic Board to influence the direction of travel of the project. The overall infrastructure provision to support the level of growth planned for, is a major concern which the council shares with the GLA. The Plan Making team will link in with Infrastructure Planning team to continue to raise this with the GLA to ensure on-going discussions with developers in respect of infrastructure provision, including incorporating innovative general waste and recycling waste management systems into the area.

Update from the service:

The council has commented on the GLA's draft OAPF document as required. The council is still waiting for the public consultation of the draft OAPF document to be launched.

- **Recommendation 12:** Lobby Government to require packaging industry to include standardised recyclability messages on all recyclable material.

Service comment at the action planning stage:

In London, we have got the London Waste and Recycling Board (<http://www.lwarb.gov.uk/what-we-do/>), which can be considered as a useful group to help lobby the government on this matter. Lobbying government for policy change is a political responsibility. Officers can provide the relevant technical context for specific arguments and can respond to requests by government for technical observations on proposed changes to policy or law. It would be inappropriate to task officers with the responsibility to actively lobby government directly for policy change.

Update from the service:

In general, the Council responds to consultations and holds corporate positions on policy matters.

Through local government organisations including the LGA, LARAC and NAWDO, Officers in Tower Hamlets have been engaged in the work being undertaken by WRAP to ensure that pressure continues to be placed on manufacturers and retailers to respond to the need

to ensure packaging materials are recyclable and carry clear messages about their recyclability.

DEFRA, are developing a new Waste and Resources Strategy, and have recently commenced a process of informal stakeholder engagements activities through which Officers are continuing to press Government about the need for less variety of packaging materials, particularly the mix of polymers used in plastic packaging, to aid greater recycling and to ensure that packaging is clearly labelled to identify its recyclability.

2. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the action plan progress that focusses on promoting a shared responsibility and removing barriers to improved recycling in the borough. The recommendations and actions in the plan continue to be delivered through existing resources. Mayoral Priority funding growth of up to £1.560M was provided for in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2017-18 to 2019-2020. The funding supports the incentivising of better waste collection arrangements on housing estates. Based on the service delivery plans for the scheme the funding has been re-profiled to £1.020M over the period.
- 2.2 The resource implications for some of the initiatives yet to be delivered will need to be assessed, quantified and considered as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy process before they can be implemented.

3. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 3.1 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. This includes receiving periodic reports on progress of recommendations from previous scrutiny challenge sessions.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 On 22nd February 2017 Council agreed the General Fund Capital and Revenue Budgets and Medium Term Financial Plan 2017-20. This is in

accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. Once the Budget has been agreed then it is the responsibility of the Mayor, the Executive and officers to implement it. However, pursuant to Rule 3.1 of the Budget and Policy Framework, subject to the provisions of Rule 5 (virement) the Mayor, Executive, Committees of the Executive and any officers or joint arrangements may only take decisions which are in line with the budget and policy framework. If any of these bodies or persons wishes to make a decision which is contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget approved by Council, then that decision may only be taken by Council.

- 3.4 Therefore any resource implications for some of the initiatives yet to be delivered will need to be assessed, quantified and considered as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy process before they can be implemented and which will require the approval of Council.
- 3.5 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.

4. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 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 £19.50 per tonne compared to up to £130 for heavily contaminated recycling waste. Savings could potentially be diverted to other frontline services that residents rely on.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 Recommendation three is aimed at supporting residents to recycle more, and to recycle right despite any language barriers they may face.

5. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 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.

6. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 6.1 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.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

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

8. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

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

9. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct implications of safeguarding as a result of the recommendations in this review.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

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

Appendix 2 – Action Plan

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

- None

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A