

<b>Cabinet</b>	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
20 September 2023	
<b>Report of:</b> Raj Mistry, Interim Corporate Director, Communities	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>Tower Hamlets Reduction and Recycling Plan 2023-2025</b>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	<b>Simon Baxter, Interim Director Public Realm</b> Fiona Heyland, Environmental Services Improvement Manager Louise Houston, Environmental Services Improvement Team Leader
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	Significant impact on wards
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	23 May 2023
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	<a href="#">Strategic Plan 2022-26</a> Priority 7: A clean and green future

### **Executive Summary**

This Reduction and Recycling Plan for 2023 to 2025 is the first phase of ambitious plans to deliver a clean and green future for Tower Hamlets. We are committed to delivering improvements over the next 5 years, with initial investment in service re-design, service delivery and community engagement.

Our plans to optimise recycling collections, deliver over £2million in flats recycling improvements and develop improved communication and community engagement are just the start. We are working alongside other local authorities and recycling experts to pilot collecting food waste on housing estates, to improve recycling from people living in flats above shops and to create more leverage from community engagement.

Taking lessons learnt, we plan to drive measurable behaviour change with the help of support from landlords, community groups, faith groups, local mosques, local media and the business community.

This forms an important part of our commitment to become a net zero carbon council by 2025 and net zero carbon borough by 2045 or sooner. In addition to demonstrating how we contribute to delivering improvements as part of the London Environment Strategy.

Developing and producing a Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) is a requirement set by the GLA to ensure all London authorities are in general conformity with the London Environment Strategy. This latest RRP comprises environmental metrics drawn from the previous reporting cycle (2018-2022) along with a cross-cutting action plan drawn from our Strategic Plan and Tower Hamlets Waste Management Strategy. This second RRP covers a two-year period from April 2023 to the end of March 2025 and sets out our ambition to achieve a 23% recycling rate.

Review of recycling performance highlights the impact of low recycling capture from our residential properties, that 22% of a typical rubbish bin contains recyclable material and that in many cases lack of available recycling bins or storage capacity for recycling is a barrier to people recycling more.

To achieve our 23% target, we need to take more direct steps to get an extra 6,800 tonnes of recyclable material out of waste bins and into recycling bins, or bags each year.

Key Initiatives within our RRP include:

- Recycling route optimisation to deliver more efficient and effective collections from all households.
- Over £2 million investment, to roll-out of flats recycling improvement project across 2160 blocks of flats.
- Focus on making sure people have access to recycling bins and bags.
- Re-focused communication campaigning to leverage more community engagement and behaviour change. To work with community groups, faith groups, schools, mosques and local media to increase waste reduction, re-use and recycling activity in all households.
- Collaborating with landlords and housing providers to obtain direct support and investment in communication, tenant behaviour change and infrastructure to improve recycling and reduce contamination.

Delivering on the actions within our RRP will generate extra cost and budget pressures to be managed in 2024/25. This is due to high inflation adding to the cost of recycling and delays in funding support from government recycling reforms.

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

- 1.1 The council is committed to helping people to reduce waste and reuse and recycle more to deliver a clean and green future for Tower Hamlets. Drawing together our service, communication, education and behaviour change activities into one plan helps to demonstrate this commitment.
- 1.2 Developing and producing this RRP is also a requirement set by the GLA to ensure all London authorities are in general conformity to the London

Environment Strategy. This second Tower Hamlets RRP covers the two-year period April 2023 to March 2025.

- 1.3 The Mayor of London expects the RRP to be signed off at Cabinet level before general conformity with the LES is confirmed by the GLA.

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 The RRP set out in Appendix 1 incorporates a range of activities and actions that will enhance recycling services and encourage greater participation in reuse, recycling and waste minimisation activities to achieve the recycling target set for the end of the plan period.
- 2.2 The council has ambitious plans to deliver a cleaner and greener future for Tower Hamlets beyond the period of the current RRP. We expect to continue with investment in service improvement, waste reduction, re-use and recycling beyond the current RRP timeline. This forms an important part of our commitment to become a net zero carbon council by 2025 and net zero carbon borough by 2045 or sooner.
- 2.3 The Mayor in Cabinet could decide not to agree the RRP. This option is not recommended as it would leave the council open to challenge by the GLA for not being in general conformity with the Mayor of London's Environment Strategy.

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

### **Waste and Recycling in Tower Hamlets**

- 3.1 Tower Hamlets Council is a Unitary authority, responsible for dealing with both collections and disposal of municipal waste. Our Waste Management Strategy 2018–2030 was adopted in 2019 with the central aim to move more waste up the waste hierarchy by helping residents to reduce waste, reuse and recycle in line with the principles of a more circular economy. In July 2021, Tower Hamlets adopted the Reuse, Recycling and Waste Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), setting the council's expectations for the provision of suitable storage and collection systems for new developments. That facilitate and encourage greater reuse and recycling of household waste.
- 3.2 Waste and recycling collections services have been delivered in-house since April 2020 and currently provides the following:
  - Recycling - weekly collection of comingled recycling to all residents in kerbside properties, flats and flats above shops.
  - Food and Garden - weekly collection of food and garden waste to residents in kerbside properties, with a limited trial of weekly separate food waste collections for 870 purpose-built flats.
  - Residual waste - weekly collection of residual waste to residents in kerbside properties predominantly via sacks, and flatted properties using communal bins with varying collection frequencies.

- A commercial waste collection service for residual waste and co-mingled recycling.  
One Reuse and Recycling Centre (RRC) in the borough operated and managed, on behalf of the council, by Cory.
- 3.3 With the high number of flats and maisonettes in Tower Hamlets (88%) coupled with communal bin collections, Tower Hamlets faces unique challenges for a London borough. These factors make achieving high recycling rates, reducing contamination in dry recycling and introducing waste improvements particularly difficult.
- 3.4 Tower Hamlets is the most densely populated borough and has the fastest growing population nationally. It has seen a 7% increase in total number of households between 2011 and 2021, the largest of any local authority area across England and Wales. Service resources and infrastructure for recycling at newly built blocks of flats has not kept up with this growth, and the amount and quality of materials collected for recycling has suffered.
- 3.5 We have invested over £3 million in improvements to flats recycling since 2018/19 with additional investment in new collection vehicles, including electric vehicle trials, food waste pilots and development of a “flats recycling improvement toolkit”. Our plans to invest in recycling infrastructure and service improvement have not kept pace with the increase in waste tonnage from our rapidly growing population. The rise in people regularly working from home since the pandemic has further increased the waste generated. This RRP sets out the first phase of our longer-term plans to drive significant improvement in recycling performance from improved service design, service delivery, education, advice and behaviour change over the next 5 years.
- 3.6 Tower Hamlets baseline recycling rate for the RRP is the recycling rate for 2019/20 (21.5%). In 2021/22 the recycling rate fell to 19.7% and in 2022/23 it fell again to 17.8%. Working against the baseline rate for 2019/20 puts the council under extreme pressure to meet the target it has set in the RRP for 2024/25 of 23%. The average contamination rate in the first four months of 2022/23 was 27.95% compared to 22.01% during the same period in 2021/22.
- 3.7 It has long been understood that people living in flats don't recycle as much as people living in houses. With the high proportion of flatted properties in Tower Hamlets, the council has previously invested in a number of activities to support residents to recycle more of their waste. However, not all of the activities have resulted in increased recycling performance.
- 3.8 We recognise the importance of making recycling sacks available for those who need them. Last year £130,800 was spent on making single-use recycling sacks freely available to take at Idea Stores. This method of distribution has not resulted in increased recycling tonnage and is currently under review. Improvements will include deliveries to all kerbside properties and flats above shops, with use of online ordering for those residents that need recycling sacks. Residents with recycling bins will be supplied with reusable recycling bags for storage and transport of recycling.

- 3.9 A research project carried out by ReLondon and Peabody Housing Association across 12 London boroughs (including Tower Hamlets) identified that the barriers residents living in flats face are many and complex. Residents need to be motivated and have sufficient knowledge to recycle, and the recycling process must be easy. All three of these interdependent conditions are needed before people change their behaviour and if any one of them is not met it will undermine the other two.
- 3.10 The results of the research project showed that most people were motivated about recycling, but their motivation was easily undermined by poor experiences and a lack of accountability. The research also showed that many people were not very knowledgeable about what materials could be recycled. Drawing on the results of the ReLondon research the council has identified a key list of interventions/actions are necessary in order to facilitate correct recycling behaviours and maximise our recycling performance. These include:
- Effective storage for segregating recycling within the home
  - Making recycling easy for residents to undertake as part of their daily routines.
  - Collecting a wide range of recyclable materials
  - Sufficient, clean and well-maintained recycling bins and bin stores with clear and visible signage
  - Regular engagement with residents to remind them about what can and can't be recycled and how to recycle correctly.
  - Promoting recycling as the social norm, through engagement with the whole community
  - Feedback mechanisms to show that residents efforts are being monitored and recognised.
- 3.11 Despite the challenges we are committed to helping people to reduce or reuse more of their waste and to increase the amount of waste that is recycled. The RRP covers actions on service improvements, increasing tonnage, reducing contamination and driving behaviour change through additional communications and engagement activities.

### **Mayor of London's Environment Strategy**

- 3.12 In 2018, the Mayor of London declared a climate emergency, and published the London Environment Strategy (LES). The LES sets out objectives, targets, and policies to make London a zero-carbon city and accelerate London's transition to a circular economy. The Mayor's London-wide waste targets are:
- To cut food waste and associated packaging waste by 50 percent per person by 2030.

- To achieve a 65 percent municipal waste recycling rate by 2030, including a 50 percent recycling rate for local authority collected waste (LACW) by 2025
- To send zero biodegradable or recyclable waste to and fill by 2026

3.13 The relevant objectives from the LES are:

Objective 7.1 – Drive resource efficiency to significantly reduce waste focusing on food waste and single use packaging.

Objective 7.2 – Maximise recycling rates.

Objective 7.3 – Reduce the environmental impact of waste activities (greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants).

Objective 7.4 - Maximise local waste sites and ensure London has sufficient infrastructure to manage all of the waste it produces.

### **Minimum level of household waste recycling service**

3.14 The LES requires all boroughs to provide a minimum level of household waste recycling (LES 7.2.1a). Tower Hamlets provides all properties in the borough with a minimum collection of the six main dry materials of glass, cans, paper, card, plastic bottles and mixed rigid plastics (pots, tubs and trays). All kerbside properties have a separate weekly food waste collection. For kerbside properties the service conforms to the Mayor of London's minimum recycling collection standards. Tower Hamlets has yet to roll out food waste collections to flatted properties.

### **The requirement for Reduction and Recycling Plans (RRPs)**

3.15 The LES introduced a requirement for London local authorities to produce RRP. These RRP were to be developed at least every four years, setting out how councils will meet LES requirements, and make an effective contribution to the Mayor of London's waste targets.

3.16 London local authorities produced their first round of RRP for 2018-2022 following the publication of the LES. There is now the requirement to have a new RRP in place, which has been approved by the GLA.

3.17 Local authorities are now looking ahead to the Government's reforms being implemented under the Resources and Waste Strategy (Environment Act 2021), which will see the most significant changes to waste collection and disposal systems for a generation. The GLA acknowledges that there is still considerable uncertainty over exactly which services local authorities will be required to provide, the timescales, and the funding they will receive to support their implementation. Due to this uncertainty, the GLA has determined that the new RRP should focus on a two-year period from April 2023 to the end of March 2025.

## **Format, Content and Governance of RRP**

- 3.18 The RRP template issued by the GLA contains five sections and is designed to act as both a useful internal reporting tool, and one that contributes to the collective understanding of London-wide impacts of borough activities and progress towards the LES's targets.
- 3.19 Sections one and two provide background information. Section three is a dashboard of current and planned performance against a set of common metrics and targets. Section 4 is an action plan documenting the activities to be carried out over the RRP period. Section five is an action plan update table, which will be completed at the end of 2023/24.
- 3.20 The GLA expects RRP to support the wider environmental policies and proposals set out within the LES. RRP actions are required to consider wider policy areas such as reduction of carbon emissions associated with waste operations, maximising air quality and vehicle LEZ/ULEZ compliance and implementing actions that integrate circular economy thinking.
- 3.21 Since the first round of RRP were submitted and following consultation with London boroughs, changes to monitoring have been made which means a lighter touch, with annual rather than six monthly updates as previously requested by the GLA.
- 3.22 The Mayor of London expects the RRP will be signed off at Cabinet level, before general conformity with the LES is confirmed by the GLA. The RRP is expected to be made publicly available.

## **Tower Hamlets' Reduction and Recycling Plan**

- 3.23 The Strategic Plan is the Council's overarching strategy document that sets the vision and direction of travel for all services, including waste and recycling. Strategic Plan Priority 7 centres around delivering a cleaner and greener future for Tower Hamlets, with a focus on improving waste and recycling performance. The mayors Waste Management Task Force has been set up to oversee improvement in this area.
- 3.24 Further elements of Strategic Plan Priority 7 focus on mitigating climate change and becoming a carbon neutral council by 2025.
- 3.25 In addition to the Strategic Plan, the council also has a waste management strategy in place, Tower Hamlets Waste Management Strategy 2018 – 2030. The waste management strategy centres around six priorities that provide a framework for the waste and recycling services moving forward.

Priority 1 – Collaboration at the heart of change.

Priority 2 – Supporting people to love their neighbourhood.

Priority 3 - Supporting people to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Priority 4 - Making waste a resource.

Priority 5 – Reducing carbon and improving air quality; and

Priority 6 – Building our green economy.

- 3.26 Despite having the Strategic Plan and waste management strategy in place, in order to be in line with the statutory requirement set by the GLA, Tower Hamlets officers have produced the new RRP action plan to conform to their template and best practice model.
- 3.27 The RRP action plan is a cross-cutting plan, bringing together actions we are already taking (and plan to undertake dependant on funding including rolling out separate food waste collections to flatted properties, separating the collections of kerbside food and garden waste, implementing separate cardboard collections and expanding on-street recycling) with the actions being drawn from our current plans and strategies. The actions in the plan are categorised under three themes:
- Waste reduction and reuse
  - Maximising recycling; and
  - Reducing environmental impacts

### **Waste reduction and reuse**

- 3.28 Actions focused on helping people to reduce and reuse more of their waste are becoming increasingly important from the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on individuals and the cost of delivering our services.
- 3.29 The RRP contains 8 actions focused on reducing and reusing waste. The key gains from the actions detailed in the RRP are:
- Reducing food waste – through the continued promotion of the national “Love Food Hate Waste” campaign and our own food waste reduction workshops.
  - Home and community composting – for many years we have supported residents to compost their food waste at home through the provision of reduced-price compost bins and wormeries and have provided support to a number of community composting schemes. We will continue to encourage residents to compost food waste at home where it is practicable to do so.
  - Clothes swap and repair events – in recent years fast fashion has led to increasing levels of clothes and textiles being disposed of in peoples’ rubbish. We encourage residents to look to pass on unwanted clothing items through clothes swap events, charity shops or textile banks located around the borough. We also hold workshops to help residents to mend or repurpose their clothing.
  - Reducing single use plastics – through our many engagement and education and behaviour change activities we will look to discourage the reliance on single use plastic items, many of which end up creating litter and blighting our environment.

## **Maximising recycling**

3.30 The RRP contains 16 actions to increase recycling which will be delivered alongside or as part of our business-as-usual services. The key gains in recycling, and the diversion of material from the residual waste stream, from the actions detailed in the RRP are:

- Co-mingled dry recycling gains from households – mainly from the work we are doing on estates and at blocks of flats to roll out the Flats Recycling Package. Infrastructure improvements to increase the quantity of recycling and reduce contamination with improvements to service delivery.
- Also, from the work we have been doing to raise more awareness about recycling and recycling correctly through the “Let’s Rethink It” campaign and our many behaviour change and engagement activities.
- Co-mingled dry recycling gains from businesses – we will be encouraging more businesses to separate their waste for recycling through an improved commercial waste service.
- Expanding collections of other materials – we will be looking for opportunities to set up or expand collections of other materials including textiles, small WEEE and batteries.
- Food and garden waste gains – in the short term mainly from re-promoting the service to residents in houses who are not yet taking part in the service and re-promoting the service to schools. In the longer term through the roll out of food waste collections to flats.

## **Reducing environmental impacts**

3.31 The RRP contains 3 actions focused on reducing the carbon impact of waste, improving air quality and driving a more circular economy. The key gains from the actions detailed in the RRP are:

- Capturing more high embedded carbon materials such as textiles
- Working with businesses to promote circular business and circular business activities.
- Greening the council’s waste and recycling fleet of vehicles

## **On-going communications**

3.32 The ReLondon research tells us that regular and on-going communication and engagement is needed to improve recycling knowledge and maintain motivation. The RRP contains 9 actions related to communication activity. To leverage support, increase community engagement and drive behaviour change to minimise waste and recycle correctly.

3.33 The action plan also looks to address some of the expected upcoming Government waste and recycling reforms and includes targets up to 2025.

The full implications of the Government’s waste and recycling reforms will be subject to a separate report to Cabinet in due course.

**Achieving improved recycling performance**

- 3.34 The timeframe of this RRP plan period is short and in order to achieve the 23% recycling target by the end of the RRP period the council must be collecting an extra 6,800 additional tonnes of recyclable material from residents each year. A waste compositional analysis carried out in December 2022 identified that approximately 22% of the household residual waste was dry recyclable material that could have been recycled through the council’s co-mingled dry recycling collection service. Of that dry recyclable material, a significant proportion was found to be cardboard. In 2022/23 the council collected approximately 68,000 tonnes of household residual waste.
- 3.35 The waste compositional analysis also highlighted that approximately 30% of the household residual waste was food waste. A weekly food waste collection service is provided to kerbside properties in the borough, but our estimates suggest that only 15% to 18% of properties on the service are taking part. Until the Council is able to roll out separate food waste collection services borough wide, our engagement and behaviour change activities will support residents to reduce avoidable food waste.
- 3.36 The council had anticipated that the Government’s waste and recycling policy reforms would have been implemented during this RRP plan period. These reforms, particularly the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for packaging waste were anticipated to provide Local Authorities with financial support to improve services. However, Government recently announced a delay to the implementation of the reforms until 2025. This has had an impact on the council’s ability to deliver enhanced performance in the short term. The council will be working hard to deliver further improvements in the recycling performance from 2025/26 onwards.

**Expected performance contributions from RRP actions**

- 3.37 As stated in paragraph 3.5, to reach the target set in the RRP we need to increase the recycling rate from 17.8% to 23% by the March 2025. We have estimated that we need to collect an extra 6800 tonnes of recycling in order to achieve this goal. Tables below set out the expected performance to be gained by our main current and proposed projects.

**Expected Performance – Current RRP projects**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Expected result</b>
Flats Recycling Project	We expect at least 2080 more tonnes of recycling to be collected per year by March 2025 this represents a 2% increase in recycling.

	We expect a reduction in contamination.
Active repromotion of the kerbside food waste service	We expect 250 more tonnes of recycling per year which represents a 0.25% increase in recycling by end March 2025  Increased participation to 25%-30%.
Other service improvement activities, including route optimisation, flats above shops and new recycling sack delivery plan	We expect this to deliver a 1.8% increase.
Communication and engagement activities	We expect these activities to close the remaining gap to 23%.

### **Expected Performance – Communications and engagement activities**

- 3.38 Whilst it is difficult to quantify the impact that communication and engagement work has on the recycling rate, but it is noted that the recycling education team employed under the Veolia recycling contract was disbanded in June 2017 and since that time the recycling rate has been declining.
- 3.39 The ReLondon research tells us that regular and on-going communication and engagement is needed to improve recycling knowledge and particularly to maintain motivation. Since 2019 the service currently has had limited resources to undertake activities to support the whole community to look to minimise waste and recycle correctly.
- 3.40 A significant focus of the RRP is communication and engagement activities. Tower Hamlets has many active community and resident groups, including faith-based, voluntary, education and cultural organisations. The recycling team has worked with many groups to raise awareness of recycling and waste reduction and encourage their members to raise awareness of recycling and waste reduction among their communities. Between April to August 2023 the team have delivered 18 stalls, talks and events, engaging with around 1200 people. Community advocacy is a central part of the team's engagement plan and we have been working to build strong working relationships throughout the community. But there is always more that can be done to improve community connections, with a particular focus on local faith groups and in schools.
- 3.41 Our Recycling Improvement and Engagement Team regularly attends community events and hubs providing recycling and waste reduction resources, information and delivering engagement activities, for instance, the team have recently been promoting reusable recycling sacks at Idea Stores. The team also hosts free regular events across the borough to support and encourage waste minimisation such as clothes swaps, mending

workshops, and food/recipe leftover workshops, which aim to help residents reuse waste, reuse and repair items. These workshops are run in partnership with local organisations and housing providers, strengthening partnership-working across the borough.

- 3.42 Our Recycling Champions scheme has been running for over two years and is growing a network of residents to help talk about and improve recycling performance where they live. Champions get involved by sharing information with neighbours at meetings, via local social media channels, posters and leaflets, attending workshops and recycling facility tours, reporting issues and volunteering at events. Our plan is to get the Recycling Champions more involved in activities, and will be launching a social media campaign in 2024 that puts them at the front and centre of recycling advice. The benefit of this is the authentic, community voice they bring. This is more relatable and accessible for residents, which we hope will result in positive changes in behaviours as people see how they can better recycle from someone like them. We will continue to grow this network and recruit more Champions.
- 3.43 Reaching young people and families in the borough is fundamental to improving our recycling performance now and in the future. We are working in schools to deliver recycling education sessions at assemblies and classroom sessions and recycling engagement stalls at school events to spread the message about the importance of recycling among pupils and their families. We've provided free recycling and food waste bins and collections for educational institutions in the borough for many years. We are proactively reviewing the services at schools and are offering advice and resources to help improve their food waste and dry recycling performance.
- 3.44 We understand the importance of faith groups in Tower Hamlets and are working on a plan to better engage with mosques, churches and other places of worship. We are in contact with the Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum and plan to work with them to develop engagement approaches and tools that are best suited to the partner and their congregation. Linked to this is creating communications in community languages and we are working with the Council's communications team to produce content that resonates with different audiences who do not have English as a first language.
- 3.45 Improving communication with the Bengali community is a priority and we will explore the option of increasing our reach through the use of targeted communications, such as popular Bengali television channel "Channel S".
- 3.46 Communication about recycling is continuous and content is regularly reviewed and refreshed. The "Let's Rethink it" outdoor advertising and social media campaign is currently in progress.

### **Resources to deliver the RRP**

- 3.47 The majority of staff resources to deliver on these plans come from our Environmental Services Improvement Team, supported by key staff in waste operations and operational services. The flats recycling project team is largely

funded by capital from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Project management support is provided by the Service Design and Improvement team, with progress on delivery and performance monitored as part of new project governance arrangements

- 3.48 Delivering on the actions within our RRP will generate extra cost and budget pressures, to be managed in 2024/25. Enhancing the recycling performance further from 2025/26 onwards will require further funding and resources. Detailed planning is underway to ensure we deliver those actions that achieve the biggest gains in waste reduction, re-use, and recycling.
- 3.49 Further funding and resources will be necessary for rolling out separate food waste collections and separating the kerbside food and garden waste collections, which have not yet been secured. The full cost impact of these improvements and level of growth needed is unknown at this stage. These requirements and other implications of the Government's waste and recycling policy reforms will require revenue and capital growth. Further details of the service and finance implications will be reported in due course.

### Progress to date on delivering the actions in the RR

- 3.50 As stated in paragraph 3.26, the action plan includes many actions we are already taking. The table below provides updates on the RRP actions that are in progress.

Ref	Action title	Progress to date
#1	Improving recycling infrastructure for blocks of flats and estates and tackling contamination through implementing Flats Recycling Package (FRP) interventions	All THH properties have been reviewed and recommendations made.  A Managing Agent engagement event has been delivered in association with ReLondon.  Improvements at THH estates have commenced with the refurbishment and exchange of recycling bins.
#2	Increasing participation in the kerbside food waste collection service through re-promotion of the service.	Survey of kerbside properties completed. Repromotion of the service will commence in the Autumn/Winter 2023.
#3	Rolling out food waste collection service to purpose-built blocks of flats	Surveying of purpose-built flats storage capacity is in progress. A pilot service is in place at two estates to test a service model for wider implementation at a future date.
#4	Reviewing the kerbside food and garden waste collection service with a view to collect food waste from kerbside properties fully separate from garden waste	This action is linked to action #3 above and will commence in due course.

#5	Reviewing service offer to kerbside properties to increase recycling	Survey of kerbside properties completed. Suitable properties not yet using recycling wheeled bins will be encouraged to switch to wheeled bins.
#6	Review and expand garden waste collection service to increase recycling	Survey of kerbside properties completed. The service will be re-promoted in the Spring 2024.
#7	Improving service delivery – Flats above shops	Mapping flats above shops is in progress with a view to commencing service monitoring in the Autumn/Winter 2023.
#8	Expansion of commercial waste service to include food waste and promote recycling collection service	We have committed to review commercial waste recycling services across the borough, to provide an improved service offer and increase take up of business recycling as part of this.
#9	Improve recycling sack distribution	New sack distribution plan under development
#10	Championing food waste reduction initiatives	Food waste reduction activities are centred around WRAP's national Love Food Hate Waste campaign and Food Waste Action Week that is held in March each year. Two events have been scheduled to date, 17 <sup>th</sup> August 2023 and 7 <sup>th</sup> March 2024. Tower Hamlets is also taking part in a pan London sustainable food campaign being run by ReLondon.
#11	Reuse, repair and recycling activities and events	A Strategic Plan target to deliver at least 32 events/activities in 2023/2024 has been set and dates for 11 events have been scheduled to date.
#12	Promoting waste reduction and recycling within the local community through the Recycling Champions Scheme	We have set a Strategic Plan target to recruit 35 new champions and undertake engagement via 1 dedicated event each quarter including a thank you event and MRF tours and bi-monthly newsletters.
#13	Education and behaviour change – Schools recycling programme	We have set a target to deliver a minimum of 10 education events at schools in 2023/2024. A new leaflet has been developed to promote the scheme which will be sent to all schools in the borough.
#14	Expand locations for the recycling of small WEEE and batteries	Small WEEE and battery collection points are currently at the RRC and every Idea Store. Further suitable locations will be investigated.
#15	Expand opportunities for residents to reuse and recycle textiles	Events planned for the year include clothing swap events which promote reuse.
#16	Collaboration with faith groups and targeted/local media to promote recycling and waste reduction	Engagement plans with key contacts from faith groups, local mosques, community organisations and local media are under development in Autumn 2023
#17	Directory of repair / circular economy companies in the	A webpage is being developed with the communications team.

	borough to promote/work with (any reuse schemes, refill shops, container reuse)	
#18	Promoting reduction of single use plastics	A plan is in development with the communications team.
#19	Improving waste reduction and recycling arrangements in new developments	<p>The Reuse, Recycling and Waste SPD was adopted in 2020. The SPD provides the framework for waste and recycling facilities in new developments and shapes the council's response to planning applications in this respect.</p> <p>Recruitment of an Officer to support developers shape their waste management proposals is in progress. This Officer will also be conducting site visits at new developments as they come online.</p>
#20	Promoting waste reduction and Circular Economy principles in the business community	Tower Hamlets has signed up to ReLondon's Circular Economy Matchmaker, a place to help local authorities and businesses to connect and collaborate. The Matchmaker provides opportunities to engage circular businesses in future project or identify circular businesses that can help green the supply chain.
#21	Greening the waste collection fleet	<p>Delivered in 2 phases including the waste fleet:</p> <p>Phase 1: £5.475 million in CIL funding has been approved for supply of electric cars, vans and light commercial vehicles, including installation of charging points in line with approved funding and procurement plans.</p> <p>Phase 2: Development of plans for replacement of remaining specialist vehicles, including trial of electric vehicle replacement options, development of business case for capital funding and procurement plans.</p>

## **Monitoring the RRP**

- 3.51 Delivery of the actions in the RRP will be monitored internally through our service plans, monitoring progress on Strategic Plan Annual Delivery Plan and Net Zero Carbon Action Plan, as appropriate. The RRP, as a whole, will be monitored annually by the GLA.

## **Liaison with the GLA**

- 3.52 A draft of the RRP was submitted to the GLA in January 2023 for initial officer review. Following feedback, the RRP was updated and resubmitted to the GLA in March 2023, for further review.
- 3.53 Further feedback from the formal review was received on 14th April and confirms that the GLA are content for the RRP to progress through for sign off by the Mayor in Cabinet, prior to formal approval by the Deputy Mayor of London. Confirmation of general conformity by the Deputy Mayor of London is subject to the RRP being implemented in a timely and effective manner and on the proviso that the council commits to and demonstrates active progress in delivering the following commitments:
- 3.54 Improving recycling infrastructure for 2,160 blocks of flats and estates and tackling contamination through implementing Flats Recycling Package (FRP) interventions by December 2024 (LB Tower Hamlets #1).
- 3.55 Completion of the route optimisation exercise to improve service delivery for recycling for residents at new build flats in the borough.
- 3.56 Rolling out food waste collection services to purpose-built blocks of flats, to a target of 30% purpose- built coverage by March 2025 (LB Tower Hamlets #2).
- 3.57 Reviewing the kerbside food and garden waste collection service with a view to collect food waste from kerbside properties fully separate from garden waste and prepare an implementation plan by March 2024, and in line with prospective government requirements and timescales.
- 3.58 Expansion of commercial waste service to include food waste and promote recycling collection service by 2024 onwards.
- 3.59 Greening the waste collection fleet, in line with the council's programme to electrify its whole fleet and the target for all HGVs to be electric or hybrid by 2030 (LB Tower Hamlets #20).
- 3.60 The RRP is attached to the report as Appendix 1

## **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The actions set out in the RRP are focused on improving services to support residents and businesses to minimise their waste and reuse and recycle

more. The actions proposed in the RRP will have a positive impact on the environment which will provide a better quality of life for all groups including those with protected characteristics.

- 4.2 Using population data, we have identified groups with protected characteristics within in the community, considered how each groups needs might differ and tailored services and communications accordingly.
- 4.3 The impacts of RRP actions on people living in different housing types, people with different fluency in English and people with each of the protected characteristics have been considered and are discussed in the Equality Impact Analysis Screening Tool which is attached as Appendix 2.

## **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.

### Best Value Implications

- 5.2 Waste and recycling services have a combined annual value of approx. £18.5M with pressure on service budgets to deal with increasing demands from population growth, service innovation and continuous improvement.
- 5.3 Overall, our plans are focusing on looking to reduce waste, through actions such as encouraging greater reuse of unwanted items, reducing the level of contamination in our recycling and targeting illegal commercial waste as means to mitigate costs increases from population growth drive better value from services.
- 5.4 Some activities in the RRP are funded by an allocation of capital funding from CIL.

### Consultations

- 5.5 The action plan hasn't been consulted on because it brings together actions from strategies that have already been consulted on, specifically the Strategic Plan and the Waste Management Strategy. The Waste Management Strategy will need to be reviewed at some point in the future, but this needs to wait until there is more detailed direction from Government on the waste and recycling reforms.

### Environmental (including air quality)

- 5.6 The council's waste management services contribute to the protection of the environment and protecting human health through the promotion of waste minimisation and effective management of waste arising in the borough.
- 5.7 The main focus of the RRP is to move waste up the waste hierarchy by providing residents and businesses in the borough with greater access to services that will allow and encourage them to waste less, reuse and recycle more. This will contribute to the council's efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change by reducing the carbon footprint of the council's waste management services.
- 5.8 The Emissions Performance Standard (EPS) is one of the metrics that features in the RRP. The EPS measures greenhouse gasses released from London's local authority waste management activities. The EPS aims to achieve significant carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions savings from the management of London's local authority waste. The EPS focuses on treatment of waste with an emphasis on recovering materials which deliver greater CO<sub>2</sub> reductions.
- 5.9 The RRP also looks to support the achievement of the council's air quality action plan objectives through the incorporation of the council's plans to green the waste services vehicle fleet.

### Risk Management

- 5.10 Some actions set out in section three of the RRP seek to address the some of the expected upcoming Government reforms. However, implementation of these actions is subject to further clarity from Government, access to funding and the ability to address operational and waste treatment issues as identified in the RRP, specifically action LB Tower Hamlets #4.

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

- 6.1 The report is seeking approval of the Council's Recycling and Reduction Plan 2023-25, to deliver improvements to waste and recycling performance as part of the strategic plans to deliver a clean and greener future for Tower Hamlets, and to comply with requirements set by the GLA.
- 6.2 The additional actions to implement the Recycling and Reduction Plan will need to be funded from existing budgets. Capital funding bids are expected to cover the increased costs of recycling infrastructure e.g., recycling bins required to deliver enhanced recycling performance.
- 6.3 Delivering on the actions within the RRP will generate extra cost and budget pressures in 2024/25, relating to increased quantity of recycling tonnage to be processed combined with inflationary pressure on processing costs and

borrowing costs for capital investment. Cost mitigations will be identified to manage these budget pressures.

## **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 Pursuant to s.355 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, the Council must:  
Act in general conformity with the provisions of the London Environment Strategy dealing with municipal waste management, save to the extent that compliance does not impose excessive additional costs on the authority.
- 7.2 Act in accordance with any guidance from the Secretary of State for determining what is to be regarded as acting in general conformity or imposing excessive additional costs.
- 7.3 Pursuant to s.356 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, the Mayor of London can give a direction requiring the Council to take action if he considers it necessary for the purposes of the implementation of the London Environment Strategy. The Council must comply with any such direction.

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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- NONE.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 - Tower Hamlets Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) April 2023 to March 2025
- Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Analysis Screening Tool

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

- None

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

N/A