


Cabinet	 TOWER HAMLETS
Wednesday 24 July 2024	
Report of: Simon Baxter, Corporate Director, Communities	Classification: Open (Unrestricted)
Reduction and Recycling Plan Progress Report - Quarter 4, 2023/24	

Lead Member	Councillor Shafi Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency
Originating Officer(s)	Richard Willams, Head of Operational Services Fiona Heyland, Environmental Services Improvement Manager Louise Houston, Environmental Services Improvement Team Leader
Wards affected	(All Wards);
Key Decision?	No
Reason for Key Decision	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
Forward Plan Notice Published	
Exempt information	N/A
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	Priority 7: Working towards a clean and green future

Executive Summary

The Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) 2023-2025 was approved by Cabinet in September 2023. It 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.

Progress reports are provided to Cabinet on a quarterly basis detailing achievements that have been made within the plan. The attached Quarter 4 report is presented to Cabinet for note.

The focus in Quarter 4 has been on improved service delivery, continued roll out of the flats recycling package and development of new communication, engagement and outreach plans with mosques, schools and community groups to drive recycling behaviour change.

Improvements in recycling performance will be seen from Quarter 2 2024-2025 onwards, as the combined impact of planned activity starts to drive recycling

behaviour change. This will include ongoing development of targeted estate by estate approaches to incentivise recycling and reduce contamination.

Key Initiatives within our RRP include:

- 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 increase household waste reduction, re-use and recycling activity. These will include high visibility fun day events, incentivisation and a competition for schools. We are working in partnership with East London Mosque on a programme of activities. We are delivering recycling education sessions in schools, targeted estates contamination engagement and recycling stalls, presentations and events held in partnership with community groups and landlords/managing agents.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the Reduction and Recycling Plan 2023-2025, Quarter 4 2024 Progress Report

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 A quarterly progress report was requested as a recommendation of the approval of the RRP at September Cabinet.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 This is noting report and there are no alternative options.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Reduction and Recycling Plan 2023-2025 (RRP), Quarter 4 2023/24 Progress Report (Appendix 1) provides an update on recycling performance with commentary and sets out the progress and achievements against priorities and actions. The report describes:
 - RRP background
 - Recycling Performance
 - RRP priorities and actions
 - Other actions and progress

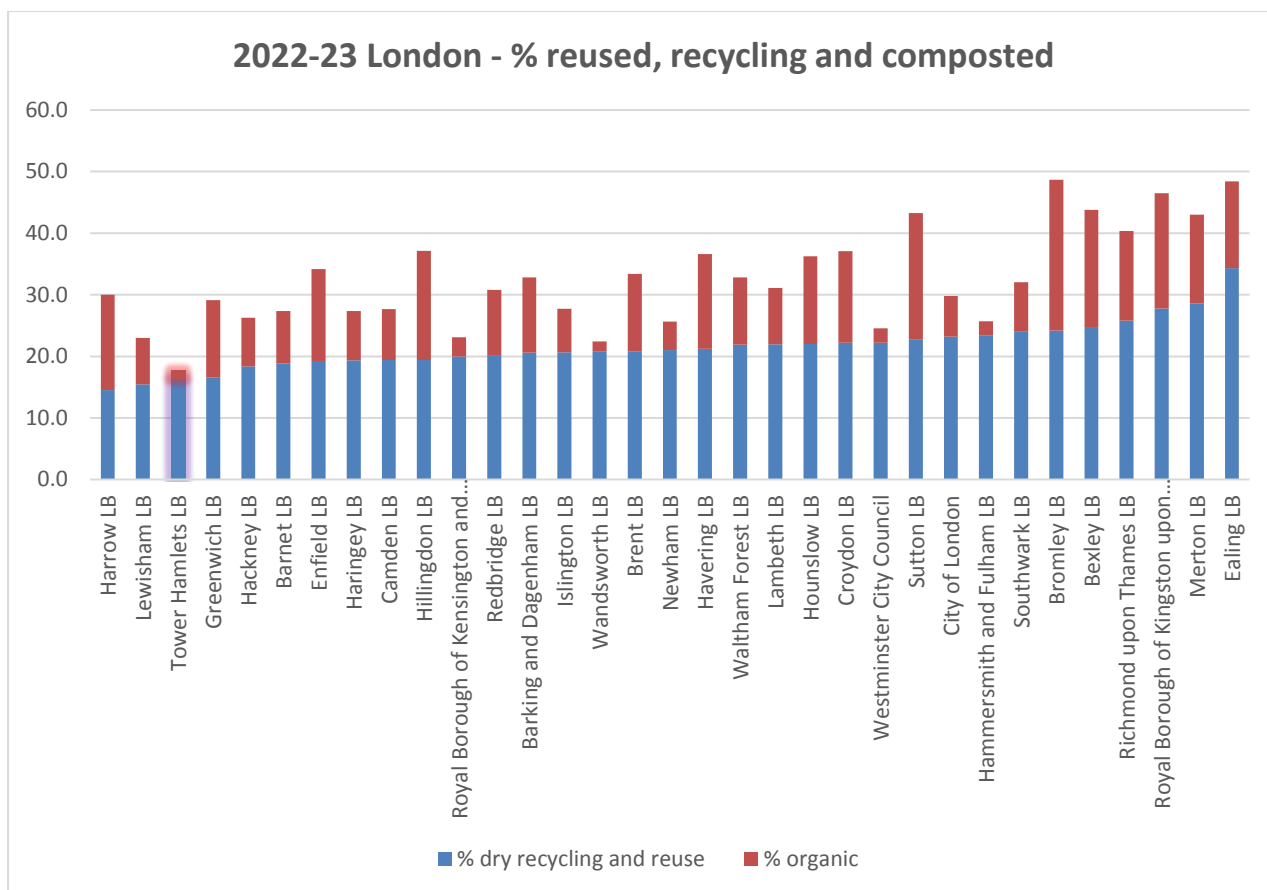
Progress summary and context

- 3.2 The GLA requires all London authorities to have a Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) showing that they are in general conformity with the London Environment Strategy.

- 3.3 The Office for Local Government (Oflog) waste management performance measures are 1. Proportion of household waste sent for recycling, 2. Residual waste per household and 3. Contamination rate of recycling – calculated as the estimated proportion that is rejected of the total amount of household waste sent for recycling.

Household recycling rate	
Target	23% by March 2025
Outturn 23/24 (provisional subject to WasteDataFlow audit)	16%

- 3.4 Tonnage delivered for dry recycling to Bywaters makes up the largest component of our recycling. In 2023/24 70 tonnes less was sent to Bywaters than the previous year. The strike in September had a significant impact on recycling tonnage collected. However, for Quarter 4 2023/24 there was a significant upturn, with 248 tonnes more dry recycling delivered compared to the same period 2022/23.
- 3.5 The average contamination percentage was higher in 2023/24 (at 30%) than in 2022/23 (at 27.26%). While significant progress has been made on actions within the RRP, it will take time for some of these to have an impact on the recycling performance.
- 3.6 London benchmarking



The table above shows the percentages of dry recycling and organic waste recycled, reused or composted across London in 2022-23. This is the most recent full year which has been audited by DEFRA.

Tower Hamlets ranked 31 out of 33 for dry recycling. For organic waste Tower Hamlets ranked 33 out of 33 for organic waste, due to the high proportion of flatted properties without gardens and food waste collections.

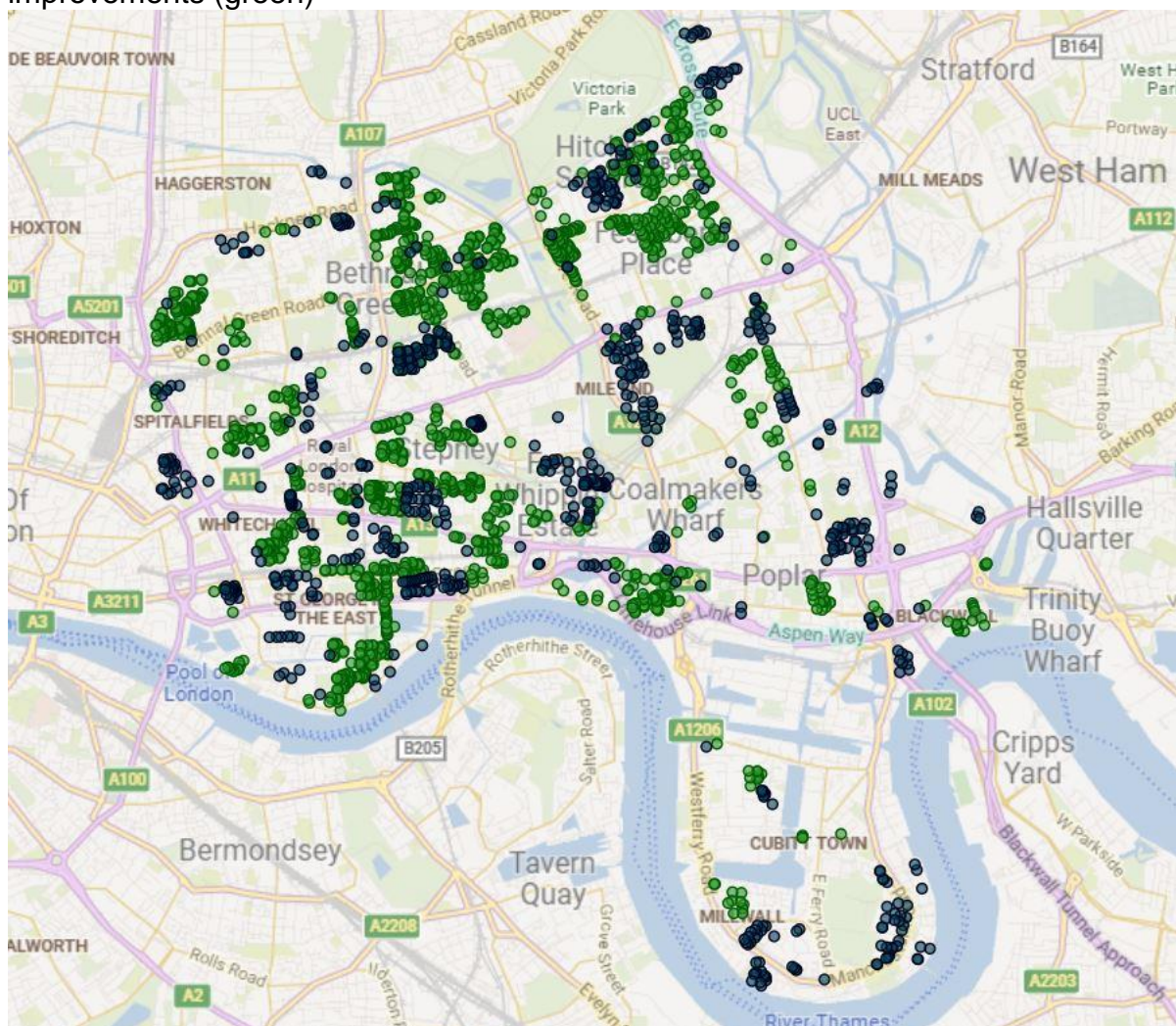
- 3.7 The population density, fast population growth and high proportion of flatted properties poses significant challenges for waste and recycling services, along with the growth in the nighttime economy. The residual waste tonnage increases in higher proportion every year, compared to the dry mixed recycling, which has only grown marginally. The property growth has a direct impact on the increase of the household residual waste generated. The total number of dwellings given by WasteDataFlow in 2023-24 is 144,240, whereas, in 2022-23, this number was 140,210. This is a 2.87% increase from last year.

Increasing recycling and reducing contamination

- 3.8 The Flats Recycling Project (FRP) is working with managing agents/landlords to increase recycling storage capacities, improve recycling bin accessibility and improve communications at blocks of flats across the borough. Infrastructure improvements including new bins, additional bins and signage are being rolled out.

FRP results (Target 2170 blocks with improvement by March 2024/25)	
Blocks surveyed	1448
Blocks with improvements rolled out	921
Number of managing agents met with	58
Number of managing agents/landlords who have agreed to improvements	34

The map below shows the location of blocks surveyed (blue) and blocks with improvements (green)



3.9 The food waste collection service currently covers all low-rise properties however, our recent monitoring indicates that only around a quarter of households are taking part in the service. Analysis of our waste composition indicates that about 34% of residual waste is food waste. The communications plan is underway. A webform is in the final stages of development which will enable residents to order their kitchen and outdoor food waste caddies online. A new leaflet has been developed and the website is being updated. Targeted repromotion of the service will take place in June to October with 7133 properties leafleted and a target of 2377 of these properties taking part in the service.

- 3.10 We are working with schools to help them to recycling more of their waste. So far 60 schools have been surveyed with 38 schools receiving additional recycling bins and/or recycling bin repairs. 28 schools have signed up to recommence food waste recycling collections. We are looking to run a poster competition at schools in the Autumn, to engage pupils in recycling at school and take the message home.
- 3.11 46 engagement events were delivered in 23/24, see table below for a breakdown by event type.

Event type	Number delivered
Recycling information stall at community events/Idea Stores	15
Swap events	8
Repair and waste reduction workshops	7
Education sessions at schools	6
Staff pod session	1
Recycling champion MRF tour or workshop	3
Caretaker engagement sessions	5
Managing agent workshop	1
Total	46

- 3.12 The recycling champions network now has 104 residents signed up. We are looking to increase active participation in the scheme by running “Improve recycling where you live” workshops, inviting volunteers to help with all engagement activities and incentivising volunteers by organising social “thank you” events, offering participation-based certificates and entry into prize draws.
- 3.13 The “Let’s Rethink it” ran throughout the year and included outdoor, social media and programmatic advertising.

3.13 Communication and engagement delivery plan outline

The table below provides the current and provisional communications and engagements activities that have been scheduled.

Month	Recycling
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flats recycling project promotions
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling stall – ISW • Recycling champions newsletter • Flats recycling project promotions
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flats recycling project promotions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer Fair – recycling champions promotion • Interfaith Forum presentation (confirmed) • Properties without bins - leaflets and sacks delivered • RSL meeting presentation (delivered) • MRF tour and workshop – recycling champions • June 22: clothes and book swap with repair workshops
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 July: ELM sermon, stall and videos (confirmed) • 13 July: Boundary recycling fun day (confirmed) • Recycling stalls – Council estate neighbourhood fun day x1 • Flats recycling project promotions • Recycling champions newsletter • Contamination project engagement • Properties without bins - leaflets and sacks delivered (confirmed) • School engagement sessions (2)
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling stalls – Council estate neighbourhood fun day x5 • Flats recycling project promotions • Contamination project engagement • Low-rise food waste repromotion • Recycling champion workshop • Focus group at East London Mosque
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13th September: ELM sermon, stall and videos • Flats recycling project repromotions • Recycle Week event • Recycle Week social media promotions • Low-rise food waste repromotions • School engagement sessions (2-3) • ELM: sermon, stall, videos • Contamination project engagement • Thank you event – Recycling Champion and Street Leaders (confirmed) • Incentive scheme launch (provisional) • Recycling champions newsletter • RSL meeting presentation • Summit at East London Mosque – 24 September (provisional)
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flats recycling project promotions • Schools engagement sessions (2-3) • Low-rise food waste promotions (provisional) • Recycling champions workshop (provisional) • Focus group at East London Mosque • Recycling stall (TBC)
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flats recycling project promotions • School engagement sessions (x3 provisional) • Recycling champions newsletter
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13th December: ELM sermon, stall and videos • Flats recycling project promotions • Social media/website: Christmas waste and recycling communications • Recycling stall (TBC)
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy nothing new month: Clothing and book swap • School engagement sessions (2-3) • Recycling champion workshop • Christmas tree collection promotions • Recycling champions newsletter • Recycling stall (TBC)
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7th February: sermons, stalls and videos • School engagement sessions (2-3) • Social media/website: Pre- Eid al-Fitr communications • Recycling stall (TBC)

March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair week: repair workshops • School engagement sessions (2-3) • Thank you event – Recycling Champions and Street Leaders • Spring compost bin offer and garden waste service promotion • Recycling champions newsletter • Recycling stall (TBC)
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3.14 Progress has been made develop a partnership with East London Mosque to help deliver key messages about faith and the environment. A sermon (Friday prayers congregation is approximately 10,000), stall, videos inside the mosque will commence in July. The programme is also set to include a roadshow of workshops, training sessions, school engagement, a summit (target 5000 people), social media activity, focus groups and Interfaith Forum work.

3.15 The Reduction and Recycling communication campaign in development will include partnership working at local mosques, schools and estates, within a set area.

3.16 We are working with ReLondon on developing our service standards and policies, with a view to ensuring that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities about waste, recycling and contamination. A new recycling and waste collection service standards and policy document has been drafted. A recycling and waste collections workshop with managing agents was held in March to discuss roles and responsibilities and improve partnership working.

3.17 We have been using information provided by Waste Operations Team and Flats Recycling Team to identify areas with high contamination. We will be selecting 6 estates on Round 7, as this round has the highest contamination. We will deliver engagement using the green/red card notifications and improvement plans, with before and after monitoring.

For each estate, engagement activities will be:

- Red letter to TH Housing notifying them of the contamination problem on the estate
- Red letter and leaflet to residents notifying them of the contamination problem
- Site visit with caretaking team on estate
- Door-knocking or recycling stall on estate

Monitoring will include:

- Round 7 contamination data monitoring
- Before and after visual check of the bins
- Resident survey

3.18 Other communications projects in progress include:

- Boundary Estate Fun Day with recycling themed stalls and activities 6 other Neighbourhood events at Council housing estates
- Internal Council Recycling campaign development
- Recycling Incentive Scheme pilot development

We are investigating the use of the FiFiLi app to trial an incentive scheme. The concept is that one person per household can report their recycling behaviours by sending in a photo. Points are allocated to different behaviour types. Fortnightly voucher prize given at random and monthly voucher prize to the entry with the most points.

Only residents on one specific collection round to have access to the scheme, so that we can monitor the impacts on recycling tonnage.

Recycling behaviours to include:

- Recycling in a clear sack (photo)
- Recycle using a reusable recycling container (for those with bins) – (photo)
- Flatten cardboard box for recycling (photo)
- Rinsed glass jar for recycling (photo)
- Rinsed plastic food container for recycling (photo)
- Attend a Council organised recycling event (scan QR code)

We will also look to run focussed participation prize draws with the requirement to be signed up as a volunteer. Participation in one of our designated activities automatically enters you into a monthly prize draw for a voucher award.

3.19 The Mayors Waste Investment Plan has been developed to improve waste services and street cleanliness across the borough. While this funding will primarily focus on service improvements in the waste and street cleansing service (including the recruitment of new frontline staff, procurement of new vehicles, and increasing service efficiency), the recycling team is identifying opportunities to integrate and proliferate messages about recycling through to frontline workers, businesses, and residents.

3.20 The recycling collection teams will be receiving training which aims to re-energise crews and improve performance of the collection rounds, with performance results regularly fed back to the teams.

Expected performance contributions from RRP actions

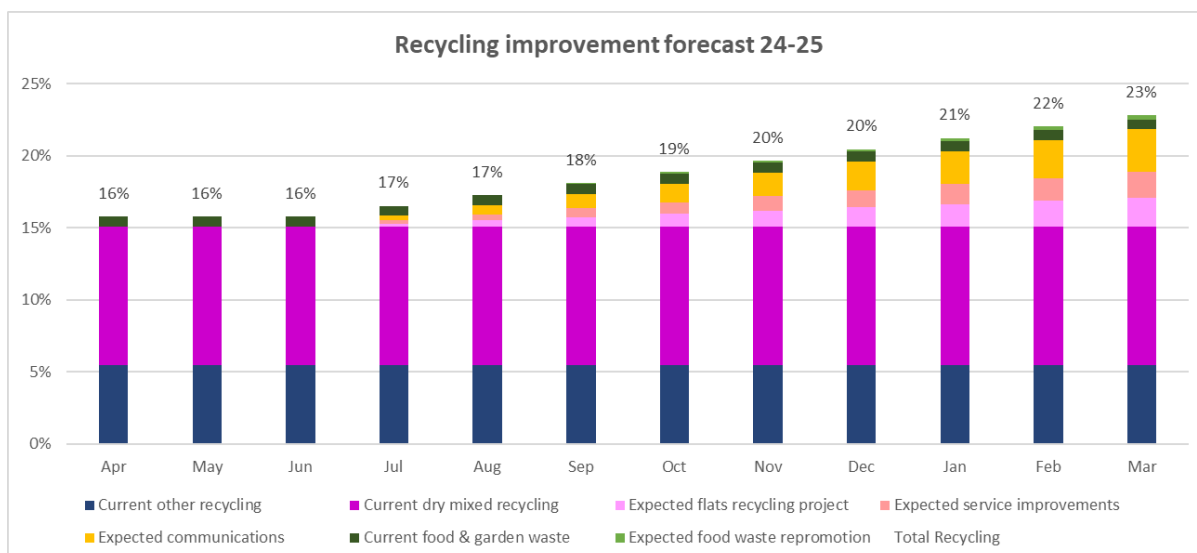
3.21 To reach the target set in the RRP we need to increase the recycling rate from 16% to 23% by the March 2025. We need to collect an estimated extra 6674 tonnes of recycling to achieve this goal.

3.22 The table below set out the expected performance to be gained by our current and planned improvement initiatives.

Expected Performance – Current RRP projects

Project	Expected result
Current performance	16%
Flats Recycling Project	<p>2% increase by March 2025</p> <p>We expect at least 2080 more tonnes of recycling to be collected per year by March 2025.</p> <p>We also expect a reduction in contamination.</p>
Active repromotion of the kerbside food waste service	<p>0.25% increase in recycling by end March 2025</p> <p>We expect 250 more tonnes of recycling per year.</p> <p>Increased participation to 25%-30%.</p>
Other service improvement activities, including route optimisation, flats above shops and recycling sack delivery plan	<p>We expect this to deliver a 1.8% increase.</p> <p>We expect 1,800 more tonnes of recycling per year</p>
Communication and engagement activities such as East London Mosque project, Contamination project communications, flats recycling project, fun day recycling stalls, school assemblies and recycling crew engagement	<p>We expect these activities to close the remaining gap 2.95% gap to 23%.</p> <p>We expect 2,950 more tonnes of recycling per year</p>
Target (March 2025)	23%

The Recycling Improvement forecast 24-25 graph below sets out the current and expected recycling improvements month on month for each workstream.



Expected Performance – Communications and engagement activities

3.23 Whilst it is difficult to quantify the impact that communication and engagement work has on the recycling rate, ReLondon research tells us that regular and on-going communication and engagement is needed to improve recycling knowledge and particularly to maintain motivation.

3.24 The work with East London Mosque referenced above in 3.13 will reach a large audience. Friday prayers congregation is 10,000 and weekly footfall across the mosque is 36,000.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 An equalities assessment was undertaken for the RRP, please refer to Appendix 2.

4.2 No other implications have been identified.

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.

Environmental (including air quality)

- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 The 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.
- 5.4 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

- 5.5 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 This is a noting report providing a quarterly update on the delivery of the Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) 2023-2025 and as such there are no financial implications emanating from it. Costs associated with its delivery are met from existing budget provision.

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.

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.

- 7.2 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

- [Reduction and Recycling Plan 2023-2025](#)

Appendices

- RRP Qtr4 Progress Report

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

- NONE.

Officer contact details for documents:

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