

**Report of:** Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Meeting of:	Date	Ward(s)
Executive	21.5.15	All

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## **SUBJECT: Waste Minimisation and Recycling Action Plan 2015-16**

### **1. Synopsis**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on recycling progress over the last two years and sets out priorities and service initiatives for the coming year.
- 1.2 Full Council on 26 February 2015 agreed in the 'Budget Proposals 2015-16' report to changes relating to recycling services and this report provides further details.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To agree the Waste Minimisation and Recycling Service Aims and Objectives for 2015/16 as set out in paragraph 3.4 below.
- 2.2 To note that as part of the Budget Proposals 2015-16 report, Full Council, at its meeting of 26 February 2015, agreed the following budget items:
  - Review recycling points on estates to make them more accessible and, following pilots, move to communal recycling on the estates where doorstep recycling is currently still offered.
  - Introduce the 'village principle' into Street Environment Services by creating area-based teams.
  - Reduce the number of refuse collection vehicles by, following pilots, moving towards communal kitchen waste and green waste collection.
  - Complete planned reduction in the Bright Sparks service's reliance on Council funding.
- 2.3 To note borough-wide changes to food waste and garden waste collections after a pilot, and to communal recycling on Estates, all as set out in paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7 below.
- 2.4 To delegate authority to agree the 2015/16 charges for bookable garden waste home-collections and for

garden waste bags to the Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Transport.

### **3. Background**

3.1 This report outlines the main achievements of the Council's Waste Minimisation and Recycling Service over the last two years together with objectives and service proposals for the coming year.

#### **3.2 Review of progress against agreed aims and objectives during 2013 to 2015**

Progress against the agreed aims and objectives for the service during 2013 to 2015 is outlined below:

##### **Aim**

**To provide quality recycling services that meet the needs of residents and to reduce the amounts of municipal waste sent for disposal via landfill or incineration.**

To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set, with progress set out against each objective.

##### **Objectives**

#### **1. To achieve a household waste recycling rate of 32.6% for 2013/14**

The recycling rate for 2013/14 was 32.68%.

#### **2. To achieve a household waste (not recycled) rate of no more than 442kg during 2013/14**

The average residual waste per household was 394.6kg per household during 2013/14.

Final audited outturns for recycling and residual waste for 2014/15 are confirmed later in 2015 but the current estimated figure is 32.65% against a target of 33.55%

#### **3. To identify opportunities to implement better quality and more cost effective methods of recycling**

During 2013/14 and 14/15 we have:

- Continued to expand the estates food waste service to more properties
- Provided clear sacks to support additional Christmas recycling for street properties
- Supported Bright Sparks through in-house voids clearances and bulky reuse collections, and through linking in the with Council's Residents Support Scheme
- Worked with London Waste and Recycling Board (LWARB) to identify opportunities for service efficiencies in the refuse and recycling service
- Tackled ongoing contamination problems at communal recycling sites, both in-house and in partnership with Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP)
- Engaged with communities and schools to promote recycling

#### **4. To support the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) partnership and the implementation of its waste strategy**

##### **Waste minimisation and partnership work with NLWA**

Islington recycling officers liaise with NLWA to deliver the Waste Prevention work as a partnership. We attend quarterly waste prevention meetings to help steer the programme, assess tenders, suggest locations for events, workshops, and to attend events where necessary.

We continue to work in partnership with NLWA on a range of activities, which include the following:

- Food waste outreach events and workshops
- Green Office week, including a 'waste less food save more money' event at Islington Town Hall
- Food waste challenge
- Waste prevention displays
- Clothes swap ('swishing') events
- Give and Take days
- Real nappy events
- Education programme to schools with Eco Active and Circus Takeaway
- A recycling art piece was installed at Islington Green
- Various Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) promotion activities
- Developing reuse partnerships between reuse organisations and Housing Associations

Supporting partnership working with NLWA to promote waste minimisation brings value for money and enables messages to be delivered at a higher regional level, as well as tailored Borough specific messages.

### **NLWA joint communications**

The Council continues to work in partnership with the North London Waste Authority and its other constituent Boroughs to deliver a range of waste services for residents. In particular, a joint communications campaign is being delivered, to promote waste minimisation and recycling. The Council will seek to steer this partnership work to ensure a greater emphasis is placed on enabling and encouraging residents on estates to recycle more.

### **Inter Authority Agreement and Menu Pricing**

We have also been working closely with NLWA to conclude discussions around an Inter Authority Agreement, new levy charging arrangements and a new waste management strategy.

## **3.4 Aims and Objectives for 2015/6**

Proposed Aims, Objectives and service priorities for 2015/16 are set out below. They reflect previous aims and objectives with updated targets.

### **Aim**

- To provide quality recycling services that meet the needs of residents and to reduce the amounts of municipal waste sent for disposal via landfill or incineration.

### **Objectives**

- To build awareness for the need to recycle/re-use through effective communication
  - To achieve a household waste recycling rate of 34.46% for 2015/16\*
  - To achieve a household waste (not recycled) rate of no more than 422kg during 2015/16\*
  - To identify opportunities to implement better quality and more cost effective methods of recycling
  - To support the NLWA partnership and the implementation of its waste strategy
- (\* See 4.1 below).

## **4. Service Updates and Changes**

### **4.1 Recycling rates**

Islington Council's recycling target for 2015/16 is 34.46%. This is extremely challenging given the financial pressures facing the Council. However, every effort will be made to continue to improve recycling services and to achieve this target.

Islington's recycling targets have been set to ensure a steady but reasonable improvement in recycling performance and to support the NLWA target of recycling 50% of household waste by 2020.

Nevertheless, recycling more needs to be set in the context of financial responsibility rather than a single overriding sole objective. It is right to recycle as much as possible but there may be situations where the cost of doing so makes it unrealistic.

#### 4.2 **Compulsory recycling**

Recycling in Islington was made compulsory on 1 April 2011. Compulsory recycling means that residents are expected not to throw away anything that you could recycle using the services provided to them at home.

The legal position is that Council may set out to householders in a notice the number and kind of receptacles to be used for different recyclable materials and the placement of those receptacles for collection. From 15 June 2015, a failure to comply with that notice will no longer be a criminal offence. However, the criminal offence has been replaced by a civil sanction. The Council will be able to serve a warning notice on a householder who fails without reasonable excuse to comply with a requirement of a notice but only if such failure causes a nuisance or is detrimental to any amenities of the locality. If the warning notice is not complied with, the Council may serve a notice of its intention to impose a fixed penalty on the householder. The householder has 28 days in which to make representations as to why payment of a fixed penalty should not be required. In order to impose the fixed penalty the Council must consider any representations and serve a final notice on the householder. The householder may appeal to the First Tier Tribunal against the imposition of a fixed penalty. If the requirement to pay the fixed penalty is confirmed on appeal, payment must be made within 28 days of the decision. Further fixed penalties may be imposed if the householder continues to fail to comply with the original requirement in the warning notice.

No enforcement action (warning notice and imposition of a fixed penalty) can be taken unless the breach of the Council's recycling requirements either amounts to a nuisance or causes detriment to the amenities of the locality can be demonstrated. No guidance has been issued yet by Defra and it is not clear what is meant by 'detriment to the amenities of the locality'. However, the test will not be satisfied if waste is simply put out in the wrong type of receptacles. The ability to impose penalties is targeted at those householders whose behaviour reduces the quality of their neighbours' surroundings.

#### 4.3 **Bright Sparks**

As part of the 2015/16 budget proposals, Full Council agreed to complete the planned reduction in the Bright Sparks service's reliance on Council funding.

Bright Sparks was set up in 2010 with £250k annual revenue funding allocation. The Bright Sparks shop opened in June 2010 at the 'Fin Futures' property, 225 Seven Sisters Road. A repairs workshop also opened nearby and has recently relocated to the Andover Estate. Bright Sparks opened a larger shop at 176 Seven Sisters Road in 2013.

The Council has been working closely with Bright Sparks to help it to become financially self-sufficient. This has been supported in two main areas:

- Firstly, the voids and reuse services have been providing Bright Sparks with quality items which are resold through their shop, increasing their income stream.
- Secondly a proportion of referrals through the Council's Resident Support Scheme (RSS) are now referred to Bright Sparks. This offers these residents an opportunity to obtain quality, reused items, giving them better value for money. This also benefits Bright Sparks through increased customers numbers and income. This important scheme is now increasingly put to good use within Islington, supporting residents, jobs and reuse.

We will work more closely with Bright Sparks to promote its services, particularly to residents on estates. This will encourage greater take up of the reuse collection options, providing Bright Sparks with more quality items for resale and distribution through the RSS, and will in turn encourage more residents to source items from Bright Sparks, leading to increased turnover.

Repairs of small electrical items have been a relatively small part of Bright Spark's operations, but by far

the most costly. Bright Sparks have now ceased the repairs of small electrical goods, focussing instead on large bulky items such as furniture, in order to sustain a viable business model. Residents can still drop off waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) at the Reuse and Recycling Centre or at the Bright Sparks shop.

Bright Sparks continues to offer an important service, providing employment, training and volunteer opportunities and by diverting increasing amounts of reusable items from disposal.

#### 4.4 **Changes to garden (green) and food waste collections**

As part of the 2015/16 budget proposals, Full Council agreed to reduce, following pilots, the number of refuse collection vehicles by moving towards communal green waste and communal food waste collection.

Changing the way that garden waste and food waste collections are made in future will enable the dry recycling and rubbish collections to be made using one vehicle instead of two separate vehicles, significantly reducing the cost of collections, the number of vehicles needed and the number of journeys made.

Residents in street properties currently receive a year-round free weekly garden waste collection service. Demand for the service is highly seasonal but annually, around 1,300 tonnes are collected, contributing around two percentage points to the overall recycling rate.

Proportionately, Islington has the 5<sup>th</sup> lowest area given over to private gardens in London and only around 30% of Islington residents have a private garden. The collection cost for garden waste is difficult to calculate as it is co-collected with mixed dry recycling and food waste but the disposal of garden waste material costs approximately £130,000 a year and currently, the collection and disposal costs are borne by all residents, including those without gardens.

Under the proposed new arrangements, residents will be able to:

- compost their garden waste at home using subsidised compost bins available from the Council;
- take their garden waste free of charge to communal local drop off points located in parks;
- take their garden waste free of charge to the Reuse and Recycling Centre (including the pedestrian drop off point at the Cottage Road entrance), or;
- pay for a collection from their home.

#### 4.5 **Changes to food waste collections**

Communal food waste collection services continue to be provided to residents on estates. The Council remains committed to providing a suitable communal food waste facility for all estate residents to compliment the mixed dry recycling services already provided.

Residents in street properties currently have their food waste collected from their property weekly. Approximately 30% of households offered the service use it. The service collects around 1,500 tonnes a year, contributing around 2.4 percentage points to the overall recycling rate.

The cost of collecting food waste in this way is difficult to calculate, as it is co-collected with garden waste and mixed dry recycling on the same collection vehicle.

Residents on estates are provided with communal food waste containers and it is intended to offer a similar arrangement to street properties, with food waste no longer being collected directly from residents' homes.

Under the new arrangements, residents in street properties will be able to:

- Compost some or all of their food waste at home using subsidised compost bins or wormeries, or;
- Use a local communal food waste recycling site.

These communal food waste facilities will embrace new technology and consist of modern, robust,

rodent proof metal containers within reasonable walking distance. They would be emptied at least weekly (more if required) with a regular cleansing service.

#### 4.6 **Food and garden waste service changes pilot**

The new collection arrangements for both garden and food waste will be piloted to ensure lessons are learnt and that the service is designed to be as convenient for residents as possible. The outcome of the localised three month pilot in June will be reviewed by the Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration and the Executive Member for Environment and Transport prior to the borough-wide service change being implemented.

It is intended that for residents wishing to have their garden waste collected from their home, a telephone and online bookable service will operate and will be subject to a proposed charge of a minimum of £10 (for up to 10 sacks). The only sacks permitted to be used will be the reusable garden waste bags available at an additional 'at cost' charge of £1.50 per bag and new compostable bags available from the Council at an additional 'at cost' charge (£10 for a roll of 20). Reusable bags currently in use may also be used.

It is recommended that Executive delegate authority to agree the 2015/16 garden waste charges for bookable home-collection to the Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Transport. Once the pilot has been completed and costs reviewed, it may be appropriate to review in-year the above initial charges and charging structure to ensure the costs of the service are recovered. Future year charges will be agreed by the Executive.

#### 4.7 **Estate recycling services**

As part of the 2015/16 budget report, Full Council also agreed to review recycling points on estates to improve and make them more accessible and, following pilots, move to communal recycling on the estates where doorstep recycling is currently still offered.

A door to door recycling service has been provided to many estate properties since 2005. In 2012/13, around half of these services were replaced with convenient recycling sites located on estates, following new guidance on fire safety within purpose built blocks of flats.

The remaining door to door service remains significantly more expensive to operate than communal recycling sites. Furthermore, evidence from the previous service change suggests that the amount of recycling collected is not adversely affected by the switch to communal recycling sites.

For many residents, using communal recycling sites is more convenient, as there is no requirement to store a week's worth of recycling before having it collected. It is intended that the door to door collection service on estates will progressively cease and convenient, smart, modern, communal recycling points will be provided on estates where appropriate. The locations of new communal sites, and improvements to existing communal sites, will be agreed in consultation with residents, ward councillors and other stakeholders.

#### 4.8 **Service efficiencies**

The Council was successful in its bid for funding from the London Waste and Recycling Board's Efficiencies programme. The funding was used to review, identify and implement efficiencies in the recycling and refuse collection service, based on nationally recognised productivity levels.

The review supports the Council's aspiration to deliver a 'village' based recycling and refuse collection service.

Services are to be planned around six 'villages', providing geographically based local services for local residents. This means dedicated resources will be deployed in localised areas, giving the collection staff and managers responsibility for refuse and recycling services in those localised areas. At present, each crew operates in different parts of the Borough throughout the week.

Recycling and refuse will continue to be collected weekly.

4.9 Implementation of service efficiencies will involve a re-scheduling of services for refuse and recycling collections for street properties to provide the most cost effective schedule possible. While disruption to residents will be kept to a minimum, changes to collection days are likely. A full and effective communications campaign would be carried out to ensure that residents were aware of the changes and the reasons for them. Members will also be fully briefed, in particular in regard to the potential for collection day changes.

#### 4.10 **Communications**

A number of the changes proposed to recycling services place a greater onus on residents to 'do the right thing' themselves, rather than relying on the Council. For example, residents in street properties will be asked to bring food waste to communal collection points, rather than have it collected from their home.

To support these changes, a communications campaign will be developed to promote pride in the local environment and greater awareness of the need for residents to think about the waste they produce and how they can do more to recycle and re-use as much as they can.

The communications campaign will be designed to encourage residents to recycle and re-use. It will raise awareness and promote how and where residents can recycle. There will be clear signage at collection points on what can and can't be recycled. The Clean Islington App will also be promoted as an efficient way of communicating with residents and vice versa.

A greater emphasis will be placed on encouraging residents in purpose built blocks of flats and in the social and private rented sector to recycle more. Most residents in purpose built blocks of flats will be asked to recycle using communal recycling facilities on their estates. We will work with residents and stakeholders to ensure these are well managed and convenient for residents to use, and will encourage their greater use through a focussed communications campaign. Detailed crew feedback on any contamination issues in particular estates recycling bins will continue to be used to target further educational activity.

#### 4.11 **Street property door to door containers**

In the run up to Christmas 2014, packs of clear plastic recycling bags were delivered to residents receiving the green box door to door recycling service. This was to help residents with their extra recycling over Christmas.

The bags were made from recycled plastic and are themselves recyclable. The bags were paid for from a grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Monitoring of the service since Christmas suggests that many residents have used and continue to use these plastic bags. Feedback via an online survey has generally been positive with a majority of respondents preferring them to green boxes and some suggesting they are easier for the elderly or impaired. Collections crews also find them easier, quicker and safer to collect than green boxes.

While there are no plans to introduce plastic bags as a replacement to green boxes, they remain available free of charge via libraries and also now from the Municipal Officers at 222 Upper Street.

## **5. Implications**

### 5.1 **Financial implications:**

The proposed service changes detailed in this report will deliver savings of £925k in 2015-16. These savings have been included in the medium term financial strategy as part of the Council's service and financial planning process for the 2015-16 budget setting process.

These savings are detailed as follows:

Budget item	2015-16 £000s
Review recycling points on estates to make them more accessible and, following pilots, move to communal recycling on the estates where doorstep recycling is currently still offered.	150
Introduce the 'village principle' into Street Environment Services by creating area-based teams.	150
Reduce the number of refuse collection vehicles by, following pilots, moving towards communal kitchen waste and green waste collection.	500
Complete planned reduction in the Bright Sparks service's reliance on Council funding.	125

## 6. Legal Implications

The Council has a duty to collect household waste. No charge may be made for its collection except in prescribed cases (section 45 Environment Protection Act 1990). Those cases are currently prescribed by the Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations 1988, regulation .5 and Schedule.2 and include the collection of garden waste. Accordingly the Council may make a reasonable charge for the home collection of garden waste as prosed in paragraph 4.8 above.

In addition to the above duty, the Council is under a separate duty to collect at least two types of recyclable or compostable household waste either co-mingled or individually separated from the rest of the household waste. That duty applies unless the Council is satisfied that the cost of doing so would be unreasonably high (on an individual premises basis) or comparable alternative arrangements are available (section 45A). The frequency and regularity of such collections is a matter or the discretion of the Council. Government Guidance in respect of this duty makes it clear that the exceptions "are narrowly drawn" and that "it is intended that they should be applied restrictively". The expression "comparable alternative arrangements" is not defined in the EPA. The Guidance suggests that one meaning of the term would be "other collection mechanisms resulting in similar numbers of households receiving a service". It further notes, however, that "whether a particular arrangement is comparable will be a question of fact in each individual case". The Guidance gives the following example in an attempt to clarify the purpose of this exception:

"Example 1 Under Section 45(1) of the EPA a WCA provides a doorstep collection of general waste to all premises in a street except an old multi-residence block receiving a communal near entry collection service for general waste. In this example the WCA would find it difficult to justify not providing doorstep collection of recyclates for those currently receiving this service for general waste. However, if there was insufficient space to locate receptacles for recyclable wastes at the near entry waste collection point in the multi residence block, the WCA may be able to justify, as a comparable alternative arrangement, the provision of a nearby bring site to those residents.

The Council may by notice require household waste and recyclates to be placed for collection in receptacles of a kind and number specified. Such receptacles may be provided by the Council free of charge or at a cost (if the occupier agrees) or by the occupier (section 46).

With effect from 15 June 2015 the Deregulation Act 2015 abolishes the criminal offence in section 46 EPA and replaces it with a civil sanction. Local authorities will still be able to issue penalty notices but only in limited circumstances and if a 'detriment to the amenities of the locality' test is satisfied. The aim of the proposed test would be to ensure that penalties are targeted at those whose behaviour reduces the quality of their neighbours' surroundings. The new procedure for imposing a penalty is set out in paragraph 4.2 above.

### 6.1 Environmental Implications

An environmental impact scoping exercise has been carried out and it was identified that there may be some impact on waste and recycling levels. These impacts will be mitigated by a focussed

communication campaign designed to encourage residents to think about the waste they produce and why they should recycle and re-use as much as they can. The service changes will also be communicated and promoted to encourage residents to make use of them.

## 6.2 Resident Impact Assessment:

The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The Council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The Council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

Full Resident Impact Assessments have been completed and summarised below.

### Food and garden waste service changes

The proposal will mainly impact those in street properties with gardens, those without a car and those on low incomes. The main equality impacts of the proposal relate to disability and socio-economic impacts and will be mitigated by having conveniently located recycling points for food and garden waste and reduced rate compost bins. The service change will be piloted prior to full implementation.

### Estate recycling service changes

The proposal will impact residents in selected purpose built blocks of flats currently receiving and using door to door recycling services. The equality impacts of the proposal relate to an impact on those with physical impairment (including some elderly) but will be mitigated by conveniently located recycling points and full consultation of residents over the location of those recycling points.

### Bright Sparks and Service Efficiencies

The initial screening for a Resident Impact Assessment did not identify any negative equality impacts for any protected characteristic or any human rights or safeguarding risks.

## 7. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 7.1 The report sets out progress on recycling over the last two years and proposals for improving recycling in the coming year. The recommendations are aimed at meeting Islington's challenging recycling targets whilst also achieving the savings set out in the 2015/16 budget report.

**Appendices:** none

**Background papers:** none

Final report clearance:

**Signed by:**



Executive Member for Environment and Transport

5.5.12

Date

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