



Scrutiny Review Household Recycling in Islington

Report of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee



**London Borough of Islington
April 2018**

Foreword

Islington's recycling rate is one of the best for inner London boroughs and its mixed dry-recycling rate is above average for all London boroughs, but the rate has stalled at 31% against an ambitious target of 35.2% for 2016/17 and 37% by 2020. Contamination continues to be a problem, reducing the amount of material that can be recycled.

While there are a number of well-understood and practical reasons for this, not least the squeeze on the waste minimisation budget caused by funding cuts from Central Government, which has substantially reduced education, communication and outreach work, there are obvious benefits to increasing our recycling rate and to encouraging re-use and reducing our waste. These make it worth the attention of this scrutiny committee.

Reducing waste and increasing re-use and recycling would:

- reduce Islington's impact on the environment;
- reduce the costs of disposal (in 2016/17 by £650,000);
- support our "making every penny count" core priority;
- help residents with the cost of living; and
- help to make Islington a place in which our residents have a good quality of life.

The recommendations are intended to support the Council's focus on making the most efficient use of resources, moving towards early intervention, prevention and resilience, and working across teams.

Although, as the scrutiny revealed, the service is generally well regarded, and Islington has planning and procurement policies that support recycling, there is some room for improvement. Increasing our focus on ensuring that procedures work more effectively and on giving more support to frontline staff, such as caretakers, would bring benefits. Frontline staff and volunteers could help increase the amount of communication, education and outreach work, which is essential to tackling low recycling rates and contamination.

Waste management has a direct impact on the quality of life of residents of streets and estates alike: overflowing bins, fly-tipping and waste dumped on estates creates an unpleasant environment and can lead to other anti-social behaviour. Working with residents to address problems empowers communities and builds resilience. Events on subjects such as food-waste reduction and upcycling, as well as "give and take days", are enjoyable sociable activities that bring communities together. In addition, the availability of good quality second-hand goods has a direct impact on the cost living. Projects such as the LOOP project on the Andover estate help to build confidence and skills.

All members of staff can contribute by their actions. Recycling already forms part of the work of a number of Council teams: housing officers and caretakers support waste and recycling on the estates; librarians hand out recycling bags and put on, or support, craft and other activities around re-use and recycling; community support officers work on projects with residents.

Recent re-organisations provide, however, an opportunity for a more co-ordinated approach and a renewed focus on delivery across teams.

The Housing Operations Service (HOS) has been re-organised into Homes and Communities, which incorporates the Voluntary and Community Team. This emphasises that, in addition to being a provider of housing, HOS has a role in supporting residents' health and wellbeing, and in giving them a sense of belonging, financial security and safety.

Libraries are developing to give a greater emphasis on their place as community hubs where people and communities come together to meet, mix and share. Trusted by residents, they are used regularly as a source of advice and support; they help to maintain residents' health and wellbeing, and to reduce social isolation. They are vibrant spaces in which people are encouraged to explore and participate in a year-round programme of inclusive and diverse cultural activities.

Street Environment Services (SES) is increasing its capacity to separate recyclable litter from litter collection in streets and has a new four-person performance data team which is using the improved data-capturing facilities of SES's new fleet of vehicles to target resourced more effectively.

Finally, one of the abiding lessons of this scrutiny is that residents' behaviour is influenced by others. For them to believe that recycling and re-use is important, the Council must lead by example.

All Council teams must rise to this challenge.

Scrutiny Review – Household Recycling

The aim of the review was to understand the challenges presented by household recycling in estates and housing blocks, and to consider ways to address contamination and food waste collection, particularly as the rate of recycling has stalled at 31%.

Evidence

The review, which ran from 11 September 2017 to April 2018, received evidence from a number of sources.

Witnesses

Support Manager, Resource London
Recycling Manager, Hackney Council
External Relations Manager, North London Waste Authority

Council Officers

Matthew Homer, Islington Waste Strategy Manager
Jon Farant, Homes & Neighbourhood Services
Tony Ralph, Head of Street Environmental Services
Bill Sinfield, Operations Manager, Street Environment Services
Billy Wells, Neighbourhood Service Manager

Peabody

Sunny Vadher, Caretaking Services Manager
Steve Mercer, Caretaking Team Manager

Site visits

London Eco Park, Edmonton
Bywater's MURPH Facility, Bow
Reuse & Recycling Centre, Cottage Road

Objectives

To build on:

- the Waste Minimisation and Recycling Action Plan 2016/17.

To understand:

- Islington's current performance and its targets;
- the legal and policy framework in which the Council operates, and to determine whether it can be strengthened;
- current strategies and their effectiveness (including cost effectiveness);
- operational and cultural barriers to recycling, particularly among hard-to-engage groups, and to consider measures to overcome the barriers;
- specific issues in relation to the quality of recycling, particularly contamination, and to consider measures to improve it;
- what internal and external resources are available, and how they are used.

To examine:

- measures to increase the amount and type of recycling among those who already recycle, for example food waste

To consider:

- operational issues that might increase participation, for example the layout and capacity of waste and recycling bins on estates;
- whether alternative or additional educational or communication strategies could help;
- the role of, and Islington's strategy for, waste reduction.

Recommendations

- 1** *Set up a cross-team group to devise a programme to work across council services, residents' groups and relevant external organisations, to support community events, programmes and initiatives – which promote waste reduction, re-use, recycling and composting – as a way of increasing community engagement, resilience, the skills and capacity of residents, and improving the lived environment.*

- 2** **Use the Council's new performance-data team to collect and analyse data more effectively on recycling and reuse. This would include:**
 - 2.1** Prioritise areas with low recycling rates or high contamination.
 - 2.2** Provide information to estates, schools and other institutions on their performance.
 - 2.3** Support incentives and promote competition between, for example, schools, estates or other areas of the community.
 - 2.4** Provide targeted communications to residents.

- 3** **Improve communications with residents, landlords, staff and councillors**
 - 3.1** Train and support:
 - 3.1.1** staff members, including housing officers, caretakers, librarians and community officers who deal with residents, to enable them to encourage residents to recycle more, and to be able to provide information and answer questions;
 - 3.1.2** officers working in council offices to enable them to be recycling champions for their team;
 - 3.1.3** councillors and youth councillors;
 - 3.1.4** staff of social landlords and Partners for Islington to give them the confidence to support their residents.
 - 3.2** Consult with different groups to gain a better understanding of their experience of council communication channels and how they access information.
 - 3.3** Review the council's social media strategy to improve its understanding of the effectiveness of different methods of communication, such as videos and messaging.
 - 3.4** Apply the lessons learned to devise a cross-service communications strategy.
 - 3.5** Make better use of Council premises, such as libraries, housing offices, community centres, and 222 Upper Street, to improve communication with residents and to provide them with information and recycling bags.
 - 3.6** Improve the Council's recycling website so that it:
 - 3.6.1** encourages residents to reduce waste, re-use and recycle more effectively;
 - 3.6.2** is easier to use and provides the information residents need, including what can and can't be recycled and the implications of getting it wrong;
 - 3.6.3** provides information on what actions the Council is taking to influence wider policy issues, such as those around waste reduction and single-use plastics;
 - 3.6.4** provides practical information on how and where to obtain recycling containers and bags;
 - 3.6.5** makes it as easy as possible to ask for containers for delivery (where applicable);
 - 3.6.6** provides information on Islington campaigns and events, such as give-and-take days, or

community events.

- 3.7 Use events, such as one-off campaign days, as publicity.
- 3.8 Prioritise attendance at forums to engage with Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs), and social landlords.
- 3.9 **Provide all new parents with information about the nappy voucher scheme and the correct way of disposing of disposable nappies.**
- 4 **Make waste reduction, re-use and recycling as easy and as attractive as possible for residents**
 - 4.1 Update procedures to ensure they reflect the joint responsibility that Homes and Communities and Environment and Regeneration have in keeping estates clean and tidy.
 - 4.2 Extend the Better Recycling sites' three-year programme to ensure recycling bins and sites are well maintained, attractive and clearly signed.
 - 4.3 Extend the community engagement work carried out on larger estates to include waste reduction, re-use and recycling.
 - 4.4 Ask all caretakers and housing managers for their suggestions on how to improve the recycling on their estates and on what can be done to help them in their recycling work:
 - 4.4.1 involve representatives of all affected parties in the initial discussions to help identify and resolve problems when changes in general procedure on waste management and recycling are considered, and before the procedure is implemented.
 - 4.5 Involve caretakers, concierges and housing managers in decisions about siting or re-siting bins, or changes in the type and number of bins on their estates.
 - 4.6 Provide training to all caretakers and housing managers, including offering visits to the re-use and recycling and the material recovery facility (MRF).
 - 4.7 Supply food bags, and clear sacks and leaflets to the caretakers and concierges, and tell residents that they are available.
 - 4.8 Ensure that caretakers are invited to the new tenants' induction and follow-up meetings.
 - 4.9 Update procedures so that caretakers and housing managers are clear on how, and to whom, they report recycling issues on their estates. Procedures should include feedback on the issues.
 - 4.10 Separate recycling and non-recycling when litter-picking the estates.
 - 4.11 Provide caretakers and concierges with new residents' names in the privately rented properties to enable them to contact the new residents about the management, including waste management, of the estate and to provide them with bags.
 - 4.12 Include a requirement to recycle in all Islington Council's tenancy agreements and include information on waste and recycling in tenants' induction packs. Provide new tenants with bags and encourage social landlords and other landlords to do the same.
 - 4.13 Include information in new tenants' induction packs, and in the six-week follow up meeting, on how and what to recycle, and on the consequences of contamination.

- 4.14 Maximise the efficiency and reach of the food-waste recycling service that is currently offered to estates. Where the food-waste service cannot be provided, consider providing community composting.
- 4.15 Improve the reliability of the ordering and delivery process for recycling containers.
- 4.16 Promote the option of using clear recycling sacks or green boxes for all street properties.
- 4.17 Ensure a reliable supply of clear recycling bags by updating the procedures for providing them through libraries and community centres.
- 4.18 Increase local collection points and run a pilot-online ordering and delivery offer of sacks.
- 4.19 Encourage home and communal composting.
- 4.20 Ensure that waste and recycling are part of landlord registration scheme requirements, that they are reviewed on inspection, and that landlords are required to display information on waste collection and recycling for each house in multiple occupation
- 4.21 work with major letting agents to help tenants understand their area's waste and recycling service by providing information at the start of their tenancies.

5 Demonstrate the Council's leadership in waste reduction, re-use and recycling

- 5.1 Audit the waste management systems of all council facilities, including offices, libraries and community centres, and continue to provide the facilities and procedures to ensure that recycling is enabled and prioritised.
- 5.2 Create a communications plan to support effective recycling in council facilities.
- 5.3 Work towards a paper-free council where possible. In the meantime, enable and encourage the minimisation of paper use.
- 5.4 Ensure that committee papers focus on the information necessary to meet the requirements for decision making.
- 5.5 Reduce, and eventually eliminate, the use of disposable plastic cups, straws, plates and cutlery at council meetings and facilities.
- 5.6 Reduce the use of single-use plastics in Islington and encourage government and producers to do the same.
- 5.7 Maximise the amount and quality of recyclable material collected from Islington's parks and open spaces.
- 5.8 Maximise the number of street-litter "Recycling on the Go" points and separate recyclable litter at the point of collections and sweeping.
- 5.9 Optimise the timing of collections of street litter recycling bins to reduce contamination at busy periods.

6 Ensure that Council policies support waste reduction, re-use and recycling

- 6.1** Review council policies and supporting documents, particularly those that relate to planning, new developments and procurement, to ensure that recycling and waste-minimisation requirements are as stringent as possible. Utilise the advice in London Waste and Recycling Boards 2014 report – Waste management planning advice for flatted properties.
- 6.2** Design all new builds with space and facilities, in individual properties and communally, to enable and encourage recycling.
- 6.3** Ensure enforcement options are available if planning conditions on recycling facilities are contravened.
- 6.4** Ensure updated information and advice is readily available for architects, developers and planning officers at all stages of the process.
- 6.5** Emphasise that waste, re-use and recycling is a priority.

7 Work with children and young people

- 7.1** Introduce sessions with children and young people in schools, youth clubs and adventure playgrounds to achieve a better understanding of their attitude to minimising waste, reuse and recycling, and to improve their engagement.
- 7.2** Work with schools, children's centres, youth clubs and adventure playgrounds to establish waste management systems which prioritise recycling and reuse.
- 7.3** Engage with children in recycling by, for example, running competitions or offering schemes, such as ECO schools.

8 Work with Residents

- 8.1** Introduce a programme of volunteer recycling champions to help with communication and engagement
- 8.2** Involve residents in significant decisions about siting or re-siting bins, or changes in the type and number of bins on their estates
- 8.3** Update procedures so that residents are clear on how, and to whom, they report recycling issues on their estates. Procedures should include feedback on the issues.

9 Promote pedestrians' and cyclists' access to recycling and re-use facilities at the Household Reuse and Recycling centre, at the site itself and in Council communications, including the website

10 Re-use on estates

- 10.1** Provide facilities on estates for residents to leave reusable furniture for other residents or for collection by reuse organisations, such as Bright Sparks.

- 10.2** Work with third-party organisations to operate more re-use and recycling projects, similar to the Andover LOOP project.
- 11** **Review the work carried out by the Waste Minimisation and Recycling Team**
- 11.1** Ensure that available resources respond to the priorities as effectively as possible.
- 11.2** Consider whether there are tasks that can be undertaken more effectively by other teams.
- 11.3** Investigate as to whether there are additional resources to support the work of the team that can be funded within current limits or through third parties.

Key Evidence

At an initial presentation by officers in Environment Services, on 11 September 2017, the Committee was informed of the following.

The Council's Annual Waste Minimisation and Recycling Action Plan had been agreed by the Executive on 20 September 2016. The aim of the plan was to provide quality services that meet the needs of residents, increase recycling and reduce the amount of waste sent for disposal through landfill or incineration.

Islington Council's compulsory recycling policy, which applies to all homes, includes all recycling, including mixed dry recycling, and food and garden waste. In addition, the plan seeks to achieve a 35.2% recycling rate for household waste and to support the NWLA's recycling target of 50% by 2020.

Enforcement is more practical with street properties than in estate blocks, which had communal bins, and recent legislative changes have made enforcement more difficult.

North London Waste Authority (NWLA) continues to be the regional waste disposal authority for Islington as well as for six other north London boroughs. In 2016/17, as a result of menu pricing, Islington Council's recycling saved the equivalent of £650,000 in disposal costs.

NLWA's Joint Waste Strategy 2004-2020, updated in 2009, is expected to be reviewed in the context of the North London Heat and Power Project (NLHPP) and the Mayor's new Environment Strategy, and of the Mayor of London's Draft Environment Strategy, which aims to make London a

“zero-waste city” with no biodegradable or recyclable waste being sent to landfill by 2025.

The Mayor’s strategy is to increase the recycling rate to 50% by 2020, and to 60% by 2030, with a focus on food waste and single-use packaging.

The Committee noted that Islington currently offers its residents a collection of mixed dry recycling, a minimum of weekly recycling and refuse collections, food and garden waste collections for street properties, communal recycling bins for estates, and nightly collections for flats above shops. There are also other services, including textile recycling sites, a reuse and recycling centre, and bulky waste and reuse collections.

Recycling is taken to the Bywaters facility in Bow, from where it is sold to reprocessors in the UK, Europe or the Far East and made into new products. Residual waste is incinerated, and converted for energy use or composting, at London Waste in Edmonton.

Organic recycling is quite low as a result of issues around food and garden waste, but dry recycling is high compared with neighbouring boroughs. Taking into consideration the fact that many homes in Islington don’t have gardens, the composting rate is quite good.

As part of its waste prevention plan, in conjunction with NLWA the Council carried out face-to-face conversations with residents to promote food-waste reduction. The NLWA also participates in events such as Annual Waste Prevention Exchanges and the School Waste Education programmes.

Islington Council does not have a discrete communications’ budget; it continues to “piggy back” on NLWA’s communications campaign and to promote its recycling services through various channels, including its website. Door-knocking campaigns have always been an effective means of education and engagement with residents, but resources are limited and are primarily directed at residents of estate blocks and flats.

The Waste and Strategy Manager acknowledged that more needed to be done, including improving recycling sites, to tackle contamination and fly tipping on estates and public sites.

Street properties are provided with individual bins for food-waste collection and some estates have communal bins, but contamination continues to be high and difficult to address. In addition, participation among estate residents is quite low.

The introduction of technology on the new fleet of vehicles enables overflowing bins, particularly on estates, to be reported and resolved effectively. In addition, the vehicles weigh the contents of the bins, enabling officers to explore the possibility of targeting estates that have low recycling rates.

Local authorities in the UK face different problems on, and have different solutions to, managing recycling. Some have resorted to fortnightly collections for residual waste and weekly collections for recycling, and in some instances charge for collecting garden waste.

Addressing issues around the housing estates and also around the private rented sector would raise the present rate of recycling.

Refuse vehicles that are identified as containing a high level of contaminated material will not be allowed to proceed to Bywaters; in cases where contamination persists, officers will engage with residents on the benefit and impact of recycling.

A decision on whether savings realised from waste collection could be diverted towards campaigns and resident engagement, is a corporate decision (disposal cost is charged corporately through a levy from NLWA) and it is doubtful as to whether a business case could be proposed to justify it.

A report, “Guide to Waste Management in the Private Rented Sector”, produced by Resource London, contains a number of recommendations on developing relationships between local authorities, landlords and private tenants. Officers are currently working through the recommendations with the aim of producing an action plan which will be brought to the Committee for consideration in due course.

As a result of Islington’s compulsory recycling policy, the Council tends to focus more on educational activities and engagement with residents, than on enforcement. Officers serve an S46 notice only in exceptional cases, such as fly tipping, and only as a last resort.

It would be difficult to incorporate clauses on recycling into tenancy agreements for private rented landlords because the Council has no control over them. There is a licensing scheme for landlords, but with the exception of the HMO Licensing scheme, it is voluntary.

Caretakers could be used more effectively as recycling champions. Their knowledge of their estates and residents, and their ability to relate to BME residents and those with disabilities, is an important asset.

The Committee considered evidence from Resource London on improving recycling performance in Islington and noted the following points.

Resource London (RL) is a jointly funded partnership programme created by the London Waste and Recycling Board(LWARB) and WRAP. It ends in March 2020. It supports London waste authorities by helping them to achieve recycling targets set by the Mayor of London and the national government. In addition, RL helps to deliver these targets by undertaking service reviews for local authorities, introducing behavioural changes among residents, and promoting innovation and development.

RL’s four objectives are to:

- restrict residual waste;
- improve the yield and quality of dry recycling;
- increase and improve the capture of unavoidable food waste; and
- minimise the amount of waste produced.

To increase the rate of recycling, RL works with councils to focus on certain aspects, such as:

- changing their residual collection regime from weekly to fortnightly;
- focusing on flats by using single transparent bags; and
- reducing the size of the residual bins and containerisation.

Changes introduced by Camden’s Waste Service in April 2017 were reported to have increased recycling tonnage by 11% compared with the previous year.

RL has developed a guidance booklet for the private rented sector to help to raise awareness of recycling, but there are concerns that landlords would still not provide recycling facilities on their premises.

RL operates on a strategic planning level with waste authorities and does not have working relationships with voluntary organisations, such as Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs).

The involvement of TRAs should be encouraged; by advising on the siting and design of recycling sites, they could reinforce a sense of ownership by the residents.

Introducing a league table of housing estates' or wards' recycling rate, on the Council's website, together with some financial or community incentives could help to increase community engagement.

Some estates are old and had no recycling facilities, but housing services are in the process of undertaking a structural survey to avoid the problem of overflowing bins.

For Islington, or any other authority, to meet the Mayor's target will require some radical changes to services, such as restricting residual waste or introducing fortnightly collections.

At its meeting on 17 October 2017, the Committee heard evidence from Hackney Council's Interim Recycling Manager, on Hackney's household recycling services.

Hackney Council provides a comprehensive borough-wide service for street properties and estates. Green boxes would not be suitable for more than 14,000 properties that have no frontage; in 2013 the Council introduced green sacks for low-rise properties.

The participation rate of street properties with the green sack scheme was an average of 84%, whereas for food waste it was 34%. Rates are low in deprived estates, which produce high levels of waste but recycle the least.

Hackney's decision to move from source-separated collection to a commingled (green sack) collection enables environmental waste operations to use single-compartment older or used waste vehicles for recycling. This has extended the life of the waste vehicles because the older ones can be used for recycling, which is lighter than waste. The use of green sacks, rather than green boxes, has resulted in faster collections by crews and reduced traffic congestion.

Hackney Council employed an external consultant to assist in developing five possible waste restriction collection models, with the aim of increasing the recycling rate, and reducing the operational resource and carbon impact. In addition, projects were undertaken to consider the participation rate, waste composition and restriction modelling. Data from 300 households indicated that food continues to be the largest component in the waste stream, whereas the weight of recycling material has decreased since 2008 and contamination is not an issue in dry and food streams at street level.

The low recycling rate on estates or in high rises – more than 50 % of Hackney properties – prompted the setting up of a corporate programme in 2014/15 to improve estates' performance levels. The Estates Recycling Programme involved a three-phase range of interventions. Phase 2 involved closing chutes and building new bin stores.

Pilot schemes on issues around the sustainability of recycling rates and participation were held on three estates, involving 1,000 residents. The outcome will be reported in the spring of 2018. In addition, where the chutes had been removed on the three estates, waste and recycling bins are sited next to one another in order to change residents' behaviour. Since the trial began, on one of the three estates there has been a noticeable decrease in waste and a notable increase in recycling.

Hackney's budget for the Estates programme is £0.5 million a year, primarily to enable closure of the chutes and the building of new bin stores. The trial tonnages for the other two estates in the trial are expected by Q4 2017/18. If the Council were to close all chutes, it would need to build 600 new bin stores in the coming years.

Instances of fly tipping in public areas, particularly with large waste such as furniture, is handled by the enforcement team. Cleaning of storage areas is managed by Housing Services, which has been brought back in-house.

Engagement with supermarkets on recycling is more of a central government issue, although Hackney Council has worked with Tesco and Charities on recycling issues. It is not, however, regarded as being core to operations.

Operatives/crew deliver green sacks to Hackney residents every three months, and residents can order them online when they run out. The recycling team holds several community events a year, engages with residents through *Hackney Today*, and is now using social media to engage with the younger generation.

Hackney Council undertook a borough-wide outdoor advertising campaign in 2014/15, which resulted in a 30% increase in tonnage. The Council was recognised as the 2015 National Recycling Awards Winners.

In 2006, Hackney Council recruited Green Champions to promote the service to neighbours and record issues for the recycling team to act on, but it has not been active for more than seven years. It is difficult to correlate the existence of Green Champions with increased recycling rates, but it can bring other benefits to the recycling team, such as increased interaction with residents, wider reach of recycling messages, and on-street recycling monitoring and reporting. It was noticeable that most of the champions had moved onto other green issues. Lessons learnt from employing champions were that appointments should be time specific, for example to start and end within a 12-month period.

In October 2016 Hackney Council received £638,000 from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to provide a rewards scheme for residents who recycle. The three-year programme resulted in 110,000 doors being knocked with a 35% contact rate, and about 28,000 residents signing up to the programme. Residents were offered local discounts and cash offers of £40 and £100 vouchers, and the option of supporting charities of their preference.

Hackney introduced penalties for residents who did not participate when compulsory recycling was introduced in 2007, but they have never been applied. In most instances officers engage with the residents and impose sanctions only as a last resort. The Council has been successful in obtaining prosecutions in extreme instances of fly tipping, but government legislation makes it more difficult for the Council to penalise residents. In any event Hackney Council prefers education and engagement.

At its meeting on 17 October 2017, the Committee considered evidence from the External Relations Manager of NLWA.

The North London Joint Waste Strategy agreed by the seven north London boroughs provides a statutory framework for municipal waste management in North London for the period 2004-2020. It contains targets for reducing, reusing and recovering a proportion of the municipal waste generated in the NWLA and sets targets for reducing the waste sent for disposal to landfill.

The strategy focuses on preventing and reducing waste, followed by encouragement for items to be re-used and recycled. Following these priorities, NLWA focuses on recovering waste and

burning it in incinerators to generate heat. Its least desirable option, because of its environmental impact, is to send waste to landfills.

NLWA's Strategy sets recycling target of a 50% by 2020, but performance rates range between 25% and 37% across the seven boroughs. Islington's rate has stalled at 30.6%.

NLWA monitors progress across targets, shares best practice, undertakes research into motivation and behaviour, is involved in communication campaigns, tackles contamination and undertakes outreach work in the community. In addition, it has embarked on an awareness campaign directed at the transient population of young north Londoners who are likely to live in flats where participation is currently low. The campaign uses simple messages – such as “one material at a time” and “saving stuff for the future” – social media, Sky TV, digital and online services. The message has been positively received by the younger population.

NLWA, in conjunction with borough officers, review useful advice issued by WRAP about what can and cannot be recycled so that advice is standardised across the boroughs. It also reviews borough literature and websites to ensure that information is clear.

NLWA recently started work on contamination and is researching what other authorities are doing, the disposal cost of contamination, and is working on communications on a pan-North London basis.

The Waste Prevention Plan involves outreach work in the community on waste prevention and recycling, which is prepared biennially and revised annually. It identifies a number of priority material waste streams, such as food waste, furniture/bulk waste and textiles, and seeks to set out a series of specific actions on each. Its focus has been on action-orientated activities, providing information, and helping to promote initiatives that it deems to be effective.

NLWA is involved in initiatives such as “Waste Less, Lunch Free” or “European Week for Waste Reduction”, where food-waste prevention stalls are set up in the community and chefs give advice on cooking skills and food portioning. Many of the events are directed at hard-to-reach groups to raise their awareness of minimising waste and cooking only what is required. For example, the “New Leaf” project, organised in the summer informed residents on disposing of salad meals as compost waste; and before Christmas the “Gift of Waste” project was developed. Participants learnt how to make their own low-cost and low-waste preserved foods, which made ideal Christmas presents.

NLWA and the London Reuse Network had operated a successful network of charities to find new homes for good-quality unwanted furniture and appliances, but it closed down. NLWA continues to work with local charities, however, on the reuse of furniture. In addition, NLWA's waste-prevention team began to promote recycling messages in 2017 and facilitated more than 59 events across the boroughs. The events centred around educating the public on mixed dry recycling and food waste by having recycling information stalls, workshops or presentations. The events were well attended.

NLWA carried out an intensive education project on waste prevention and recycling that involved visiting 14 schools a year across the seven north London boroughs. It spoke to more than 4,240 pupils, 220 staff and 175 parents. It reviewed facilities in the schools to encourage waste reduction and increase recycling. On revisiting the schools a year later, there was a noticeable reduction of approximately 1 ton of waste per school.

At its meeting on 14 November 2017, the Committee considered evidence from the Caretaking Manager of Peabody Estate and noted the following points.

Peabody, established in 1862, manages more than 27,000 properties in London, incorporating Peabody, Thamesmead, CBHA and Crown Estates. Since the recent merger with Family Mosaic, the portfolio has increased to more than 55,000 properties. Peabody manages 1,689 properties in six housing estates in Islington.

Peabody has adopted a corporate approach to recycling in various London borough estates and is currently involved in the Loop re-use project on Hackney's Pembury Estate where bulky items, such as furniture, are offered at discounted prices to new tenants. Peabody currently works Hackney on recycling food waste and with Tower Hamlets on recycling mattresses; over the years it has advised Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea on bin design.

A number of innovations have been introduced to suit particular estates, such as different sizes of food bins and bags. Committee members were invited to visit the Priory Green Estate to see an example of recycling that experiences a high level of participation.

The success of Hackney's food collection services can be attributed to a number of factors, including continuing communication with residents and education programmes in schools that highlight the environmental and costs implications to the Council and residents. The introduction of incentives and Hackney Council's determination to persist have also been crucial.

Residents who live in the old housing estates managed by Peabody, which have no lifts or waste chutes, are provided with different-sized bins and are encouraged to dispose of waste in communal bins. Residents receive regular communication/updates to ensure that the recycling agenda continues to be a high priority.

Caretakers on Peabody estates work closely with local authorities on reporting missed collections, to help remove and report contamination in their estates, to advise residents on identifying recyclable materials, to provide feedback when consultation is being carried out by developers on new builds, and to work with asset management teams on communal improvements.

Suggestions, including using Council resources more efficiently, were made on how to increase recycling rates. Other suggestions included encouraging staff to undertake activities, such as door knocking and the distribution of leaflets. If any initiatives are to be effective they must be sustained rather than being one-off or short-term.

Providing vouchers for residents or financial contribution to projects – such as gardens in estates and landscaping activities – are useful incentives.

The design and positioning of bins is vital; residents do not like touching bins when disposing of waste and recycling, and bins need to be convenient to use.

The Committee also heard evidence on the operations of the recycling team, and the data-collecting potential of the recently acquired fleet of Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs).

Although technology exists for other aspects of the crews' operation, the Service currently only collects data that relates to the vehicles' total tonnage after each round of collections, when a crew returns to the depot in Hornsey Street.

The Head of Street, Environmental Services reported that the new fleet of RCVs currently collects waste from street level properties but not from estate recycling bulk bins. The vehicles used by the estate recycling service are, however, scheduled to be replaced in 2019 as part of the vehicle procurement exercise. The new vehicles will be fitted with bin-weighting technology that will enable the exact tonnage that each estate is actually recycling to be ascertained and the data will

be able to be used to identify areas with low participation rates. Currently crews report on these, and on high-contamination areas.

Despite constant messages and leaflet distribution to estate residents, participation rates continue to be low and contamination continues to be a problem. Offering incentives, appointing recycling champions and inviting residents to be stakeholders at resident meetings, could raise awareness and participation.

Missed collections on estates could be a result of access issues for the vehicles or of contamination, which cannot be collected as recycling. This is reported immediately and followed up by the refuse crew.

Crews' preference for bags, compared with plastic boxes/bins, was noted. Each crew member lifts up to 230 recycling boxes a day. The advantages of using bags included that they are easier to lift, speed up the operation because they do not need to be returned to the property, and keep recycling items contained so that there is less mess on the streets. When boxes are too small for some households, it leads to littering. There is an issue with the capacity of the bags to hold heavy recycling loads, such as large amounts of paper and bottles, and they can be blown about in high winds. Plastic sacks relate only to street-based collections, and recycling bulk bins are made available to estate recycling collections.

At its meeting on 25 January 2018, the Committee considered evidence from the Neighbourhood Services Manager and noted the following points.

Regular meetings are held between officers of Street Environmental Services and Housing Services to ensure that there is a joined-up approach to issues around collections in estates. Over the past 12 months there had been significant progress in addressing recycling issues.

The introduction of technology, particularly on some of the recently acquired refuse collection vehicles, enables officers to identify levels of recycling in different areas and helps them direct resources to deal with the different challenges of participation and contamination.

Measures to improve recycling rates include: developing a caretaker app for the caretaking services; working with and supporting caretakers to be recycling ambassadors; providing regular training to caretakers; siting of recycling sites closer to residents; introducing competitions between estates; and involving resident.

The Head of Homes and Neighbourhood Services reiterated the importance of resident's involvement as the key to participation levels with the view to encouraging resident volunteers to be recognised as "resident champions".

Recycling bins that are in locations without clear signage confuse residents. The Street Scene Strategy Manager reassured Members that, although TMOs and TRAs have different management styles, decisions on the siting and design of bins would have been agreed following a consultation with residents.

Operators and caretakers need to report the condition and state of bins, particularly damaged lids and untidiness. The Council is in the process of installing better-designed bins through its Capital programme.

The Neighbourhood Service Manager reported that the caretaker app, which is being developed to address anti-social behaviour, could also be used to identify low rates recycling and reporting missed collections.

On the issue of community engagement and consultation, officers should consider seeking views beyond those of the residents who regularly attend Tenant and Residents' Association meetings, by using online forums so that feedback is more representative.

Some businesses are using communal bins that are designated for household recycling and some estates receive both estate and street type collections, which causes confusion

The Neighbourhood Services Manager reported that an offer by the Street Scenes Manager for additional staff training on recycling was welcome. In addition, Members were advised that concerns about tipping and environmental crimes, particularly around communal areas in estates, were being tackled by the Council. The use of mobile CCTVs, and in serious cases prosecution, had been successful.

At its meeting on 26 February 2018, the Committee met residents and representatives of the TRAs who had been invited to share their experiences and to suggest ways of improving residents' participation and of increasing the recycling rate. The following points were made.

TRAs and TMOs play a vital role in engaging residents and in raising issues, such as residual waste and recycling collection in housing blocks, but there is still more to be done to increase resident participation.

A minority of residents of the St Luke's Estate TRA still refuse to participate in any form of recycling, despite the TRA's efforts. There is still some low-level fly tipping on the estate.

TRAs would welcome Council support in areas such as residents being able to access recycling bags and properly labelled bins in suitable locations on the estate to prevent contamination.

Residents are concerned that labelling is not clear enough and have suggested the provision of larger recycling bins to deal with overflowing. Other concerns include the untidiness of communal bins and communal areas. It was suggested that car parking bays could be replaced with lumber storage facilities to prevent fly tipping and dumping.

St Luke's Resident and TRAs are active in facilitating recycling and levels of participation, but few residents are directly involved, which is not sustainable in the long run. Residents who recycle complain about the indifference to safety of those who, for example, leave items of clothing by the concierge or on the ground floors.

Converting the use of chutes from residual waste to recycling waste has worked on some estates but concerns about blocked chutes and contamination should not be disregarded.

The Council needs to address the root causes, rather than the symptoms, of recycling. The Council's contractual arrangements may need to be reviewed because one of the reasons for high contamination is that residents are not interested in separating items for recycling.

The Council can provide bags of compost, particularly for estates that have performed well with kitchen-waste recycling and have gardening groups.

If the accumulation of rubbish on housing estates is not addressed, it could easily descend into anti-social behaviour and, possibly, illegal activity.

The Council has a statutory duty to collect waste. Although it cannot charge residents it can decide on

the frequency of collections and the number of bags that it provides residents.

Community-driven reuse and well-being programmes, such as the LOOP project on the Andover Estate (sponsored by Groundworks), deliver benefits that include community cohesion, the acquisition of craft skills by volunteers, the prevention of fly tipping and the facilitation of community events.

Groundworks, which runs the LOOP project, will be bidding for c£10,000 to build on the success of the project to enable it to develop a community-driven reuse and well-being project to reach out to more people.

Funds would be used towards raising awareness of the LOOP programme, engagement in informal educational activities and highlighting the benefits of the reduce/reuse/recycle agenda. In addition, the project would engage harder-to-reach groups, such as older/isolated men, BAMER women and young people not in education/employment training.

It is important to encourage residents to reduce waste by changing their behaviour.

Meanwhile, the Council continues to support waste collection, prevention, recycling and reuse.

The Executive Member for Environment & Transport acknowledged the importance of recycling but reiterated that in as much as the Council continues to encourage recycling rates, it supports the waste hierarchy with regards to waste collection, namely prevention, recycling and then reuse, and that it was important to encourage residents to change their behaviour to reduce waste.

Conclusion

The Committee thanks all the contributors to the scrutiny.

While it acknowledges the evidence presented to it that less frequent collections and containment will drive up recycling rates it is not persuaded that this is practical way forward given Islington's housing. Its recommendations are intended to support the Council's focus on using resources more effectively and supporting Islington Council core priorities. In doing so the Committee believes that Islington's re-use and recycling rates will increase.

Membership of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Councillors – 2017/18

Councillor Champion (Chair)
Councillor Hamitouche (Vice Chair)
Councillor Doolan
Councillor Raphael
Councillor Russell
Councillor Gallagher
Councillor Heather
Councillor Jeapes
Councillor Perry-Clarke

Substitutes

Councillor Poyser

Councillor Court
Councillor Gill
Councillor Turan
Councillor Debono
Councillor Diner
Councillor Picknell

Acknowledgements

The Committee thanks all the witnesses who gave evidence to the review.

Officer support

Ola Adeoye – Democratic Services
Lead Officers – Matthew Homer

Appendix – Scrutiny initiation document

Review: Domestic Recycling
Scrutiny Review Committee: Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Director leading the review: Bram Kainth
Lead Officer(s): Matthew Homer
Overall aim: To reduce the amount of waste going to incineration or landfill by increasing the amount of domestic recycling
Objectives of the review: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To build on the Council’s Waste Minimisation and Recycling Action Plan 2016/17• To understand Islington’s current performance and its targets• To understand the legal and policy framework in which the Council operates to determine whether it can be strengthened• To understand current strategies and their effectiveness (including cost effectiveness)• To understand what internal and external resources are available and how they are used• To understand specific issues in relation to the quality of recycling, in particular contamination, and to consider measures to improve it• To understand operational and cultural barriers to recycling in particular among certain hard to engage groups and to consider measures to overcome such barriers• To consider measures to increase the amount and type of recycling among those who already recycle e.g. food waste• To consider operational issues which might increase participation eg layout and capacity of waste and recycling bins on estates• To consider whether alternative or additional educational or communication strategies could assist• To consider, briefly, the role of waste reduction and Islington’s strategy in this regard
How is the review to be carried out: <p>The Committee will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review the effectiveness of the Council’s current Recycling Strategy and2. Make recommendations for further measures to work towards the North London Waste Authority target of 50% recycling by 2020. <p>Types of evidence</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It is proposed that oral evidence is taken from:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Islington Council Officers Matthew Homer – Street Strategy Manager Bill Sinfield –Operations Service Manager Tony Ralph – Head of Street Environment Service Jo Murphy – Service Director – Homes and Communities David Salenius – Principal Housing Manager – Estates Services• Officers from Neighbouring Councils Hackney Council Camden Council• Executive Member for Environment and Transport – Claudia Webbe• London Resources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North London Waste Authority • Tenants and Residents Associations <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Documentary evidence 3. Scrutiny visits to recycling and waste depots and housing estates 	
Programme	
Key output:	To be submitted to Committee on:
1. Scrutiny Initiation Document	11 September 2017
2. Draft Recommendations	22 March 2018
3. Final Report	17 April 2018

Appendices

Meetings

23rd October 2018 - Street Environment Services (performance data and operations generally)
 1 February 2018- Homes and Communities (Community Engagement)
 8th November 2017 – Greenspace (Parks and open spaces)
 11 January 2017 – London Borough of Camden
 16th January 2018 – Libraries
 5th February 2018 - Environmental Health (Landlord’s Licensing)
 16th February 2018 – Groundworks
 26th February 2018 – Youth Council
 12th March 2018 – Housing Needs (Partners for Islington)
 14th March 2018 – Housing Needs (New Builds)
 10th April 2018 – Homes and Communities (with Caretakers)

Visits

13th July 2017 – NWLA Food Minimisation Workshop
 15th July 2017 – NWLA Food Waste and Recycling stall at Whitecross Street
 13th October 2017 - London Eco Park, Edmonton
 31st October 2017 – Field trip with a recycling crew
 2nd November 2017 – Recycling training at the Re-use and Recycling Centre
 17th November 2017 Bywater’s MRF Facility, Bow
 23rd November 2017 – Visit to Priory Green Estate with Peabody
 31st January 2018 – Andover Estate Steering Group
 12th March and 22nd March 2018 - Visits to Marquess Estate

Presentations to the Committee:

Recycling presentation by Waste Minimisation Team dated 11th September 2017
 Improving Recycling Performance in Islington by Resource London dated 11th September 2017
 Recycling in Hackney by Recycling Manager dated 17th October 2017
 Operations by Street Environment Services dated November 2017
 Recycling in Islington by Peabody dated 14th November 2017

Islington Council documents:

[Waste Minimisation and Recycling Action Plan 2016/17](#)
[Waste Minimisation and Recycling Action Plan 2017/18](#)

Delivering The Loop@Andover on Andover estate, Islington Report dated January 2017
 Muslims Women’s Network Project report 2014

Recycle Week Summary Report Doorstepping October 2017 by Keep Britain Tidy
Clear recycling sack Pilot evaluation report 2014
Recycling Containerisation Project 2012
Residents recycling champions – feedback from other Local Authorities
Expansion of communal food waste to remaining purpose built blocks of flats
Recycling in properties managed by social and private landlords
Residents' Survey (and summary report)
Facebook Quiz
Recycling and rubbish Google Analytics - Oct to Dec 2017

Islington Council's HMO Licence Conditions
Islington Council's Resident's sign up pack and tenancy agreement
Local Plan, Development Management Policies
Procurement Rules
Recycling and Refuse Storage Requirements

Reference:

North London Waste Prevention Plan 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2018
Evaluation of the North London Intensive Education Project in 2014-15 and 2015-16 dated March 2017 by NLWA
Guide to Improving Waste Management in the Domestic Rented Sector by Resource London, 2017
Waste management Planning Advice for New Flatted properties by LWARB, December 2014
Waste: Household Recycling London Assembly Environment Scrutiny Committee, December 2017
Wrap and Resource London Studies