

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**Executive - 14 February 2005****Report from the Director of Policy and Regeneration**

For information

Wards affected:
All

**Report Title: Report on the Overview Task Group Report
'Increasing Household Recycling in Brent'**

Forward Plan Ref: PRU-04/05-12

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report contains officer's comments regarding the Financial, Legal and Diversity implications of the Report of the Overview Task Group on Increasing Household Recycling in Brent. These comments provide additional information to the Executive.

2.0 Financial Implications

- 2.1 It is agreed that the current charging arrangements for waste are complex and are in need of reform. However without legislation any change requires the unanimous agreement of the six boroughs and this is unlikely to be forthcoming. For example in recent years a proposal to change the levy allowance from one based on household numbers to one based on population has failed, as while Brent would gain under such an arrangement other boroughs would incur significant additional costs. At the end of the day the charging mechanism is just a method of apportioning the costs incurred by WLWA (West London Waste Authority) and inevitably any change will produce winners and losers. From past experience any changes are unlikely to be acceptable to all six boroughs unless the impact is small or there are adequate transitional provisions which will allow boroughs time to adjust their behaviour.
- 2.2 The Government has been proposing a move to a tonnage based levy for a number of years but this has not been forthcoming. The Queen's Speech included Defra's Clean Neighbourhoods Bill in the programme for the present parliamentary session. This Bill contains a provision that would empower the Secretary of State in the joint waste disposal authority areas to disapply mandatory recycling credit payments, which is an essential precursor to introducing a tonnage based payment arrangement. The latest position from Defra is that the introduction of new arrangements is still planned for 2006/7,

but may be dependent upon the Bill not being lost through the calling of a general election.

- 2.3 To date the recycling initiatives introduced in Brent have required significant growth in revenue and capital budgets. This is because recycling requires significant investment in vehicles and bins and a relatively high collection cost per tonne compared with traditional refuse collection. There is no doubt that in future the Council will incur significant financial penalties if it fails to divert tonnage from landfill and Defra have already announced that the penalties under the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) due to start in April 2005 will be £150 per tonne. While WLWA do not foresee any financial implications for 2005/6 the potential implications for future years are very substantial. To date the driver behind recycling has been meeting government recycling targets but with the introduction of LATS the key driver will be diverting tonnage from landfill which requires a different strategy. For example collecting additional garden waste may meet the recycling target but if this is tonnage that was not previously going into the domestic waste stream e.g. householders were composting it in their gardens, it will have no impact on the tonnage going to landfill.
- 2.4 Having invested in the infrastructure for recycling we need to ensure that its use is maximised and in particular that we concentrate on diverting tonnage from the traditional refuse collection bin to the green box or organic waste bins. The message that needs to go out is that failure to reduce the tonnage going into the traditional refuse collection bin will lead to significant increases in Council Tax.

3.0 Legal Implications

- 3.1 Under Section 52(1) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Council can claim a credit from the waste disposal authority (in Brent's case WLWA) for any waste retained by the Council for recycling.
- 3.2. Under section 49 of the Act the Council is required to prepare a plan as to arrangements for separating out waste for recycling that it collects and to modify this as appropriate from time to time.
- 3.3 The Household Waste Recycling Act 2003 imposes a specific requirement that by the end of 2010, Councils have arrangements in place to separately collect at least two types of recyclable waste. The Act also required the Secretary of State to report to Parliament by October 2004 on a Council's performance in meeting the Government's recycling and composting targets."
- 3.4 Prizes could be considered where appropriate, but the council would need to consider the potential challenge that services should be provided on the basis of need rather than as prizes.

4.0 Diversity Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations outlined in the Overview Task Group report will benefit all service users and all community groups in Brent. Further work is underway (see para 7.1) to increase Brent's recycling rates and to increase awareness of recycling within all diverse community groups, and an action plan has been drawn up incorporating these proposals.

5.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific staffing or accommodation issues to be considered in this report.

Background Papers

Overview Task Group Report on 'Increasing Household Recycling in Brent'
'Increasing Brent's Recycling Rates' – Action Plan

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