



**Resources and Public Realm
Scrutiny Committee**
9 January 2018

**Report from the Strategic Director
of Regeneration & Environment**

Review of Recycling Rates in Brent

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Kelly Eaton, Public Realm Projects and Policy Manager Email: kelly.eaton@brent.gov.uk Tel: 0208 937 5565

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee have requested a report to assist their understanding of the Borough's recycling rate. They are concerned recycling rates are not rising and wish to investigate this by comparing rates with other similar authorities to determine how performance might be improved.
- 1.2 To further assist this process, Committee Members seek specific information as follows:
 - How does our performance compare to other authorities?
 - What can we do reduce food waste in the recycling stream?
 - What new technology could be deployed to improve recycling?

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the information provided in this report.

3.0 Detail

Recycling in the UK

- 3.1 Currently, the EU requires Britain to achieve a 50% recycling rate by 2020. The current overall English recycling rate is around 44%, with Brent's recycling rate during 2017/18 currently at 37%. This is increasing slightly every year. The rate is based on the material we send for reuse, recycling or composting; including food waste and garden waste. It does not include the disposal of wood.

Comparison with other London Boroughs.

- 3.2 The figures below show the recycling rates for all London Boroughs for 2016/17. Brent sits in the top half of the table but has a slightly lower recycling rate than the comparative boroughs within the West London Waste Authority grouping. However, with around 50% of our properties being flats, the second most ethnically diverse borough in the country and a large transient population, Brent has a higher recycling rate than authorities with a similar demographic such as Hackney and Tower Hamlets.

Authority	2016/17 Recycling Rate (lowest first)
Newham	14.1%
Westminster	17.4%
Lewisham	17.7%
Wandsworth	21.9%
Hammersmith & Fulham	23.2%
Barking & Dagenham	25.3%
Kensington & Chelsea	25.7%
Camden	26.6%
Redbridge	26.7%
Hackney	27%
Tower Hamlets	27.6%
City of London	28.5%
Lambeth	28.8%
Hounslow	30.1%
Islington	31.6%
Southwark	34%
Waltham Forest	34.4%
Greenwich	34.9%
Haringey	35.7%
Merton	35.7%
Brent	36.4%
Sutton	36.5%
Enfield	37.2%
Havering	37.3%
Barnet	37.4%
Croydon	38.6%
Harrow	39.7%
Richmond	42.4%
Hillingdon	43.4%
Bromley	46.9%
Kingston	47%
Ealing	50.7%
Bexley	52.7%

Recycling in Brent

- 3.3 Whilst our recycling rate is reported annually to the government's database Waste Data Flow for publication, the new Veolia Contract in 2014 stated that Veolia should concentrate their focus on reducing the residual waste tonnage that was sent to landfill, by encouraging positive public behaviour with regards to waste minimisation and maximising the amount of waste segregated for reuse, recycling, composting and recovery. The particular strategic principle of the contract specified that Veolia would achieve this by "engaging with residents, businesses and communities in Brent to help them use the services provided to increase the quality and quantity of materials collected and to reduce the amount of residual waste generated. This work will be carried out by Veolia's Community Engagement Team and will be supported by our Veolia's Operations Team who will ensure the quality of materials is maintained at every stage of collection."

Residual Waste Tonnage Position

- 3.4 In practical terms, the tonnage collected by Veolia for 2016/17 for each material stream was as set out in the table below. These figures also include the residual tonnage collected from street cleansing as well as from households. It should also be noted that the vast majority of residual waste is being sent to the WLWA Energy from Waste Facility in Bristol, and is no longer being sent to landfill.

	Tonnes
Residual	73,007
Recycling	20,113
Composting (including garden and food waste)	12,284

- 3.5 Our recycling rate in 2016/17 was 36.4% and is projected to be around 37% for 2017/18. Therefore, even with an increased number of properties in Brent in the last year, our recycling rate is increasing at a slow but steady pace.

How can we improve this?

- 3.6 Veolia's Education Officers visit individual properties who are recorded as having contaminated their recycling bins. Our database shows that for the month of November 2017 (YTD), there had been 2230 requests for visits by an education officer to properties who had issues with contamination of their recycling bin.
- 3.7 Veolia have produced a sticker which can be placed on the recycling bin to assist residents in a visual way to understand what can be placed inside and what needs to go in other bins. This is also currently available in Wembley Library and we will look to make this available in every library in 2018. The education officers should also be placing one of these stickers onto the lid of every bin that they find still contaminated when they visit.
- 3.8 In early 2018, we will be reviewing our bulky waste collection service to determine if we can provide a re-use and/or recycling service to our residents for large items. This will provide a potential increase in our recycling performance and a reduction

in our residual waste tonnage.

- 3.9 A recent project in conjunction with WLWA that looked at food waste recycling in Brent identified the possibility of our collection crews collecting food waste bins with food waste that is wrapped in carrier bags as recycling, rather than as general waste. More food waste is wrapped in carrier bags in our communal food waste bins in blocks of flats than in the individual household recycling containers. WLWA have advised us that the end processor is able to process carrier bags meaning we have the potential to significantly increase the amount of food waste by capturing that which is currently considered to be contaminated. A report on the outcomes of this project is due in early 2018.
- 3.10 The same project also examined the use of a 'no food waste' sticker on general waste bins. This is seen as a positive and easy way of telling residents that food waste is something that should be recycled. The impact of the trial will be reported in early 2018. As food waste is generally the heaviest component of waste in a general waste bin (and can constitute on average a third of the waste in a general waste bin) any project designed to have this amount of food waste recycled has the potential to increase our recycling tonnage and rate quite significantly.
- 3.11 We have also just been awarded a £5000 grant from Recycle for London to participate in a recycling campaign - One Bin is Rubbish. This will involve the use of vehicle advertising, an advert in the spring edition of The Brent Magazine and social media advertising on the council's Twitter and Facebook accounts in early 2018.

How to reduce the amount of food waste in our recycling?

- 3.12 Food waste is also currently the top contaminant in our recycling bins. Figures from our sorting facility (MRF) state that around 3-4% of our dry recycling (which equates to around 70 tonnes per month) is actually contaminating food waste. This can be reduced by better communication regarding food waste and by gaining a better understanding of the type of food waste that is being placed into recycling bins. We will also seek to carry out analysis on whether this is occurring more at individual houses or at blocks of flats. Tailored communications will be more possible once we have this information.

The use of technology in increasing our recycling rate

- 3.13 We have commissioned a recycling search facility and an app called Recycleopedia. This tool allows residents to search for an item and see which bin it should be placed in. Recent figures suggest that there are between 4-5,000 searches taking place by Brent residents every month. Technology is being utilised at the moment by companies to focus on how to better recycle existing items, particularly those containing Styrofoam, polystyrene and polyethylene, which is currently found in all the soft plastics that cannot currently be recycled by Brent, such as carrier bags and bread wrappers. These advances will greatly assist on an environmental level. They may not impact so greatly on our recycling rate, as items made of these materials tend to be extremely light. Reuse, waste minimisation and the use of a MRF (Materials Recovery Facility) are all, in their own way, innovative methods of increasing recycling and reducing the amount or

waste generated by Brent residents. We continue to watch for emerging technology that will assist us in increasing our recycling rate.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

6.0 Equality Implications

6.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 None required at this stage.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications

8.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

Report sign off:

Amar Dave

Strategic Director of Regeneration & Environment