



**Resources and Public Realm
Scrutiny Committee**
14 March 2019

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

**Update on initiatives to reduce barriers and increase
recycling in flats and flats and above shops**

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision: (only applicable for Cabinet, Cabinet Sub Committee and officer decisions)	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:	Nil
Background Papers:	N/A
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. This report provides clarification of the council's recycling service, current challenges with regards to increasing recycling and what steps are being taken to develop the best possible recycling service for our residents. In October 2011, Brent expanded its recycling provision to Brent residents, by changing the collection containers from a small green box, to a 240 Litre blue topped recycling bin, which allowed for a much greater amount of household items to be recycled by residents. This scheme was introduced to all street level properties; which includes all houses, maisonettes, flat conversions and small blocks of flats which have under 8 properties. Recycling was already in place in some blocks of flats by means of communal bins. However, external funding was obtained in 2012; which allowed us to introduce communal recycling bins into all blocks of flats. Further external funding was obtained in 2013, which allowed the council to provide communal food waste recycling to all blocks of flats; making us one of the first authorities in the country, and certainly the first in London to have food waste available to all blocks of flats, irrespective of the size of the block.
- 1.2. This report provides clarification on the barriers to recycling in flats and the initiatives that are being undertaken to increase recycling in these properties.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That members of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee note the contents of this progress report.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 In 2014 a new waste collection contract was entered into between the Council and Veolia Environmental Services. This contract was designated as an output based contract; whereby there was no target set for a recycling rate to be achieved. Instead the contractor took responsibility to reduce the amount of household waste being sent to landfill; which as of 2017 is now all being sent to an Energy from Waste Facility in Bristol. To aid Veolia in meeting this obligation, responsibility for all communications and education to residents (other than the councils web pages), was transferred to the contractor. Although the contract is output based and now monitored on tonnage; the council still reports a recycling rate to Waste Data Flow, which allows for national and local comparison of recycling rates achieved annually.
- 3.2 The figures below highlight the recycling rates achieved since the new Veolia contract in 2014/15. The figures demonstrate our recycling rate based on waste collected directly from households.

2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
35.21%	35.80%	36.40%	36.50%

- 3.3 A comparison is show in the table below, with other London Boroughs within the West London Waste Authority for 2017/18 only.

Brent	Ealing	Harrow	Hillingdon	Hounslow	Richmond
36.5%	48.8%	41%	40%	29.8%	41.9%

- 3.4 Whilst the recycling rates vary across the 6 West London Borough's, the demographics and housing stock of our comparators are vastly different. Only Hounslow has a similar issue in terms of high turnover of residents, language challenges and a high proportion of residents living in blocks of flats. Residents in Ealing and Richmond tend not to move very often and generally live in houses rather than flats, making education and communication much less challenging.
- 3.5 Comparison with boroughs outside of West London Waste Authority with similar demographics and property stock to Brent however, show that we are achieving a good recycling rate; with Redbridge residents recycling 23.9% and Tower Hamlets recycling 26.4%.
- 3.6 To offer further clarification the actual tonnages of household waste for the last four years for Brent are as follows:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Recycling Tonnage	18148	21849	21214	21979
Garden Waste/Food Tonnage	15897	12212	12935	12762
General Waste Tonnage	58968	57645	58584	57231

4.0 Factors and challenges affecting recycling from flats in Brent

- 4.1 **Challenge 1: Recycling in Blocks of flats.** Over 50% of Brent's housing stock are flats, and this figure is increasing continuously. Communal recycling poses challenges; as there is no one individual to take responsibility for placing incorrect items into communal bins. Any bins that are considered as contaminated with the incorrect items can only be collected as general waste, because there is a lesser likelihood of anyone taking responsibility for the removal of incorrect items.
- 4.2 **Solution:** Veolia have recently completely redesigned the annual education leaflet and collection calendar, which is due for distribution to all street level properties in March 2019. In addition, however, they have also produced a new education leaflet for residents in blocks of flats, residents who live along the North Circular Road and all residents in Flats above Shops; with tailored leaflets depending on whether the property is in a timed collections area. All properties in Brent therefore, for the first time ever, will be receiving a leaflet about their collection service in March this year. Leaflets to properties that are not street level have previously only received information if an education officer has to visit them because of a highlighted issue of concern. This is a comprehensive pro-active approach to education for all Brent residents.
- 4.3 Veolia's education team also have a flats recycling project underway; which has been in place for the last year and will be continuing for the coming year. After a few trials of different methods, a creative approach to increasing recycling at flats has been developed. Any block of flats that are identified as having issues with contaminated recycling bins are visited by the team. Education is carried out to residents; with the support of the managing agent where possible. Then note is taken of the number of bins. Blocks of flats have historically had more general waste bins than recycling bins and our policy is to charge managing agents for any new bins. However, now, where possible, recycling bins are separated from general waste bins to reduce the possibility of contamination. In addition, general waste bins are swapped for recycling bins, increasing the number of recycling bins at a given location. There is no charge made to the managing agent for this swap and refurbished recycling bins are provided. This is an incentive for managing agents as additional bins, both for general waste and recycling incur a charge of nearly £400 per bin. This is followed up with further education to make the residents aware of the change and to encourage them to recycle more. So far 62 blocks of flats have been part of this innovative project and contamination in communal recycling bins has been shown to drop

following direct intervention, based on visual inspections of bin content and consistent collections of recycling bins by the collection operatives.

- 4.4 **Challenge 2: Transience and properties with small external space.** High transition of residents is also a factor in Brent that affects whether people are resident in the borough for long enough to engage fully with our services. Highly transient residents tend to live in Flats above Shops and blocks of flats. Other factors that affect full engagement with the recycling and waste services are whether a property is a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) or a flat above a shop. HMO's pose challenges due to the number of people in a property producing waste, which has to be balanced against the space in a front garden for a recommended number of bins. Flats above shops have designated areas on the public highway or in a service road where they can place their waste for collection.
- 4.5 **Solution:** Neighbourhood Managers work closely with colleagues who manage the landlord licencing scheme to hold landlords to account for the provision of the correct number of bins (where space allows at a property). For those residents who live in a Flat above a Shop, timed collections offer a comprehensive twice a day, 7 days a week collection service for those living in directly above our high streets.
- 4.6 **Challenge 3: English as a second language.** Given the diverse range of Brent residents, language can also be a potential barrier to understanding what materials can be recycled.
- 4.7 **Solution:** Veolia is working to improve the visual aspect of their communications and education material to ensure that the message is as visual as possible, with clear 'Yes' and 'No' messages regarding certain materials. All communications material for 2019 will be in a clear visual format. A sample of a leaflet for residents living in a flat above a shop is attached in Appendix 1.
- 4.8 **Challenge 4: Access to recycling facilities for resident living in Flats above Shops.** Residents have advised the service that they have found it difficult to order recycling bags. Further investigation also highlighted an issue with recycling bags being delivered to communal doorways of properties and then allegedly being used by businesses rather than residents.
- 4.9 **Solution:** Flats above Shops recycling has been developed with a year-long trial in Harlesden Library. The trial allowed for a stock of recycling bags to be made freely available to residents who live in in Flats above Shops in the local area through the provision of a collection point at the Library. The library has confirmed that residents are taking these bags; and Veolia have been refilling the supplies at the Library, which has led to the creation of a permanent offering of the provision of recycling bags, for those who live in flats above shops, in all libraries across Brent.

- 4.10 In addition, a new online form has been developed, which makes it even easier for residents in Flats above shops to request recycling bags for delivery. Veolia also are looking into flat pack options for recycling bags so they can more easily be posted through resident's doors.

5.0 The Way Forward

- 5.1 One recent success has been that Brent was selected by Resource London in early 2019, to receive £8000 worth of recycling communications via a targeted Facebook video advert. The communications method will clarify four key materials which can be recycled and four key materials which can't; with the aim of increasing recycling across the borough. We will be monitoring its effect with Resource London after its launch, which is due to take place in March 2019.
- 5.2 A recent review of Veolia's communications and education methodology has led to a change in process. Recycling stickers will be sent out with all letters set to residents who are identified as having the wrong items in their recycling bin which have prevented collection on at a least one occasion. The sticker will provide an easy reminder they can stick on top of their own recycling bin to assist them get it right every time.
- 5.3 Food waste is the heaviest item in general waste. Removing this from general waste bins would greatly assist in reducing the tonnage sent to Energy from Waste and also impact on the recycling rate. Steps to make this happen include a refresh of the communal food waste collection service, with delivery of food waste bags to residents in blocks of flats when targeted education is carried out by the Veolia team. In addition, Brent was the first West London borough to be supported by West London Waste Authority in the delivery of a project which looked at various methods to increase food waste recycling. This project demonstrated that residents respond well to direct messages on their bins. As a result, Veolia are looking to consider the placing of 'No Food Waste' stickers onto general waste bins, to encourage residents to use the separate food waste service.
- 5.4 The innovative Recycleopedia app is being promoted in all of our service leaflets and is now consistently receiving over 7,000 searches every month from residents; seeking to place their household waste in the correct bin. Brent was the first borough in London to support this search facility for our residents.
- 5.5 There is a large amount of development taking place in Brent at the moment. Thousands of new properties; mainly flats are being built every year. Most new properties surrounding Wembley Stadium are due to be on the Envac disposal system and their waste will not be included in any recycling tonnage for the borough. However new developments in Kilburn, Alperton and Stonebridge will be contributing to the household waste tonnages. Waste collection will be monitored closely at newly built blocks with the aim of encouraging residents to place the correct items in the correct bins right from the start of their tenancy.

5.6 Whilst recycling is important and certainly an option that we are encouraging Brent residents to wholeheartedly participate in, it is also the third option on the Waste Hierarchy. This states that the options for managing waste should firstly be to reduce, then reuse and then recycle. This is also supported by the Mayor of London's Environment Plan. A long term aim of the service is to encourage residents not only to reduce the amount of waste they produce, but also to look at ways of reusing household items they currently have. Veolia's education team and the Neighbourhood Management Team will be working closely together in the coming year, to make reuse a reality for Brent residents.

5.7 The Mayor's Environment Plan was produced in May 2018. It sets out four key objectives:

Objective 7.1 - Drive resource efficiency to significantly reduce waste focusing on food waste and single use packaging

Objective 7.2 – Maximise recycling rates

Objective 7.3 - Reduce the environmental impact of waste activities (greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants)

Objective 7.4 - Maximise local waste sites and ensure London has sufficient infrastructure to manage all the waste it produces

5.8 All London boroughs are required to produce a Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) by December 2019, to be signed off by the GLA shortly afterwards. The plans were required to be produced in 3 phases by all London Boroughs; with Brent being recognised by the GLA as being in the final phase because we are seen as an authority who meet and exceed the Mayors requirement to offer a minimum level of recycling provision to our residents. Brent enables its residents to recycle all possible materials, provides a separate food waste service; including to those in blocks of flats, and a separate garden waste service. Our task when setting our targets for the RRP, which will be signed off by the GLA later this year, is to demonstrate how the improvements and projects contained within this report, can lead to a greater recycling rate, contribute to the overall London recycling target of 50% by 2025 and reduce the amount of waste being sent to WLWA's Energy from Waste facility.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 None

7.0 Legal Implications

7.1 None

8.0 Equality Implications

8.1 None

Appendix 1: Timed Collections Service Leaflet 2019

Bulky waste

For £35 we will collect up to five bulky items such as furniture, large electrical items and carpets.
Book a collection at brent.gov.uk/specialcollections or call 020 8937 5050.
Please place items booked for collection on the pavement as near to 7am as possible and do not obstruct the footpath.
Alternatively, you can take bulky items to the Reuse and Recycling Centre on Abbey Road, NW10 7TJ.
If you receive certain benefits, your first collection is free.

✓ YES PLEASE

Bulky items including fridges, sofas, furniture etc

Clothes and Textiles

Textiles cannot be placed in your recycling bags.
There are clothes banks across Brent, see brent.gov.uk/recycling for locations.

✓ YES PLEASE

Clothes and textiles

Quick Questions

What happens to my recycling and waste?

Your recycling is sent to be separated and sold on to manufacturers to make new products. Your general waste is sent for energy recovery to power homes.

How can I get my recycling bags?

You can collect direct from the libraries below:
Ealing Road Library HA0 4BA
Harlesden Library Plus NW10 8SE
Kilburn Library NW6 6NN
Kingsbury Library NW9 9HE
The Library at Willesden Green NW10 2SF
Or order them online at brent.gov.uk/fasrecycling

Can I leave Large items on the pavement?

Not without arranging a special collection, otherwise it's fly-tipping. That's a criminal offence and you could be fined at least £400.

Timed Collections

Your recycling and waste service

To order recycling bags - see page 4

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Printed on 100% recycled paper.

Brent recycles

Brent VEOLIA

working in partnership

Recycling

Check your collection times online at brent.gov.uk/recycling or on nearby street signs

✓ YES PLEASE

What to include in your clear recycling bag

✗ NO THANKS

! Make sure your bags get collected

Placing wrong items in your recycling means your bags will not be collected until you remove the wrong items. Processing wrong items also costs many thousands of pounds annually and prevents Brent from recycling more as ruined recycling needs to be collected as general waste. If in doubt, leave it out or check with our recycling app below.

Download Brent's Recyclepedia app for more information on what you can and can't recycle or visit brent.gov.uk/recyclepedia

Recyclepedia

Where and when should I put my bags out?

Good to know

- To keep your street clean, you must only place your recycling and waste bags out for collection half an hour before your confirmed collection times.
- Your collection times can be found online at brent.gov.uk/recycling or on nearby street signs.
- Please secure your recycling and waste using durable bags tied in a knot to prevent spillage, making sure your bags do not obstruct the pathway.

! Enforcement

If you put your recycling or waste out for collection at any other times than stated, you could receive a fine. If this is unpaid, legal proceedings will be filed against you. Our Enforcement Team work hard to ensure timed collections are followed to keep Brent clean and safe.

General

Check your collection times online at brent.gov.uk/recycling or on nearby street signs

✓ YES PLEASE

What to include in your general waste bag

✗ NO THANKS

These items can be taken to the Reuse and Recycle Centre on Abbey Road, NW10 7TJ.

Use your recycling bag.

2

brent.gov.uk/recyclepedia

brent.gov.uk/recycling

3