



Overview & Scrutiny Committee 22nd July 2008

Report from the Director of Environment & Culture

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Increasing participation in recycling in Brent

1.0 Summary

1.1 In its final report for 2007/8 the Budget Panel recommended:

That the further provision of recycling facilities should be considered alongside the introduction of compulsory waste recycling as a way of increasing recycling rates and reducing waste going to land-fill

The Budget Panel was particularly concerned that the lack of recycling facilities in some properties in the borough, particularly flats would hinder progress.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to comment about the barriers to achieving higher participation in recycling and composting services in Brent and consider whether two or three members of this committee should be asked to look at best practice in improving participation rates elsewhere and report back to the Committee's meeting in October 2008.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That two or three members of this Committee investigate best practice from elsewhere for improving participation in recycling in Brent.

2.2 That, subject to recommendation 2.1 above being approved, a report be presented to the October 2008 meeting of this Committee.

3.0 Detail

3.1 In 2007/08 the Council set itself a recycling target (i.e. the amount of total waste captured for recycling or composting) of 25%. Brent achieved 22%, and thus fell short of our target.

3.2 Our performance is split roughly 50:50 between dry recycling (i.e. mainly via the Green Box service), and wet recycling (i.e. mainly via the Green Bin service).

3.3 In London “league tables”, Brent appears bottom or near to bottom for dry recycling and near the top for wet recycling. There is undoubtedly a significant amount of dry recyclable material (such as paper, glass, cans, and plastics) that we are not capturing. Were we to capture significantly more of these types of material, our overall performance would improve greatly.

With regards to wet recyclables (i.e. garden waste, kitchen waste, cardboard), we are amongst the highest performers in London.

3.4 In the short term, we have a target to recycle (and compost) 30% of our waste by 2009/10. The Government has recently introduced new targets that seek 40% by 2010.

Participation

3.5 Participation monitoring is very labour intensive and thus not frequently undertaken. However, we are confident that participation rates (be it 25%, 30%, 40% etc) are low in comparison with other Boroughs.

3.6 A number of exercises have been undertaken to measure participation and external support has been obtained in the past.

3.7 A project was undertaken in an area with a high BME community in 2007. This involved incentives for recycling and a Summary Report is shown at Appendix A.

3.8 This project reported that, amongst other things, the Green Bin service (that collects kitchen waste) was thought to be unhygienic.

3.9 Members of this Committee will know that the Borough has approved the introduction of Compulsory Recycling from 4 August 2008. The roll-out plan involves further information being given to residents and a degree of face-to-face contact to provide assistance, clarification, advice to residents so that they are able to access the kerbside collection service for dry recyclables.

3.10 At this point, the effect of compulsory recycling in terms of improved recycling tonnages, reduced landfill tonnages, and resident participation and reaction cannot be gauged.

- 3.11 A piece of work was also commissioned from Waste Watch during 2007 to identify areas not yet served by recycling facilities and propose a system that might best serve residents in these properties. This resulted in an “action plan” that officers are currently working through. The action plan will be made available to members.

Background Papers

None

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APPENDIX A

Encouraging increased participation of recycling amongst Black and Minority Ethnic groups in Brent

Report summary

Introduction

In the 2001 census Brent was named one of only two boroughs in England and Wales where for the first time Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) groups represented a greater proportion than White groups. This was recorded as **54.7%**. These figures prompted a research project into recycling levels in Brent; we felt with that with our diverse and transient community, communications that better targeted our BME communities could help to increase recycling levels.

Our research revealed that the Indian Hindu population are the largest BME group in Brent, resident mainly in the Wembley Central and Alperton wards. We found that residents in these areas tend to experience higher unemployment and lower education levels. With this in mind we decided that a targeted recycling awareness campaign would work as a tool to educate the community, after this it was expected that recycling levels would increase.

Main elements of the project

The campaign included:

- a period of awareness raising by ‘door knocking’
 - 1464 residents in 18 roads in Wembley Central and Alperton were door knocked, of this 454 or 31% of doors knocked were answered;

- partnering the Brent India Association, a local community centre serving the residents in Wembley Central and Alperton;
- 55 roads received our specially designed publications and were invited to take part in a recycling competition;
- five weekly draws for residents who put a voucher out with their recycling, each winner receiving £20. We felt the monetary element associated with the competition would encourage more of the community to recycle;
- all literature produced as part of the campaign being translated into Hindi to ensure the campaign message got to our target audience, this literature was sent out to 1400 Indian Hindu Brent residents

Recommendations for developing Brent's Recycling Service

- Translated literature should feature the original English text, to help residents compare the two languages, and so improve their English language skills;
- We need to find a more hygienic method of collecting organic kitchen waste – many residents do not like the flies, maggots and smells associated with the green bin / kitchen caddy;
- We received positive feedback from the targeted communities. Combined with the increase in recycling levels, it is important that we carry out more interactive campaigns to help increase Brent's recycling and composting rates.

More detailed feedback

- Languages

Whilst door knocking we asked residents if they felt recycling rates would increase if we translated all future recycling material. There was an almost even split on this subject, those who felt we should provide translations, 48%, made it clear that there is a difference to speaking and reading a new language. It was brought to our attention that speaking a new language does not necessarily mean that one can read in the language. It was felt by many of the community that as much as possible should be done to encourage non English speakers and readers to integrate into wider society and they should be given the chance to participate in all aspects. They felt that it would be money well spent to translate into the most commonly spoken languages.

- Using recycling bins

During the door knocking period it quickly became apparent that some residents have barriers to putting their food waste in the green bin. The main one being flies and maggots associated, many see this form of recycling as unclean and as such send their waste to landfill. To improve the service further this must be addressed, as despite any reasoning from us many residents still refused to put their food waste into the green bin. A method should be formulated to make this form of recycling cleaner. This could be the introduction of bio degradable sacks or paper bags for food. If such practices

are introduced we could see the levels of organic waste recycling increase, with more of the community taking part.

- Results

Participation monitoring was undertaken before during and after the competition to assess the success rate of the competition and awareness campaign. It is apparent from the results gathered that in many of the participating roads recycling levels increased during this period. An increased recycling level indicates that residents were motivated by the competition and the prospect of winning an amount of money. The main trends from the results are listed below.

The average numbers of residents recycling at least once during the three participation periods (Green Box Kerbside Collection)

	Monitoring 1 Before comp	Monitoring 2 During comp	Monitoring 3 After comp
Average % of residents who recycle	34.5%	35.4%	37.2%

- The results from the green box saw the greatest increase,
- The recycling rates experienced at the end of the competition ranged between a 19% increase to a 0.8% increase,
- 31 streets out of the 55 streets targeted experienced increased green box use.
- 8 streets saw no change,
- 6 streets recorded worse recycling levels at the end of the competition.

The average numbers of residents recycling at least once during the three participation periods (Green Bin Organic Waste)

	Monitoring 1 Before comp	Monitoring 2 During comp	Monitoring 3 After comp
Average % of residents who recycle	50.9%	61.9%	50%

- The results from the green bin saw extreme improvements and extreme declines in use,
- During the competition the results dramatically increase but are not maintained at the end of the competition,
- Overall, 25 streets out of 55 saw an increase in use,

- This increase ranged from 45% to 0.2%,
- 24 streets out of 55 were worse (the remaining 6 streets did not have enough data to analyse).

- Conclusion

The combination of a period of door knocking and the recycling competition went some way to capture the target audience. To our benefit it was not just the Indian Hindu community that was included in the campaign, the nature of the project meant that all residents could be involved. The competition went some way to re-promote recycling in the area and was successful at increasing the level of recycling participation. Initial expectations were exceeded, it was expected that participation levels would dip back to normal once the competition was over. In fact participation levels were maintained weeks beyond the competition proving that the habit of recycling had been encouraged by the competition. An added benefit of this campaign is that we have got to know our community in this area even better by speaking to them and observing how the community live.

Members of our target group were especially flattered that we had designed a campaign to their community and were very supportive. A few weeks after the competition winners had received their prize money, one of the winners contacted us by letter praising the work we had undertaken.