



Executive
14 December 2009

**Report from the Director of
Policy and Regeneration**

Wards Affected:
ALL

**Increasing participation in recycling in flats task group
report**

Forward Plan Ref: PRU-09/10-11

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report brings before the Executive the work, findings and recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's task group investigation into increasing participation in recycling in flats.
- 1.2 The task group was set up to identify how participation rates could be increased on estates in Brent to help the council reach its LAA target of 40% recycling of waste by 2011. This target is unlikely to be reached without finding a solution for flats. The task group's findings are set out in the following areas:
- Understanding our local population to raise the profile of recycling
 - Resources available for recycling from flats
 - Making recycling easy
 - Communication, education and involving residents
 - Signage

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree that the recommendations contained in the task group report will be considered as part of the Waste & Recycling Gold Project.
- 2.2 That members of the task group be thanked for their work

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Improving recycling rates in Brent is one of the council's key priorities as outlined in the Corporate Strategy 2006-10. The Corporate Strategy sets a target of 30% of waste reused or recycled by 2010. The Government's Waste Strategy for England 2007 set new targets for recycling and composting of household waste. These are at least 40% by 2010, 45% by 2015, and 50% by 2020. The first of these targets, 40%, was built in to the council's Local Area Agreement 2008/11.
- 3.2 There are 99,991 households in Brent with almost 46.8% of properties being flats¹. The 2001 census identified that 27% of dwellings in Brent were purpose built and 18% were part of a converted or shared house. Flats that are in converted houses will be serviced by a green box collection. It is therefore increasing the participation in recycling of residents in the 27% of flats in purpose built blocks that this review focused on. The task group found that only fifty percent of flats currently have recycling facilities and found that the resources currently targeted on increasing this number are unlikely to do so.
- 3.3 Recycling rates in Brent have historically been relatively low. For 2007/8 the council fell short of its target of 25% capturing only 22% of waste for recycling. When compared to other boroughs Brent consistently appeared near the bottom for dry recyclables and near the top for wet recyclables.
- 3.4 Compulsory recycling was introduced in the borough in August 2008 to help increase participation rates and reduce the amount and therefore the cost of waste going to landfill. The roll out of this initiative involved providing information, assistance and advice to residents so that they are able to access the kerbside collections service for dry recyclables.
- 3.5 Although this has had a significant impact compulsion does not currently apply to flats but if it did it would be unlikely to have the same impact on those living in flats as those in houses. This is because flats in blocks frequently have communal recycling bins which means that it is difficult to know who is recycling and who is not. In addition the logistics of collecting recyclables and taking them down to communal bins means flat dwellers are likely find recycling more challenging.
- 3.6 In order to complete the work identified in the scope and produce a set of recommendations that will deliver increased participation in recycling in flats the task group undertook the following research.
- Reviewed research on increasing participation in recycling, particularly research related to flats. This included Beacon Council information
 - Talked to a number of witnesses. These included:
 - Keith Balmer, Director of Streetcare, Brent Council

¹ Figures taken from the 2001 census as reported in Mosaic Profile: Brent residents living in flats produced by Environment & Culture

- Chris Whyte, Head of Environment Management, Brent Council
 - David Pietropaoli, Waste Policy Manager, Brent Council
 - Tanya O'Rourke, Waste Education and Environment Officer, Brent Council
 - Edward Yendluri Westminster Council
 - Matthew Homer Islington Council
 - Tenants & Landlords from the following:
 - Brent Housing Partnership
 - Stadium Housing Association
 - ASRA Housing Association
 - Paddington Churches Housing Association
 - Fortungate Housing Association
 - Hillside Housing Association
- Reviewed the technical memo for *Estates Recycling Services in Brent* produced by London Remade for WRAP 2007
 - Reviewed *Recycling Collections for Flats* produced by WRAP in August 2009
 - Undertook a tour of sites in Brent
 - Visited the London Boroughs of Westminster and Islington to identify best practice
 - Held a meeting with local RSL's including BHP and with local residents to identify the barriers to recycling and what would need to happen to increase participation.
 - Used a Mosaic profiling report produced by the Street Care team to identify our local population types that live in flats and their key characteristics.

4.0 Recommendations from the Task Group

1. That an annual waste reduction and recycling conference is held aimed at informing and involving local people. This should include a programme of annual recycling awards.
2. That recycling facilities particularly the use of new technologies are a priority consideration in all planning applications for flats in the borough.
3. That Environment and Culture review how resources are allocated within the department with a view to redirecting resources towards increasing the number of flats that receive a recycling service.
4. That Environment and Culture explore further the use of co-mingled recycling collection for flats. This should include setting up a pilot scheme to ascertain the impact on recycling in Brent.

5. That a reusable bag or sack for collecting recycling is provided for all flats in Brent that do not receive a green box service. The bag should have printed on it information on it about what to recycle.
6. That a network of recycling champions is developed on estates in Brent to support and encourage fellow residents to recycle and to link into the recycling service. Recycling champions should also be invited on Neighbourhood Working ward walkabout and other consultation and engagement events.
7. That a programme of engagement for children and young people is developed, particularly in areas where new recycling facilities are being rolled out.
8. That the service ensures that residents are involved from the start in the roll out of facilities on estates, particularly when deciding where bins are sited and how best to provide information
9. That the task group supports the implementation of the newly developed communications and involvement strategy for recycling in flats.
10. That clear and consistent signage on how to recycle is used across the borough
11. The leader of the council's annual council tax letter includes a message about the cost and importance of recycling and an information line number.

5.0 Service Departments Response

Recommendation	Service Response	Officer Responsible
1. That an annual waste reduction and recycling conference is held aimed at informing and involving local people. This should include a programme of annual recycling awards.	StreetCare would be happy to organise this. It could be combined with the existing StreetWatchers conference.	Head of Environmental Management
2. That recycling facilities particularly the use of new technologies are a priority consideration in all planning applications for flats in the borough.	This recommendation is agreed.	Head of Environmental Management
3. That Environment and Culture review how resources are allocated	This recommendation is agreed.	Head of Environmental

within the department with a view to redirecting resources towards increasing the number of flats that receive a recycling service.		Management
4. That Environment and Culture explore further the use of co-mingled recycling collection for flats. This should include setting up a pilot scheme to ascertain the impact on recycling in Brent.	This recommendation is agreed. The waste & Recycling Gold Review will look at all options for extending recycling at estates, including co-mingled collections.	Head of Environmental Management
5. That a reusable bag or sack for collecting recycling is provided for all flats in Brent that do not receive a green box service. The bag should have printed on it information on it about what to recycle.	This option will be considered as part of the Waste & Recycling Gold Review. A suitable method will be proposed in the revised Waste Strategy.	Head of Environmental Management
6. That a network of recycling champions is developed on estates in Brent to support and encourage fellow residents to recycle and to link into the recycling service. Recycling champions should also be invited on Neighbourhood Working ward walkabout and other consultation and engagement events.	This recommendation is agreed.	Head of Environmental Management
7. That a programme of engagement for children and young people is developed, particularly in areas where new recycling facilities are being rolled out.	This recommendation is agreed.	Head of Environmental Management
8. That the service ensures that residents are involved from the start in the roll out of facilities on estates, particularly when deciding where bins are sited and how best to provide information.	This recommendation is agreed.	Head of Environmental Management
9. That the task group supports the implementation of the newly developed communications and involvement strategy for recycling in	This recommendation is agreed.	Head of Environmental Management

flats.		
10. That clear and consistent signage on how to recycle is used across the borough.	This recommendation is agreed.	Head of Environmental Management
11. The leader of the council's annual council tax letter includes a message about the cost and importance of recycling and an information line number.	This recommendation is agreed.	Head of Environmental Management

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Waste and Recycling Gold Review will consider all these recommendations with a view to them being incorporated into the revised Waste Strategy which is due for publication in 2010.
- 6.2 Waste disposal costs for non recycled waste are escalating at rates way in excess of general inflation e.g. 21% increase in 2009/10. This is due to the year on year increase in Land Fill Tax of £8 per tonne and the high costs of alternatives to Land Fill. If the Council does not meet Government targets for waste going to land fill then it is likely that these costs will increase even further due to penalties and fines. While the recommendations in this report may require budget growth in the short term it is likely that they will have a pay back in terms of savings in waste disposal costs. The review team will consider the cost of implementing each option and the pay back in terms of savings in waste disposal costs before reaching a conclusion on which options to include in the revised strategy.

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 S45A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires that from 31 December 2010 the Council has a duty to collect at least two types of recyclable waste i.e. household waste which is capable of being recycled or composted from premises where we already collect household waste.
- 7.2 There are two exceptions, namely where the cost of doing so would be unreasonably high (Guidance issued by DEFRA suggests that if general waste is collected from the premises it will have passed the cost test) or comparable alternative arrangements are available. This would apply for example where there is insufficient space to locate receptacles for recyclable wastes at the general waste collection point for a multi residence block but provision is made nearby for those residents. The Council would have to be able to justify an alternative site as the exception could be challenged in the courts.

8.0 Diversity Implications

- 8.1 Recommendations from task groups are incorporated within service department's delivery or development plans and as such will be subject to the equalities impact assessments carried out by services as part of their work programme.

9.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 9.1 None

Background Papers

Increasing Participation in Recycling in Flats task group report

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