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MEETING

DATE

ITEM

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**ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

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## **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

<b>SUBJECT: REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE-WASTE MINIMISATION TOPIC GROUP</b>
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<b>SUMMARY</b>
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This report contains the findings and recommendations that have emerged after the Topic Group scrutinised the subject selected by the Sub-Committee in June 2015.

The environmental, equalities & social inclusion, financial, legal and HR implications and risks are addressed within the topic group's report.

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
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That Members:

1. Note the report of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Topic Group
2. Decide whether to refer the recommendations of the Topic Group to Cabinet.

## REPORT DETAILS

At its meeting on 18 June 2015, the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee agreed to establish a topic group to scrutinise how waste can be minimised in Havering, which could provide savings to residents as well as the Council

Attached is the Topic Group's report. The report includes details of the research that the group undertook in reaching the conclusions set out.

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## REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE WASTE MINIMISATION TOPIC GROUP

### 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At its meeting on 18 June 2015, the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee agreed to establish a topic group to scrutinise waste minimisation in the borough by understanding the current waste collection contract and by investigating any alternative solutions that would lead to the minimisation of waste in the borough.
- 1.2 The following Members formed the topic group at its outset: Councillors Barbara Matthews (Chairman), Patricia Rumble, Carol Smith and Steven Kelly.
- 1.3 The topic group met on three occasions, so that all aspects of the waste contract and possible alternative solution could be scrutinised. The Topic Group has now reached its findings and conclusions which are detailed in this report

### 2.0 SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

- 2.1 To understand the current waste collection contract.
- 2.2 How to reduce the tonnage collected, therefore reducing the levy, as well as mitigating any increase in waste disposal costs.
- 2.3 Understand the alternative solution for minimising waste and their impacts.

### 3.0 FINDINGS

- 3.1 The group wished to understand and gather information on the general view of waste in the borough together with any ideas from the East London Waste Authority (ELWA) on how minimisation could be achieved. It was noted that ELWA was made up of four boroughs, Havering, Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge and Newham. ELWA produced a total tonnage of 440,829 tonnes of waste a year. This had reduced from 555,000 tonnes in 2002/3. However the group felt that this could be reduced further. The group was informed that Havering contributed 108,491 tonnes of municipal waste in 2014/15.
- 3.2 It was noted that Havering had to pay for every tonne of waste that went over the weighbridge at Shanks who managed the waste disposal contract on behalf of ELWA, therefore although Members noted further work could

be done encouraging residents to recycle more, recycling would not save the Council any significant amount of money. It is only total waste prevention that could save total tonnage and money.

- 3.3 The group agreed that the diversion of waste from landfill was very good with diversion rates of approximately 75% and noted that this diversion was a combination of recycling and waste which had been processed in the Biomrf to produce Refuse Derived Fuel. The Biomrf process also generated a compostable type material which it was hoped could be used as such in the future and also diverted from landfill.
- 3.4 The group noted that Havering had comparatively low bulky waste tonnage. This was attributed to the number of good charity shops who would collect unwanted furniture and that the borough had a charging scheme for the collection of bulky waste. The main issue was the total tonnage of household waste as there was no restriction on the amount of waste each household could leave out. It was agreed that a more targeted approach was needed in pockets of the borough to try to work with residents to reduce the amount of waste that was produced.
- 3.5 Officers provided a breakdown of the contents of black sacks across the different households within the Borough, discovered through composition studies. It was noted that on average 1.75 orange sacks (recycling) were set out per household, with the largest amount presented in areas categorised as affluent (ACORN 1) and the lowest in areas categorised as financially stretched (ACORN 4). On average 2.2 black sacks were set out by each household. It was explained that on average 43% of black sacks by weight was food waste, with up to 47% in the more affluent parts of the Borough.
- 3.6 The national picture for food waste showed that on average 60% was “avoidable” (slices of bread, apples and yoghurt), 17% was “possibly avoidable” (bread crusts, potato skins) and 23% was “unavoidable” (tea bags, banana skins and bones). It was explained that there was a top ten of avoidable foods that were thrown away. The types of food were:
- Bread
  - Fresh potatoes
  - Milk
  - Meals (home-made and pre-prepared)
  - Carbonated soft drink
  - Fruit juice and smoothies
  - Poultry meat
  - Pork meat
  - Cakes
  - Processed potatoes (e.g. chips).
- 3.7 Officers explained that by weight the largest contributions of avoidable food waste was fresh veg and salad (19%), Drinks (17%), Bakery (11%), Home-made and pre-prepared meals (10%) and Dairy and eggs (10%). The main

reasons given for throwing food away was that it was not used in time (either gone off or past the date on the packaging) which accounted for just under 50%, or that it had been cooked, prepared or served too much, which accounted for 31%. The group were shocked by the percentage of drinks, which should have been poured away and the containers recycled.

- 3.8 The “Love Food Hate Waste” (LFHW) campaign had been used in the Borough to help educate residents on how to prevent food waste. However the group agreed that this was an area that still needed attention given the amount left in the waste stream, and with the right education this could reduce the tonnage as well as the impact on the environment and health issues.
- 3.9 In a London-wide survey it was explained that most people said that they threw away either “none” or “hardly any” food, however it was necessary to break these perceptions as well as teaching residents the Love Food Hate Waste Principles. These were Storage, Planning, Portions and Leftovers. Studies had shown that the majority of households overcooked portions of pasta and rice, which could be used to make another meal, rather than just being put in the waste.
- 3.10 The group agreed that a borough campaign should be run where residents were educated about how to reduce the amount of food that they wasted. It was important that this put the emphasis on how much each householder contributed to the waste stream, how this can be reduced as well as the rising costs of waste disposal and how this contributed as part of their Council Tax bill. It was agreed it was important to get the community involved in the campaign to assist in getting the messages heard,
- 3.11 It was agreed that the strapline for the campaign would be “Save your Weekly Collection” with tips on how food waste could be reduced using LFHW principles. The key strategy would be to get residents to pay attention to the issues, drive the action and eventually change the behaviour through simple messages. Members were keen that the advertising language was kept simple. It was felt that making a direct link between weekly collections and the cost of disposal could be a significant motivator which may help to change people’s behaviour.
- 3.12 There were a range of advertising opportunities to get the message out to residents which were discussed. Some areas would be of no cost, other would have a cost attached to them. Members also suggested ways of getting the message out, including a message on the telephony system for calls being transferred or waiting to be answered as well as details being overprinted onto envelopes stating “X% of your Council Tax goes on waste collection and disposal” – here is how to reduce your waste”
- 3.13 The group were keen to include a barometer or gauge of how the waste was reducing, however officers explained that because of the fluctuation in waste over the year, this would not give a true reflection of the change. The suggestion was to reflect the change in attitude and/or engagement with the

scheme. Trends could be across different areas of the borough, which may encourage areas to become competitive.

- 3.14 The group discussed other areas where the campaign could be advertised. This included the back of buses as well as the roundabout advertising in the borough. Officers felt these may be more costly, but could be sought as an option.

- 3.15 A breakdown of the options is shown below:

<b>No Cost (other than staff)</b>	<b>Cost Options</b>
Press releases	Website design
Council e-zines	Posters
Social Media	Council noticeboards
Internal messaging channels	JC Decaux boards
Website information	Living Adverts
London Green Points e-zines and website	Vehicle livery
Living Magazine Articles	Outreach work: workshops, demonstrations and roadshows
Phone messaging	

- 3.16 Officers provided the group with some outline figures for all of the items that would have a cost implication. Over a three month period the cost for advertising would be £8,589. This would equate to approximately £34,356 each year. To carry out workshops, demonstrations and other events over a three month period would be at an additional cost of £19,200 for the year. This brought the total cost of the full campaign to £53,556, which equated to 52p per household. The Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) had recommended that to launch a campaign would be £2 per household and to maintain an established campaign would be £1 per household, so even the most expensive of the options was still well below the suggested spend.
- 3.17 It was agreed that the no cost and lower cost items could be delivered (excluding the JC Decaux boards, Vehicle livery and outreach work). This would be approximately £1,929 over a three month period, equating to £7,716 for the year. (Recommendation 5.1)
- 3.18 Members were of the opinion that external funding be sought for the campaign. Officers explained that whilst there were no external funding streams available immediately, they could be sought. Members suggested seeking funding from Veolia. However, upon investigations, officers stated that the Veolia Trust were unable to fund any waste or recycling communications initiatives due to a change in legislation about what landfill tax money could be spent on. Possible funding could be available through the Love Food Hate Waste London campaign which could complement the work of the topic group, but its use would likely be prescriptive and not available until at least spring or summer 2016. It was noted that should

sufficient funding become available the implementation of the full campaign could be considered. (Recommendation 5.2)

- 3.19 Officers explained that evidence demonstrated people need support in making complex behaviour changes, rather than solely hearing messages through advertising. This could be done through cookery workshops, roadshows and other support events but this would require additional funding.

#### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The group discussed other options that could be considered to reduce waste tonnages. The options included that of fortnightly collections which were felt to be a contentious issue and not something that Havering would wish to consider at the present time.
- 4.2 The other options discussed were the use of wheeled bins to restrict waste or the introduction of a pay as you throw collection service where by residents would be provided with a number of sacks to use for residual waste disposal with the options to purchase additional Council branded sacks.. Officer explained that whilst this may reduce the amount of waste that residents produced , the current waste collection service had only been operational since August 2014, and to re-fit the vehicles in order to tip the bins would be a costly option. There would also be significant capital investment required and additional ongoing increased revenue costs. It was felt that both these options would require detailed work and should not be considered at this time

#### **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 To launch a low-cost advertising and information campaign with the strapline of “Save Your Weekly Collection” with food waste being the key focal point for the campaign. This will then lead onto further details on the Havering Website that gives tips in line with the Love Food Hate Waste Campaign, about how to keep food out of the waste stream, leading to a reduction in waste, and therefore a reduced cost to both the Council and the residents.
- 5.2 Officers to seek external funding to assist with the advertising and information campaign.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

During the course of its review, the topic group met and held discussions with the following people:

Lisa Foster – Waste and Recycling Manager  
Paul Ellis – Group Manager, Waste Environment Service  
Sunita Patel – External Relations Officer

**The following comments are submitted by members of staff:**

**Financial Implications and Risks:**

**Legal Implications and Risks:**

**Human Resources Implications and Risks:**

**Equalities and Social Inclusion Implications and Risks:**

**Background Papers List**

Notes of the Waste Minimisation Topic Group Meetings:

17 September 2015  
5 November 2015  
2 December 2015