

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 19 September 2011

Agenda item: 9

Wards: All

Subject: Scrutiny Review on Efficient Household Waste Management and the Environment

Lead officer: Chris Lee, Director Environment and Regeneration

Lead member: Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Forward Plan reference number: 1083

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Recommendations:

- A. To note the contents of this report.
 - B. To agree the associated action plan (Appendix 1) and that this is passed to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Cabinet at its 20 June 2011 meeting resolved that officers:
 - report to the September Cabinet with an appraisal of the text and recommendations of the submitted report by the Scrutiny Task Group together with an analysis of the evidence base used including financing, changing technology, working practices, previous research, recycling rates, the processes adopted by partner boroughs and residents responsibilities;
 - consider implementation of the recommendations through an action plan working with relevant local partner organisations and Cabinet Member(s) (designated by Cabinet).
- 1.2. This report takes Members through the Scrutiny report section by section and provides an action plan for the 22 Scrutiny report recommendations at Appendix 1. Overall the majority of recommendations of the Scrutiny report are acceptable and make a positive contribution to shaping the future objectives and design of services associated with waste management. This is a complex matter and within the timescales available it is inevitable that some evidence may not have been considered. Within the report there are suggestions of areas where further work would have better informed some of the recommendations. These should be viewed as suggested areas for further work.

2 DETAILS

Introduction

- 2.1. The introduction to the Scrutiny report sets out that the group agreed the following terms of reference
- To scrutinise current and alternative methods of domestic waste collection;
 - To evaluate each model, taking into account value for money, impact on the environment, lessons learned from other authorities, likely future technological and other changes;
 - To make recommendations to Cabinet on how domestic waste collection should be arranged in future.
- 2.2. With respect to the first point, officers were asked to evaluate the financial impacts of four collection systems:
- current methodology
 - wheeled bin for residual; continue with boxes for recycling
 - sacks for residual; wheeled bins for recycling
 - wheeled bins for both residual and recycling
- 2.3. Officers were not asked to explore the levels of street litter that may be impacted upon through the provision of waste containers and the potential financial impacts of such improvements. This matter was explicit in the Deputy Leader of the Council's letter to the Scrutiny Panel requesting the establishment of a Task Group to consider waste containment options.
- 2.4. This does not address options in terms of alternative containers; frequencies of collection or potential shift pattern changes (working 4, 5, 6 day weeks with a variety of shift patterns). These options also do not take into account impacts of food waste collection or on street cleansing resource requirements.
- 2.5. Leeds for example operate a 4 day working shift pattern over 6 days of the week, saving one collection vehicle in three. Cardiff operate a double shifting pattern over 5 days a week, although officers found on a joint visit with Sutton that the overall collection budget available was more than that of current budgets in Merton and Sutton combined. Cardiff also collected from fewer households than both these boroughs together.
- 2.6. The report sets out that an introduction meeting was held with the Director of E&R and HoS, Street Scene and Waste. The report does not seem to cover many of the issues raised at this meeting and neither officer was asked to any further meetings save to discuss specifically the matter of garden waste collections.
- 2.7. The group invited 4 "expert" witnesses, two of whom have very limited, if any, experience in delivering municipal waste management services across the board. The Group did not apparently consider asking the council's own expert advisors for references or recommendations on who should be

approached as “experts” to look at top performing councils operating resource efficient collection and street cleansing models.

- 2.8. The report refers to five visits to identify good practice elsewhere. These included three neighbouring boroughs, two of which are lower performers than Merton with respect to recycling (Wandsworth 28/33 and Croydon 16/33 in 2009/10). With respect to RB Kingston the only positive conclusions drawn were in respect of communications. Little of the reasoning behind their service model was explored or cited within the body of the report.
- 2.9. A review of resident satisfaction would also show that resident satisfaction with recycling services is above the London average and on average for refuse collection. No research was carried out with respect to resident satisfaction and it is difficult to see why research into best practice was limited to three boroughs and no reason or justification given as to why these boroughs were chosen.
- 2.10. The Group also visited Merton Priory Homes, which from the council’s perspective are assisting Waste Services to drive recycling up on Housing Estates rather than leading in this area themselves. Waste Services has been leading on the food waste collection trials on the Ravensbury Estate.
- 2.11. The Group also visited Garth Road where they spoke to one refuse crew. They did not speak to a cross section of operatives nor did they speak to any officers at supervisory or managerial level.
- 2.12. Waste collection and disposal is a complex policy and operational area in a rapidly changing environment. It is understandable that the Scrutiny task group had to ‘draw a line’ and report at some point. The majority of recommendations are practical and useful. Many reflect the direction of the current service and highlight areas where the council is taking a very positive if not leading role in improving recycling levels and minimising waste being sent to landfill.
- 2.13. Since reporting there has been a Government review of waste policy published as well as changes in collection methods and frequencies in a number of London boroughs – reflecting the financial pressures faced. Such developments will need to be considered as we develop our own plans for the future.

Household waste collection in Merton

- 2.14. The Scrutiny report details the position as at 1 May 2011. Merton now has in place:
 - a new chargeable garden waste collection service which commenced on 11 July with fortnightly collections. 2,750 households have signed up for this service, with 84% of these requesting a wheeled bin. 20 tonnes of garden waste a week are currently being collected from these households
 - since the introduction of a bulky household waste collection service for up to 5 items from 1 November 2010, requests for this service have effectively doubled. Some 12,000 collections per annum from households are projected

- the Garth Road Household Reuse & Recycling Centre (HRRC) contractor (Environmental Waste Controls (EWC)) is now recycling 73% of the waste throughput per month, and all the South London Waste Partnership (SLWP) HRRC sites are in the top 12 nationally for HRRC recycling rates
 - EWC have agreed to manage the disposal of Merton's bulky waste stream. Figures for the recycling rate now being achieved are not yet available
 - Merton continues to provide 28 Neighbourhood Reuse & Recycling Centres strategically sited around the borough
 - in a November 2010 study involving 24 London boroughs Merton ranked 8th in terms of lowest collection cost per 100,000 households
- 2.15. Whilst the Scrutiny team acknowledges that Merton "now ranks 11th out of the 33 London Boroughs" for recycling/composting, no evidence is cited looking at the systems and models adapted by the highest performers. Excluding organics, Merton compares to the highest performing councils across England.

Street Cleaning

- 2.16. The Scrutiny report mentions that the group were informed that around 50% of the street litter originates from refuse bags and recycling boxes. The report does not mention that this figure originated from a Keep Tidy Britain review of Merton's Street Cleansing Service which reported in April 2010 (see 11 October 2010 Cabinet paper). This backed up a Defra report quoted in the February 2006 Merton Scrutiny Review of Waste Collection which stated that plastic sacks for domestic waste '*can increase littering by up to nine times over levels achieved by well-specified and operated wheeled bin systems.*' These linkages between street cleansing resources and improved waste containerisation are not examined in the Scrutiny report.
- 2.17. The £321K saving in the street cleansing budgets agreed at the 2 March 2011 Council meeting included deletion of litter picking on the same day following waste collection. The Council can no longer afford the previous level of scheduled service, carried out regardless of need, and instead now adopts an intelligence led system. Under this system, there is a need to ensure a high standard of communication between refuse/recycling collection crews and the area based street cleansing teams, focusing on streets needing cleansing as and when required.
- 2.18. In addition, Merton is giving high priority to developing its CRM IT system to enable improved public reporting and feeding these directly through to frontline crews.
- 2.19. Independent monitoring of street cleansing standards continues to show the council is meeting agreed targets. However, due to the severe financial pressures on all services across the council, it would be prudent to reconsider the impact of waste containerisation on street litter levels. Litter avoidance will facilitate a reduction in street cleansing resources without impacting on performance and overall environmental quality.

Waste Minimisation

- 2.20. The South London Waste Partnership Joint Committee agreed a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy at its 17 February 2011 meeting. This emphasized that the Waste Hierarchy is at the heart of the Partnership's approach to managing waste. It stated:

In looking at how we manage any waste, this approach firstly focuses on the scope for waste minimisation, and then examines each subsequent option before disposal is considered.

- 2.21. The approach is consistent with the Waste Strategy for England 2007, the London Mayor's Draft Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the Government Review of Waste Policy in England 2011.

- 2.22. The Waste Hierarchy:

1.	Reducing waste
2.	Reusing waste without altering it (eg reusing textiles or shoes)
3.	Recycling and Composting
4.	Recovery (treating waste to recover value through energy release)
5.	Disposal (eg when no further value can be extracted, such as in sending waste to landfill)

- 2.23. The reduction in waste tonnage handled by Merton in recent years has led to Members agreeing a total of £581K of savings in the budget setting process for 2010/11 and 2011/12. Further substantial reductions are likely to be proposed for 2012/13.

- 2.24. Growth in Merton housing has averaged 465 new units per year since 2000. Plans for future years include 370 units per year. Merton's population of 201,400 (mid-2008 estimate) is projected to rise to 216,000 by 2015. The Mayor's Draft Municipal Waste Management Strategy predicts a London population growth of 22% by 2031. Waste minimisation will be key to reducing the negative impact.

- 2.25. Merton's support of home composting has contributed to local waste minimisation.

- 2.26. However Merton's current black bag collection service does not encourage waste reduction since residents have an unlimited capacity for residual waste collection.

Re-use

- 2.27. Increasing re-use remains a challenge for the SLWP and more generally across London. Merton will continue to work in partnership with local charities to meet this challenge.

- 2.28. Merton carried out a trial using Croydon Arc for 4 months during 2010 to collect all its bulky waste stream and maximise reuse and recycling. Disappointingly the maximum reuse Arc achieved was 5% of the tonnage collected, with an additional 14.5% being recycled. Overall a maximum of

19.5% was reused/recycled during this trial. The figures in the Scrutiny Task Group report erroneously stated that this trial achieved recycling/reuse levels of 40%.

- 2.29. The SLWP has also worked closely with organisations funded by the London Waste & Recycling Board, including in 2010 with the London Community Resource Network mentioned in the Scrutiny report, to try to enhance reuse and recycling but so far we have yet to see a viable business model in the current economic environment.
- 2.30. In May 2011 Merton agreed with EWC, the SLWP HRRRC contractor, that they would accept Merton bulky waste stream with the aim of reusing/recycling as much of this as possible. EWC have promised a report shortly on the initial results.

Food Waste

- 2.31. The Scrutiny report recognises the linkage between the ongoing SLWP procurement aimed at securing a substantial new residual waste treatment contract from 2014/15 and any decision on further rollout of food waste to the remaining households consisting of approximately 20,000 houses and 12,000 flats.
- 2.32. The Scrutiny report does not reference available research that shows that weekly food waste collections combined with a fortnightly residual waste collection can have a significant impact on participation rates for food waste collection services and consequently higher diversion from residual waste. The report states that both Kingston and the Somerset Waste Partnership found that when they introduced a separate food waste collection, the weight of landfill was reduced by more than the weight of the food collection (paragraph 39 of Scrutiny Report). The reports does not point out that Kingston introduced wheeled bins and a fortnightly collection of residual waste at the same time as their food waste service. All of the five districts within the Somerset Waste partnership provide a wheeled bin service and four of them collect residual waste on a fortnightly basis. It should be noted that fortnightly collections of residual waste is not a policy of the current administration.
- 2.33. This will be the subject of a further report to Cabinet later in the year.

Recycling

- 2.34. Merton successfully implemented co-mingled dry recycling collection in February 2009 and this has led to financial savings both from collection crews and disposal handling through joint SLWP working under partnership contracts. Some 1,500 additional tonnes - or 10% - of kerbside collected dry recycling was collected in the first year following implementation.
- 2.35. A consistent approach is needed for dry recycling arrangements with residents. The value of individual elements of the dry recycling waste stream has gone both up and down in recent years and collecting the individual elements has an additional collection cost attached.
- 2.36. Officers would only recommend considering any change back to separated dry recycling streams as part of any opportunity in changed SLWP

contractual arrangements. However taking a longer term market view carries a significant cost risk. The current SLWP materials recycling services contract expires in 2022, with a break clause in 2015. The SLWP will be looking at the possibility of a new collection contract across the Partnership from 2014.

- 2.37. Regular reports on the financial and operational performance and auditing of the SLWP contracts is carried out under SLWP contract management arrangements and reported to the Joint Waste Committee Members, which includes relevant Merton Cabinet Members.
- 2.38. An aim for the new SLWP contract due to be concluded in 2011/12 is to include profit sharing options for third party waste and income generated from both energy revenues and the sale of recyclables.
- 2.39. Merton does not have a significant issue with contamination of the dry recycling waste stream. 98.9% of the dry recyclables collected was recycled in 2010/11. However there can be an issue with wet paper when this has been exposed during periods of heavy rain prior to collection.
- 2.40. Members will wish to consider the implications carefully of making the use of clear plastic sacks a future requirement for the collection of landfill waste. The price of available clear sacks is generally several times that of black sacks at present. Waste can also be hidden within other sacks or bags within a clear sack. Such a requirement may also not be enforceable, although a mandatory recycling scheme might be possible at some future date. Officers do not recommend making clear sacks a 'requirement' in the current economic environment.
- 2.41. The SLWP boroughs are working towards a common approach to the range of materials that can be recycled. This is already fully in place for HRRCs where recycling rates in excess of 70% are being achieved across the Partnership. Kerbside dry recyclables collected in Merton are processed at a facility that handles the same waste streams from 24 other local authorities.
- 2.42. Merton Council provides bins for dry recycling in flats and will continue to work with landlords and managing agents to maximise recycling opportunities and communications with residents. Bins are labelled using standard national standard graphics provided by Wrap. Merton is trialling food waste collection from flats.

Flexibility and planning for the future

- 2.43. Waste treatment for the residual waste stream, as an alternative to landfill, will be the subject of a separate report to Cabinet later in 2011/12.
- 2.44. The overall volume of waste handled by Merton continues to fall in the current economic conditions. However the amount of household residual waste is likely to remain significant and this and the nature of this waste are factors to take into consideration in any decision to move to fortnightly residual collection. For example, it is known that fortnightly residual collections also provide an incentive to participate in weekly food waste collection schemes and encourage waste minimisation as stated above in paragraph 2.29. It should be noted that fortnightly collections of residual waste is not a policy of the current administration.

Communication with residents

- 2.45. The SLWP's first comprehensive Communications Strategy, and supporting Communications plan, was approved by the Joint Waste Committee (JWC) in December 2009.
- 2.46. A 2011-12 Communications Strategy, taking into account the results of local SLWP research conducted by Ipsos MORI in summer 2010, was agreed at the 24 March 2011 JWC meeting and endorsed by the relevant Merton Cabinet Member.
- 2.47. As well as examining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, the SLWP Communications Strategy looks at target audiences, generic messages, communication channels, branding and protocols. Within this framework, Merton officers agree with the relevant Cabinet Member targeted local campaigns and content.
- 2.48. A copy of Merton's 2011-12 Recycling communications plan is enclosed at Appendix 2. This encompasses best practice and guidance from Wrap and maximises the use of available media. Merton will continue to work closely with Wrap as a critical friend and advisor.
- 2.49. Kingston provide the SLWP communications lead for the Partnership. They also chair the SLWP communications forum of partnership communications officers and Merton officers will continue to work closely within the Partnership to pool communications resources and expertise.
- 2.50. Waste officers also work closely with internal Communications colleagues to achieve Waste aims. Waste communications budgets transferred to central Communications Team from late 2010-11. The aim is also to enhance further the Waste Operations and Waste Services communications linkages by co-location of the relevant staff.
- 2.51. Officers will also continue to work with the SLWP, Merton Priory Homes, other social landlords, Wrap and other expert organisations in identifying the most effective ways of communicating re-use and recycling messages to residents.
- 2.52. Recycling crews carry contamination cards to encourage recycling and these have recently been improved. Workshops are also provided for collection crews, to give staff the knowledge and ownership of their service with residents. The resource implications of reducing the collection efficiency of crews by giving them a wider role do however need to be considered.
- 2.53. Separately and more widely the Council provides house to house communications through My Merton, the annual waste 'Christmas Card', with the 6-monthly re-supply of food waste bags to 50,000 households, and door-knocking when resources allow. A door knocking exercise involving 15,000 Merton households, using grant funding by Wrap, was completed early in 2011. As a Waste Collection Authority, Merton has a continued duty to collect household waste and the aim is recycling through encouragement.

Service modelling

- 2.54. With the scale of budget savings required, Members will wish to keep under review the options for waste collection, including waste containerisation requirements further improving street cleanliness and allowing savings in

that area as well as looking at options for reduced collection frequencies, together with the implications of decisions on food waste collection and future SLWP developments.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. Not applicable.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. Not applicable.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. As above.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. As above.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. As above.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. As above.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Not applicable.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The Task Group report paid little attention to the health and safety implications of different collection systems. As noted in the 11 October 2010 Cabinet report, improvements are anticipated in Health & Safety operationally with any introduction of wheeled bins, with less lifting resulting in less manual handling type injuries and containment of rubbish with less risk of glass and sharp related injuries. This should result in lower sickness levels amongst staff, hence lower costs.

10.2. Wheeled bins are the recommended Health & Safety Executive waste container of choice. This point does not appear to have been considered by the Scrutiny group. Leeds (see paragraph 2.4 above) introduced wheeled bins at the same time as a new 4 day working shift pattern involving longer daily working for staff over 6 days of the week.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix 1 Action Plan in response to Scrutiny report recommendations
- Appendix 2 Recycling Communications Plan 2011-12

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Scrutiny Review on Efficient Household Waste Management and the Environment (20 June 2011 Cabinet report)

Scrutiny Review on Efficient Household Waste Management and the Environment – Action Plan

No.	Recommendation	Action
1	We recommend that the Director of Environment and Regeneration review how the refuse collection and street cleaning crews communicate with each other in order to ensure that street cleaning takes place immediately after refuse collection.	Agreed on need to ensure a high standard of internal communications between refuse/recycling collection and street cleansing teams, particularly since street cleansing is no longer scheduled to automatically occur after collection. See 19 September 2011 report to Cabinet detail, also on IT developments.
2	We recommend that waste minimisation should be one of the guiding principles to be taken into account by Cabinet when taking decisions about the collection, management and disposal of household waste	Agreed. The waste hierarchy is detailed in the 19 September 2011 report to Cabinet and will continue to be adhered to when Cabinet are making waste management decisions.
3	We recommend that the Council should more actively encourage the re-use of household items in order to reduce waste. The Council could advertise the local “freecycle” website at the recycling and re-use centre and in council communications such as My Merton and the council tax leaflet.	Agreed. The Council pro-actively encourages re-use of household items, making use of its own publicity media and working closely with community groups to raise awareness.
4	We recommend that the Council should advertise local reuse services such as	Agreed. The Council publishes information about re-use

	companies that collect used light bulbs, batteries, small electrical goods etc.	companies/charities to inform residents and offer them a choice, making use of its own publicity media.
5	We recommend that the Council investigate ways of promoting the re-use of items of bulky waste, including the possibility of a third party taking over the collection in order to increase the level of re-use.	Agreed. Reuse and recycling a larger proportion of the bulky waste stream is a South London Waste Partnership (SLWP) priority. However trials involving collection via a local charity have proved disappointing. The sorting of the waste stream, rather than collection, is key. See 19 September 2011 report to Cabinet detail.
6	We recommend that Cabinet receive and carefully examine costings before taking any decision to complete the roll out of the food waste collection to the remaining 30,000+ households in Merton.	Agreed. This will be the subject of a separate report to Cabinet.
7	We recommend that the Council work in partnership with Merton Priory Homes to continue to explore ways of maximising the collection of food waste from flats.	Agreed. The Council will continue to carry out the food waste collection trial which includes 360 properties managed by Merton Priory Homes. See also recommendation 6 above.
8	Given our current rate of recycling, we recommend that the Council should continue to have a co-mingled recycling collection service in order to drive up the recycling rates.	Agreed.

9	<p>We recommend that the Council should keep the recycling collection methods under review in order to identify the point at which the separate collection of individual components becomes financially advantageous. The Council should then change the service accordingly and should provide clear communication to residents, setting out the reasons for the change as well as the new collection requirements.</p>	<p>The SLWP continues to monitor the recyclables market, working with its recycling processing contractor (Viridor) to maximise value. Other recyclables not included in the SLWP contract are for example collected separately, such as textiles, for which the Council earns a direct income. See 19 September 2011 report to Cabinet detail on the risks here.</p>
10	<p>We recommend that the Director of Environment and Regeneration should continuously monitor the market and provide regular reports to the relevant Cabinet Member on the value of the raw materials obtained from the recycling collection.</p>	<p>Agreed. The SLWP Management Group will continue to monitor this and provide reports to the Joint Waste Committee (JWC). The relevant Merton Cabinet Member is a member of the JWC.</p>
11	<p>We recommend that Cabinet should ensure that future contracts relating to the collection, management or disposal of waste are sufficiently flexible to enable the council to benefit from changing market conditions in relation to the value of raw materials.</p>	<p>Agreed. The Council will continue to work with the SLWP on these matters. See also 19 September 2011 report to Cabinet detail.</p>
12	<p>We recommend that the Council work with</p>	<p>Not Agreed Members will need to</p>

	<p>local supermarkets to encourage the stocking of clear plastic refuse sacks with a view to making the use of clear sacks a future requirement for the collection of landfill waste.</p>	<p>consider the implications of this carefully. The price of available clear sacks is generally several times that of black sacks. Waste can also be hidden within other sacks or bags within a clear sack. Such a requirement may also not be enforceable. Not recommended in the current economic environment.</p>
13	<p>We therefore recommend that Cabinet should work towards establishing a common approach to the range of materials which can be recycled among the authorities within the South London Waste Partnership.</p>	<p>Agreed. The SLWP worked towards this approach in awarding its 2008 recyclable contract and will continue to do so in examining a future collection contract.</p>
14	<p>We recommend that the Council, Merton Priory Homes and other registered social landlords provide information to residents who live in flats with communal recycling bins telling them that they can put their recyclables in to an ordinary plastic bag and then throw the recycling bag into the bin.</p>	<p>Agreed. The Council will continue to provide information to residents that live in flats regarding what they can deposit in the recycling bins provided by the Council. See also 16 below.</p>
15	<p>We recommend that the Director of Environment and Regeneration keeps abreast of technological developments in order to identify opportunities for changing waste collection and disposal methods so that</p>	<p>Agreed. The Council will continue to work closely within the SLWP on these matters.</p>

	<p>greater value for money may be achieved, as well as meeting environmental and waste minimisation objectives.</p>	
16	<p>We recommend that the Council develops a communication strategy to encourage the public to re-use and recycle. This should be a complex strategy that targets different messages to different groups, based on the typologies identified by WRAP in its “barriers to recycling” report. Communication should include information on what happens to recyclable materials after collection and cost savings achieved through reducing the amount sent to landfill. Publicity and clear signage should also be put on containers, including cost information. Every opportunity should be taken to communicate re-use and recycling messages, including each issue of My Merton and the council tax leaflet.</p>	<p>Agreed. The SLWP’s first comprehensive Communications Strategy, and supporting Communications plan, was approved by the Joint Waste Committee (JWC) in December 2009. A 2011-12 Communications Strategy, taking into account the results of local SLWP research conducted by Ipsos MORI in summer 2010, was agreed at the 24 March 2011 JWC meeting. As well as examining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, it looks at target audiences, generic messages, communication channels, branding and protocols. Within this framework, Merton officers agree with the relevant Cabinet Member targeted local campaigns and content. A copy of Merton’s 2011-12 Recycling communications plan is enclosed at Appendix 2. This encompasses best practice and guidance from WRAP and maximises the use of available media.</p>
17	<p>We recommend that all communication</p>	<p>Agreed. See 16 above. Kingston</p>

	with the public should use words that are in common use. Communication materials from Kingston provide a good example of this approach.	provide the SLWP communications lead for the Partnership.
18	We recommend that the Council continue to work with Merton Priory Homes, other registered social landlords, WRAP and other expert organisations to identify the most effective way of communicating messages to encourage their tenants to recycle and re-use.	Agreed. The Council will continue to work with the SLWP, Merton Priory Homes, other social landlords, WRAP and other expert organisations in identifying the most effective ways of communicating re-use and recycling messages to residents. See also 14 and 16 above.
19	We recommend that strong links should be developed between the waste collection service and the communications team so that communications becomes an integral part of the service. We would prefer this to be provided by a designated officer in the communications team. Alternatively work could be kick-started by buying-in expertise, for example from the Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames who provide the communications lead for the South London Waste Partnership.	Strong links agreed. Waste communications budgets transferred to central Communications Team from late 2010-11. Aim is to enhance further the Waste Operations and Waste Services communications linkages by co-location of the relevant staff. See also 16 above for the Communications Lead for the SLWP provided by Kingston. Kingston chair the SLWP communications forum of partnership communications officers.
20	We recommend that the Director of Environment and Regeneration considers	Recycling crews carry contamination cards to encourage recycling and these

	<p>the best way in which to use the collection crew as ambassadors for recycling. This would include identifying and leafleting households that are not participating in recycling (or only putting out small quantities). Leaflets could be left for those who mix recycling and landfill waste. A stepped approach could be taken whereby reminders at first and then warning leaflets are left, leading ultimately to non-collection when recyclable materials are put in with landfill waste. Results from the current trial of yellow and red cards to encourage residents to present their landfill waste sacks correctly should help to design the scheme.</p>	<p>have recently been improved. We also provide workshops for collection crews, to give staff the knowledge and ownership of their service with residents. Separately the Council provides house to house communications through My Merton, the annual waste 'Christmas Card', with the 6-monthly re-supply of food waste bags to 50,000 households, and door-knocking when resources allow. As a Waste Collection Authority, Merton has a duty to collect household waste and the aim is recycling through encouragement.</p>
21	<p>We recommend that the Council continues to collect landfill waste from plastic sacks and provides boxes for the collection of dry recyclables</p>	<p>With the scale of budget savings required, Members will wish to keep under review the options for waste collection, including waste containerisation requirements linked with any potential move to fortnightly collection (a potential suggestion by the Task Group but not the policy of the current administration) and the implications of decisions on food waste collection (see 6 above) and future SLWP developments (see 15 above).</p>
22	<p>We recommend that Cabinet investigate</p>	<p>Not Agreed. See 21 above. Apart from</p>

	<p>the feasibility of buying lids for the recycling boxes and running a trial in one part of the borough in order to evaluate whether this makes a difference to the quantity and quality of recycling material collected and to the amount of litter on the street.</p>	<p>additional operational costs and envisaged replacement costs, the provision of lids limits the capacity of the boxes. This does not confirm to agreed objectives of increasing recycling and minimising waste to landfill.</p>
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Merton Council's communication implementation plan

Recycling communications plan

April 2011 – March 2012

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1.1 Background

Current Services

Merton currently delivers all the Council's waste and recycling services through an in-house team. The council currently operates:

A weekly black bin collection for residual waste – rubbish is to be collected from the front edge of property using compacting RCVs. Residents can buy their own wheeled bin or place their rubbish in a bin at the front edge of the property to minimise problems with vermin.

A weekly kerbside recycling service where residents can use 55litre green recycling boxes for the co-mingled collection of paper, cardboard, food / drinks cans, beverage/ food cartons, plastic bottles, glass bottles and jars.

50,000 properties in Merton are also served by the food waste collection service. Households are supplied with a kitchen caddy and an outside food bin which is emptied weekly. A pack of 52 liners for the kitchen caddy are delivered to households every six months, with additional liners available to purchase from Merton Libraries and local supermarkets.

Both dry recycling and food waste are collected on the same day as refuse.

A free garden waste collection service has recently been stopped and is proposed to operate a chargeable garden waste collection.

A free bulky waste service is in operation. Up to five items can be collected free of charge from each household each quarter, subject to the household being up to date with Council tax payments.

A network of bring sites collecting the same materials and in addition textiles, shoes, DVDs, CDs and books.

Environmental Waste Controls (EWC) operates a Household Reuse and Recycling Centre (HRRC) at Garth Road for the recycling and reuse of a wide range of materials.

Waste Data

Best Value Performance Indicators for 2010/11 are:

BVPI	Activity	Performance 2010-11
BVPI 82a & b	Waste Recycled/composted	36%
BVPI 82d	Waste Landfilled	64%
BVPI 84	Arisings per head of population	kg

Planned service improvements

Scrutiny is currently reviewing all services with a report due in the summer for recommendations. These include possible provision of wheeled bins (a manifesto commitment), the rollout of food waste to the remaining households and flats in the borough.

A chargeable garden waste scheme is also currently being considered.

1.2 Research

Feedback on service

During March 2011 external funding was received to deliver a doorstepping campaign to 14,975 households in low performing areas. This achieved a 39.5% contact rate speaking to 5,920 residents.

85.9% of the residents contacted claimed to use the recycling box service, while 14.1% of residents did not participate in the service.

The main collective reason for lack of participation in the recycling box service recorded was 'no box' (54.1%).

The main material recycled by residents using the recycling box service was paper (86.8%).

72.0% of the residents contacted claimed to use the food waste collection service, while 25.1% of residents did not participate in the service.

The main collective reason for lack of participation in the food waste collection service recorded was 'no bin' (20.2%).

The main food waste type recycled by residents using the food waste collection service was fruit and vegetables (67.1%).

1,151 orders were taken for receptacles.

In terms of feedback on the recycling services, the positive to constructive comments ratio was 69:31. The most common constructive comment was 'missed collections' (22.7%).

The main barriers to address are:

Poor service delivery

These include delays in receiving recycling container or liners following request and complaints of boxes being hurled or litter left following collection.

Inappropriate equipment

That containers are too small, some people would prefer a wheeled bin whilst others are anti wheeled bins.

Concern items aren't recycled

Scaremongering from press that items are not recycled and recycling is a wasted effort.

Lack of information

Being able to provide information to residents moving into the borough to make them aware of the services available especially with a transient population with a turnover of around 30%.

Good practice in delivering communication campaigns is available through WRAP guidance and case studies.

Acorn data is available to map the demographics and socio-economic groups in the borough.

1.3 Strategy

Recycling Levels	
Where we are now	We currently have a recycling and composting rate of 36%) levels of participation vary throughout the area ,
Where we want to go	We want to: 1. Improve current levels of recycling and 2. increase levels of recycling in those areas that are currently underperforming
How we're going to get there	1. Ongoing positive feedback and reminders for existing recyclers. 2. Identify then specifically target and support lower performing areas
Recycling in 'Hard to Reach Areas'	
Where we are now	Hard to reach areas include flats and areas of social housing. The nature of their accommodation is more transient and mean that more intensive publicity is needed to maintain and increase recycling levels. Previous initiatives (WRAP funding) have raised the levels of recycling in these areas but input needs to be continued to maintain these levels. Some people living in flats have expressed that they would like to recycle more materials and/or have access.
Where we want to go	We need to maintain and increase levels of recycling in the hard to reach areas and continue to review requests from residents living in flats from the feedback we receive at roadshows.
How we're going to get there	1. Shared Houses and flats - develop work with community groups and landlords, with intermittent canvassing An overall timetable for more specific activities is included in the Communications strategy 2. Develop publicity for flats withs and improve links (with caretakers, management groups etc). 3. Recruit recycling champions in flats 4.Feedback from residents
Confusion/myths about recycling/services	
Where we are now	There is some public confusion about aspects of recycling and the services we provide, (eg which plastics to recycle in kerbside). Myths/misunderstanding include not understanding the environmental impact of organic material especially in landfill (eg paper bags are not better than plastic bags) Promotional work on these areas has met with some degree of success (more people now report understanding plastic bottle recycling) but more work is needed to continue to reduce confusion and

	frustration.
Where we want to go	We want to continue to reduce confusion about the services so that people are clear and confident about what they can/can't recycle, have a better understanding of the issues involved and how they can find out information for themselves
How we're going to get there	1. Reinforce information on website, media, through roadshows and similar outlets 2. Ensure effective reinforcement through recycling crews and on the ground staff
Recycling of different materials	
Where we are now	MRF recycling analysis and self reporting all show that some materials are recycled more frequently than others.
Where we want to go	We want to maximise the levels and range of materials that can be recycled by increasing awareness and motivation to recycle them.
How we're going to get there	1. Continue with seasonal promotional themes 2. Remind people through press releases, My Merton News, talks etc.
HRRCs	
Where we are now	Closure of Weir Road HRRC could have impact on recycling rates. EWC exceeding contract specifications for the amount of material that is being separated and recycled. Not everyone is aware of what materials we collect (eg cooking oil, plasterboard) and some people are still dumping recyclable materials in the rubbish skip, especially through black bags.
Where we want to go	1. We want to continue to increase the amount of material that is separated for recycling and minimise the use of black bags. 2. We want to raise awareness and knowledge amongst the public about what can be recycled.
How we're going to get there	1. Make information available through range of outlets (leaflets, website, sites etc.) 2. Recycling Advisors on site to help guide people, 3. Clear signage
Composting – at home and through collections	
Where we are now	1. Through the National framework we provide subsidised home composting bins. We have issued over 15,000 compost bins to local residents and schools, slight increase in delivery costs this year. 2. Free garden waste collection and plans for a

	chargeable scheme with an annual subscription.
Where we want to go	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We want to continue to encourage more people to take up home composting and make sure that those who have started, continue to do so and compost properly. 2. We want to minimise garden waste put out as rubbish. 3. If chargeable scheme introduced maximise take up of the service.
How we're going to get there	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to promote home composting 2. Promote alternative garden waste disposal options – HRRC. 3 Promote the chargeable collection service.
School Recycling Collections	
Where we are now	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recycling Collections We provide free recycling collections for a good range of materials for nearly every school. 2. Composting Over the past 5 years, over 40 schools have set up composting schemes within the school. However we have little accurate data on how many schools are still actively and successfully using them.
Where we want to go	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recycling Collections Maintain good levels of recycling and enthusiasm in schools despite loss of waste education post. Provide supporting publicity material (eg bin signage etc.) 2. Composting Increase the number of schools actively and successfully composting Up to date information on schools that are successfully and actively composting
How we're going to get there	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collections Promote and measure school recycling collections and composting with appropriate publicity
Waste Minimisation	
Where we are now	<p>Waste minimisation is a difficult message to communicate and measure. We have made good inroads with Love Food Hate Waste and Home composting. There are a number of areas that are currently underdeveloped. It is particularly important as recycling rates get higher that we encourage people to think about reducing their waste as well. It is currently low on people's priorities and levels of awareness.</p> <p>Love Food Hate Waste WRAPs food waste reduction campaign that we have</p>

	signed up to. Vine Project & BHF – Encourage donation of household goods . Sustainable Merton implemented bag free zone in Wimbledon Park. There is information on waste minimisation on the website and in a leaflets.
Where we want to go	We need to encourage action on waste minimisation by: Increasing knowledge and awareness Providing opportunities and activities for people to reduce their waste Providing opportunities to measure waste minimisation initiatives Building on our successes Maximising opportunities and resources when promoting waste minimisation We want to see a decrease in the amount of waste being sent to landfill.
How we're going to get there	1. Promote the Love Food Hate Waste campaign especially to households not receiving food waste collections 2. Promote more specific activities that people can do, station book swaps, freecycle, sustainable buying. 3. Work with local businesses on reuse opportunities – bag reuse
New Services	
Where we are now	WRAP funding secured to roll out food waste to remaining properties in borough subject to scrutiny review..
Where we want to go	We need to maximise participation in the new food waste collections
How we're going to get there	Implement publicity plan as per previous rollouts.
Site visits	
Where we are now	1. We have arranged site visits for small groups at Crayford Creek MRF and at Weir Road HRRC. However the Garth Road HRRC cannot facilitate site visits.
Where we want to go	1. We would like to provide more tours of waste technologies for interested parties and in conjunction with SLWP.
How we're going to get there	1. Continued liaison to re-establish site visits and develop further opportunities elsewhere.
Events and Exhibitions	
Where we are now	We have successfully increased the numbers of

	<p>roadshows and displays we hold each year with an annual average of 30 events, speaking to over 7,000 people.</p> <p>We have increased the range of opportunities for events and roadshows including developing links with a number of businesses.</p> <p>Our team has reduced staff to deliver events.</p> <p>At roadshows we have provided activities for children, given out freebies such as reusable bags.</p>
Where we want to go	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We want to continue to deliver events and roadshows but may have to work more closely with other departments. 2. We need to continue to develop and maintain public interest in the events on offer.
How we're going to get there	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New opportunities and locations for roadshows and displays, 2. Development of additional interactive activities
Door to door canvassing	
Where we are now	<p>We have recently conducted door to door canvassing to 15,000 properties through a WRAP funded campaign.</p> <p>Monitoring work has shown an increase in the levels of participation and the amount being recycled following canvassing work linked to these projects.</p> <p>Canvassing has also been targeted at some of the lower performing areas.</p>
Where we want to go	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To carry out further doorstepping in low performing areas.
How we're going to get there	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apply for funding and look to work with community groups. <p>Revisiting areas with transitory populations and lower performing areas, promoting other messages, liaising with the community.</p>
School Recycling Activities	
Where we are now	<p>Schools are becoming more environmentally conscious with increasing opportunities to link in with recycling including; Eco-Schools, Sustainable Schools, The National Healthy School Programme, Schools Fruit and Veg Scheme, Citizenship and Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE). .</p> <p>The national Recycle Now campaign has also been developing a range of resources and activities for schools.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Activities <p>We have provided a range of lesson plans and activities to primary and secondary schools via our</p>

	<p>website.</p> <p>2. Resources</p> <p>The activities we provide are supported by a range of resources that we can loan to schools. The Green Living Centre looks to facilitate environmental education.</p>
Where we want to go	<p>Encourage take up of eco-schools</p> <p>Support community groups work in schools</p>
How we're going to get there	<p>Provide school newsletter at least termly.</p>
On the ground staff	
Where we are now	<p>The staff on the ground are often seen as the 'public face of waste services' and have a crucial and often overlooked role to play regarding public perception and engagement.</p> <p>1. Recycling Centres</p> <p>EWC have Recycling Advisors at the Recycling Centres to help the public separate their waste, provide and distribute information. This has led to an increase in recycling at the sites.</p> <p>2. Green Box Collections</p> <p>Whilst there is praise for the recycling service there are also areas of weakness that need addressing. The recycling crews do not receive regular training on recycling and their understanding about the materials they collect varies greatly.</p> <p>Literature is available for contamination but it is often not used.</p>
Where we want to go	<p>1. Increase the public perception of the services through improved service delivery and communication with the public.</p> <p>2. More knowledgeable staff who are better placed to deal with public enquiries.</p> <p>3. Increased consistency of service and related communication.</p>
How we're going to get there	<p>Keep staff informed of developments and develop training opportunities and follow up options.</p> <p>Review content and distribution of guidance material</p>
Press and Publicity (local media, My Merton)	
Where we are now	<p>1. Media</p> <p>We have a good relationship with the local media and are usually successful in getting positive coverage</p> <p>3. My Merton</p> <p>We have a regular environmental page to focus on pertinent issues. Distribution is reduced to quarterly.</p>

Where we want to go	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We want to improve the quality and variety of coverage 2.. For My Merton we want to maintain existing levels of achievement.
How we're going to get there	<p>Continue to issue press releases etc. and follow up where appropriate to the letters page.</p> <p>Develop additional media opportunities and stories</p>
Advertising	
Where we are now	<p>Advertising is expensive and hard to measure, therefore we are selective in what and where we choose to advertise to maximise our cost effectiveness.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specific events and projects (eg Christmas Collections Local newspapers 2. Vehicle Livery
Where we want to go	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We want to make sure we are continuing to make the most cost effective use of advertising by selecting those mediums most suited to each specific project.
How we're going to get there	<p>Database of advertising opportunities to be reviewed as appropriate for new and existing projects.</p>
Website	
Where we are now	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Website To be reviewed regularly and updated it in line with corporate requirements. There are areas on the intranet that are currently underdeveloped for recycle from work.
Where we want to go	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Website Continue to improve the quantity and quality of information on the website to keep it comprehensive, current and relevant. By updating imagery.
How we're going to get there	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Website Increase livelink users
Promotional Material	
Where we are now	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leaflets <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. These have recently been updated through the WRAP campaign. We have improved the distribution methods to make sure the right number of leaflets are sent to the right locations and out of date leaflets are replaced by more current ones. 2. 'Give away' Items

	<p>We have a limited range of promotional material including reusable bags, magnets, pencils, love food hate waste recipe cards.</p> <p>3. Signage The signs at the Neighbourhood Recycling Centres need renewing as many are starting to become torn and look grubby. We also need to look at how we can ensure all signage of flats bins is updated.</p>
Where we want to go	<p>1. Leaflets We want to rationalise the number of leaflets so that they are more targeted, ensure consistent branding in conjunction with Recycle Now and maintain up to date imagery and information.</p> <p>2. 'Give away' Items We need to make sure that we are using the most suitable promotional material effectively and that we have appropriate material available for all events.</p> <p>3. Signs and stickers We need to make sure that all signs and labels are clear, consistent and up to date.</p>
How we're going to get there	<p>1. Leaflets Rationalise and update leaflets and target content more effectively.</p> <p>2. 'Give away' Items Use existing promotional materials.</p> <p>3. Signs and stickers Ensure all bins are labelled</p>
Recycle Now national campaigns	
Where we are now	<p>We have been working for some time with the Recycle Now campaign. We have used the iconography and images on a range of materials (leaflets, signs, banners etc.) and taken part in the annual Recycle Now week .</p> <p>We have also signed up to the Love Food Hate Waste Campaign and are developing work on this.</p>
Where we want to go	<p>Maximise our involvement with Recycle Now and related campaigns and maximise the use of iconography and branding wherever possible.</p>
How we're going to get there	<p>Keep up to date with branding, initiatives and campaigns.</p>
Monitoring	
Where we are now	<p>Participation Monitoring We have undertaken some participation monitoring but it is time consuming as crew data can not be relied upon. This is crucial information in order to effectively target low performing areas.</p> <p>Tonnages</p>

	<p>We record the amount of material being recycled per round and for the overall borough.</p> <p>Waste Analysis We do not have an up to date waste analysis.</p> <p>Surveys A council survey identified that the majority of residents like to be informed of Council services by leaflets through the door.</p> <p>Request for boxes This is an indication of residents using the service..</p>
Where we want to go	1. We want to continue to carry out and review our annual monitoring to help inform us of areas needing additional input.
How we're going to get there	Participation monitoring of representative rounds, review of tonnage data. Annual residents survey.

1.4 Communication objectives

- To increase the recycling rate
- To reduce waste arisings per head of population
- To encourage reuse
- To target areas of low recycling tonnage
- Reduce number of contaminated loads
- Ensure residents understand how to use the recycling service.

2. Understanding our market

2.1 Target audience

In order to maximise awareness of services and encourage participation.

Merton Council employees

Staff delivering service and waste helpline
Elected members
Office staff

Householders

The female head of household has been shown to be the key influence / decider for waste management within households (National research).
Target low performing areas of the borough

Schools

Headteachers

PSHE co-ordinators
Eco-Schools Co-ordinators
With the loss of the waste education post there will be reduced contact with schools.

Community Groups

Sustainable Merton
Vine Project
Squirrels scrapstore
Transition Town
Green coffee group
Faith groups
Ethnic groups
Scouts and Guides
WI

3. Building our communications implementation plan

3.1 Key messages (primary, secondary)

Different messages will be utilised for different audiences.

- Use your recycling box or bank / Recycle Now
- Reduce, reuse and recycle
- It is easy to recycle
- Benefits of recycling – saves energy / tackles climate change
- How items recycled

3.2 Key project milestones

- **August / September 2011** – evaluation of quarter one and quarter two plans
- **September 2011** – writing quarter three and four communications plans
- **March 2012** – evaluation of quarter three and four plans
- **March 2012** – final evaluation of overarching campaign

3.3 Monitoring

We will monitor the campaign on the following information.

Tonnages

We record the amount of material being recycled per round and for the overall borough. The waste arisings will also be monitored.

Participation

To undertake quarterly participation monitoring of the services

Publicity / Media

75% positive media

Face to Face Contact

The number of residents engaged with will be monitored at roadshow events and community talks.

Surveys

A council survey identified that the majority of residents like to be informed of Council services by leaflets through the door.

Request for boxes

This is an indication of residents using the service.

3.4 Evaluation

The campaign will be evaluated in March 2012 where we will check that each objective has been met using stats from My Merton, media coverage reports and the success of tonnages etc.

3.5 Partners / stakeholders

South London Waste Partnership

They will be undertaking communications on:

Options for waste disposal

Waste technologies

Cost of landfill

Environmental Waste Controls

Recycle for London

They will be undertaking London wide campaigns for local boroughs to localise the messaging. There are also opportunities to bid for funding.

Merton Priory Homes & Moat

These are the main social housing providers within Merton, who are keen to support recycling services within their housing stock.

Low carbon zone

The low carbon zone operates the Phipps Bridge area of the borough to tackle climate change.

National Trust

A green living centre at Morden Hall Park is due for completion in Autumn 2011.

Spokes people

Key elected spokespeople for this campaign will be:

- Councillor Andrew Judge, cabinet member for environmental sustainability and regeneration
- Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Leader

Key spokespeople – officers:

- Chris Lee, director for environment and regeneration
- Cormac Stokes, Head of Street Scene and Waste

Awards

- Let's Recycle Excellence Awards – Best Crew
- Larac Awards - Best Partnership

4. Implementation

4.1 Channels

Media

Press releases to be written up throughout year

Web

Update pages throughout the year

Print

Service information, contamination cards

Social media

Make use of facebook and twitter and to promote at roadshows and on literature.

Call centre

To maintain good links with the waste helpline and offer support.

Internal

Insight magazine – raise awareness to staff of office recycling facilities and campaigns.

Face to face

Maintain a presence at road show events throughout the year

Vehicle Livery

Two banners on each RCV and food waste vehicle

External advertising

JC Decaux / Borough poster sites

Community groups

Utilise community links as messages can have more from a neighbour / friend.

4.2 Communication tactics

See Excel spreadsheet for outline plan and individual communication plans for new services (eg garden waste).