

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 19 January 2015

Wards: Lavender Fields

Subject: Waste Collection, Street Cleaning and Recycling Opportunities

Lead officer: Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration

Lead member: Councillor Judy Saunders, Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking

Contact officer: Cormac Stokes, Head of Street Scene and Waste

Recommendations:

- A. To agree the proposal for the implementation of a pilot wheeled bin scheme for the provision of the weekly collection of general waste and dry recycling to cover a sample of 1200 households within the Lavender Fields Ward, to be carried out over a period of six months commencing in April 2015, in order to test the benefits or otherwise of this method of collection
 - B. To request the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider an officer report setting out the findings of the pilot and to ask Scrutiny to assess whether it offers opportunities to improve street cleanliness and ensure value for money for council tax payers
 - C. To delegate to the Director of Environment & Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking, the decision of where to implement the pilot scheme within Lavender Fields ward
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report aims to set out the current operating model of the recycling collection services, within the context of the overall waste service together with performance achieved against key indicators. The report demonstrates the impact of the whole Street Scene and Waste collection service and collection policy on levels of recycling.
- 1.2. The report highlights the correlation between the level of street litter in domestic areas and the collection method used to contain the different waste streams.
- 1.3. The report shows that recycling performance has remained relatively static for the past 2-3 years despite educational and awareness raising interventions, including financial incentives and recommends testing the benefits or otherwise of an alternative operating model designed to increase recycling, increasing income from recyclables and reduce the council's reliance on landfill and waste treatment, delivering significant cost savings as a result.
- 1.4. On the basis of the current evidence the report recommends the introduction of a small wheeled bin pilot covering approximately 1,200 households to determine better the potential benefits and opportunities for the cleanliness of our streets and value for money for council tax payers.

- 1.5. The pilot will assist in determining whether or not the assumed benefits — as set out in the report — can be realised and whether this approach demonstrates value for money in the long term.
- 1.6. The report requests that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel be asked to consider the findings of the proposed pilot and contribute to the review of the outcomes based on their findings and considerations.

2 DETAILS

2.1. Current operating model

2.1.1 Street Cleaning - the current establishment for all street cleaning activities across the borough is 103 staff. This covers street sweeping, mechanical sweeping, emptying bins/collecting litter sacks. In addition to these tasks the service also provides graffiti removal, gulley cleansing, weed removal, bulk leaf removal, fly tip removal and ancillary activities.

2.1.2 Residents are currently provided with three kerbside collections each week for residual waste, recyclables and food waste. Residents also have the opportunity to subscribe to a fortnightly garden waste collection service.

Kerbside Collection Service	Collection frequency	Container	Number of households (est.)
Refuse	Weekly	Sacks (single use - householder supplied)	68,000 H/Holds 13,000 Flats
Co-mingled Recycling	Weekly	55 litre kerbside box(s) collected using slave bins	68,000 H/Holds 13,000 Flats
Food waste	Weekly	104 liners a year (2 per week) for 5 litre caddies. Waste presented in 23 litre caddies.	68,000 H/Holds 12,000 Flats
Chargeable garden waste	Fortnightly	240 litre wheeled bin and option for compostable single use sacks	5,600

2.1.3 Recycling - At present the service utilises 9 compaction vehicles to provide a weekly co mingled kerbside recycling collection from the 81,000 households across the borough, working a standard Monday to Friday working pattern. 2 collection crews are used to collect from the borough's 13,000 flats. In these locations bulk wheeled bins are provided by the Managing Agents, who historically recharge this cost back to their tenants. An additional crew is used to undertake collection from areas with restricted access. The remaining 6 crews serve the remaining 68500 households. In total 9 crews totalling 31 staff are used to undertake a weekly recycling collection.

2.1.4 General waste - collections are undertaken weekly utilising 7 compaction vehicles. A further 2 vehicles are used to collect from flats and is supported by a further crew who undertaken collections from areas of restricted

access. In total 10 vehicles with 35 staff members are engaged in the collection of residual waste. The service also provides a bulky waste service which is collected by 2 additional crews.

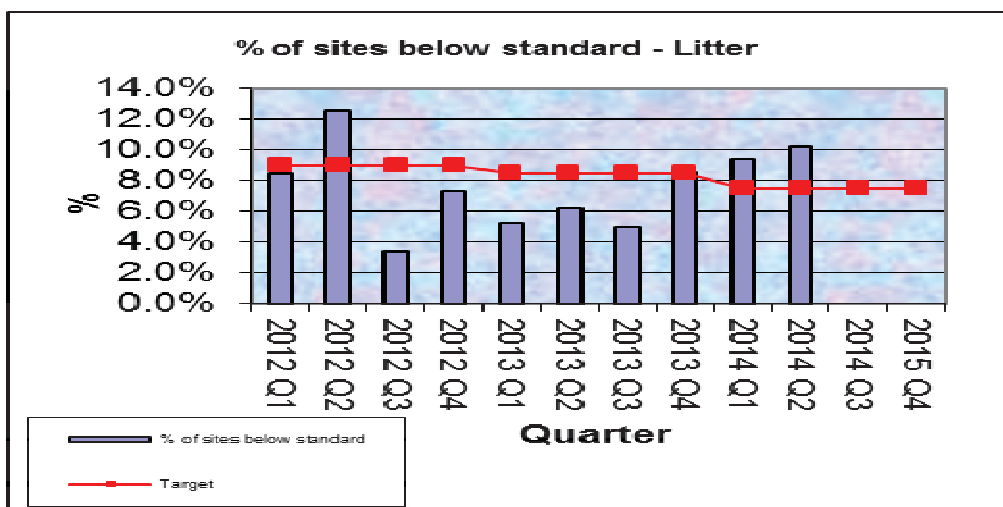
2.1.5 The council provides 55ltr boxes for dry recycling with many properties presenting between 2-3 boxes each week for collection, totalling between 110ltr – 165ltr capacity.

2.1.6 The box system was originally introduced for the collection of newspapers and magazines. A second box was provided when the materials collected extended to cardboard, glass bottles and jars, drinks cans and plastic bottles. Since then the council has introduced further materials to the collection service including a wider range of plastic containers and packaging. It is clear that boxes are not sufficient for this wide range of materials.

2.1.7 All dry recycling is co mingled in the council’s box collection service. These boxes are emptied by the crews into a wheeled bin which is then emptied into the back of the collection vehicle using a hydraulic lift. The materials are delivered to the Viridor Waste Transfer Station for bulking and onward transport to a Materials Recycling Facility in Crayford Kent for sorting and onward marketing.

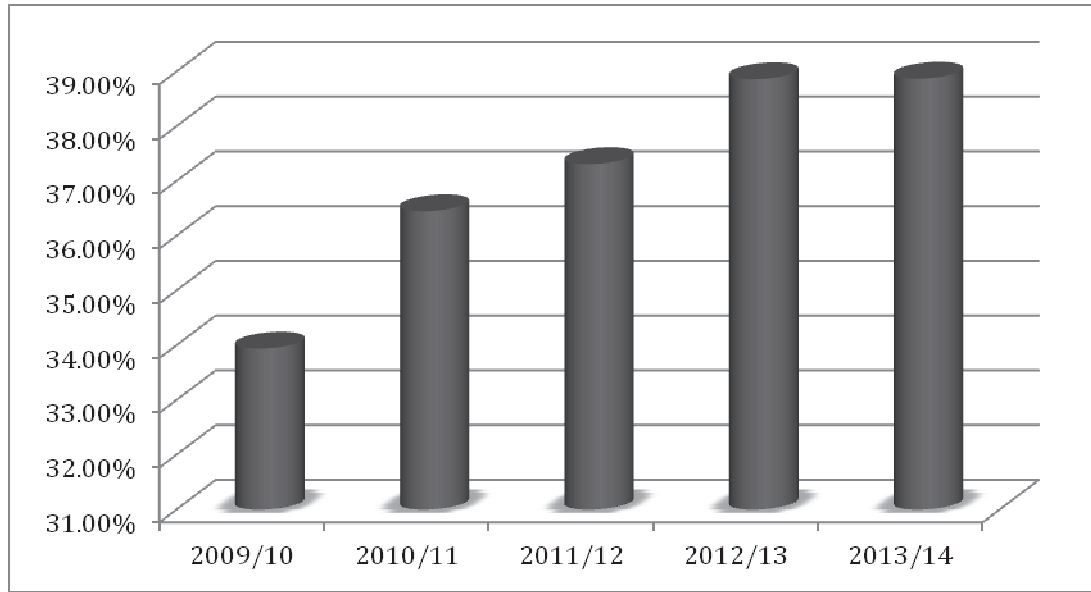
2.2. Service performance

2.3. As can be seen in the table below the level of street litter fluctuates seasonally. Overall this year 9.8% of sites surveyed were found to be below the service standard of 7.5%.



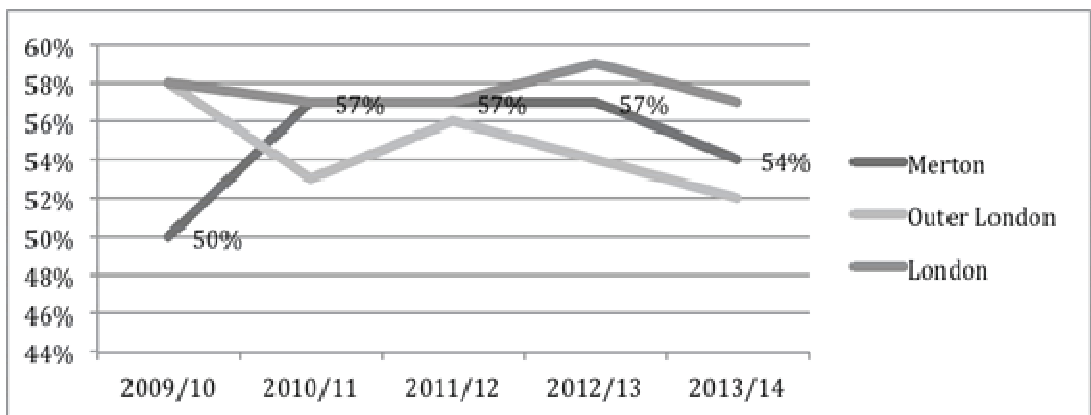
2.3.1 Over the last 3 years the council’s recycling performance has remained static at 38.8%. 21% of this recycled waste can be attributed to the kerbside collection service, with a further 6% collected through other recycling services (Bulky waste collection, HRRC) and 11% from organic waste. The table below sets out recycling performance over the past five years.

Annual recycling rate 2009-2014

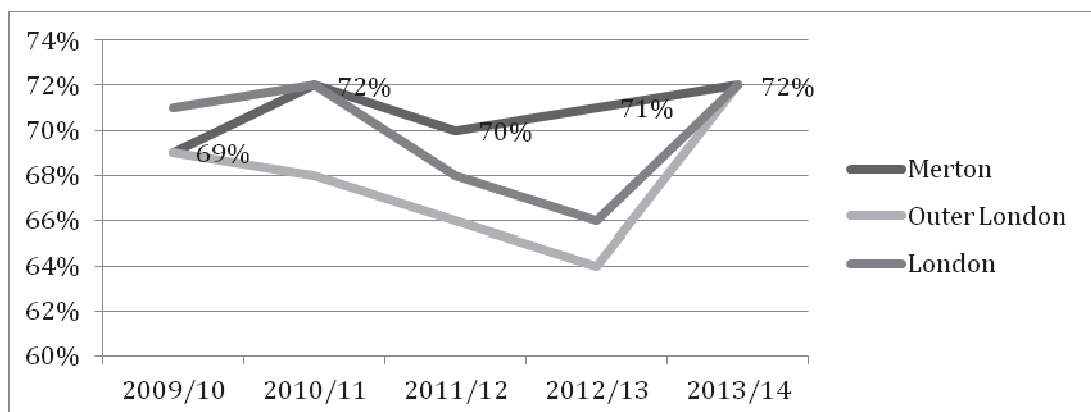


2.3.2 Each year the council undertakes a resident satisfaction survey. The tables below sets out levels of satisfaction with refuse collection, recycling facilities and street cleaning over the past five years and provides comparison with London as a whole and Outer London Boroughs.

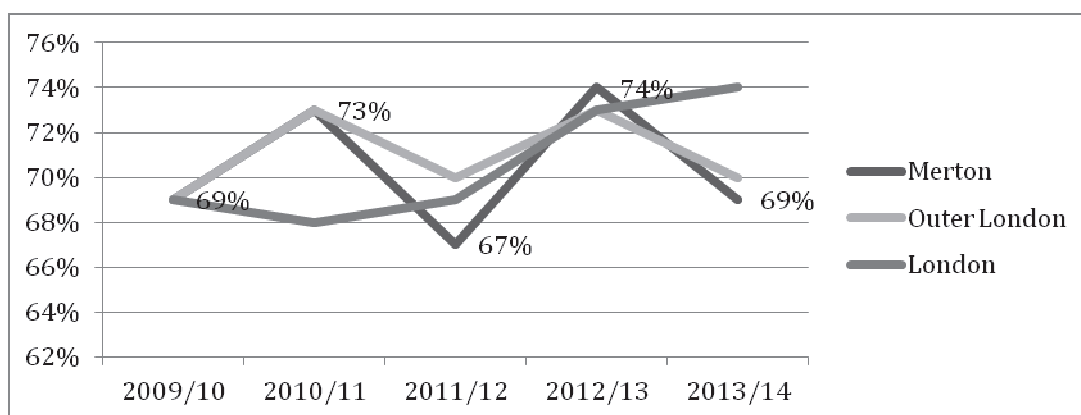
Residents satisfied with Street Cleaning



Residents satisfied with Refuse collection



Residents satisfied with recycling facilities



- 2.3.3 The survey also confirms that residents continue to be concerned about people who litter our streets. However, 60% of residents say that they are satisfied with the way the council deals with litter. Nonetheless, concerns about people littering in the streets have risen in recent years with residents more dissatisfied than the London average.
- 2.3.4 Research carried out by the Tidy Britain Group on behalf of the council in 2010 indicated that as much as 50% of all street waste arisings in residential roads can be attributed to the black sack and box collection schemes operated within Merton.
- 2.3.5 In April 2014 the service commissioned MEL Research Ltd to undertake a waste composition analysis of our kerb side collections. Significantly the findings suggest that 60% of Merton's residual waste is of a type that could have been recycled. This compares to only 23% in Sutton.
- 2.3.6 In 2013 the authority commissioned Waste Watch (part of Keep Britain tidy) to monitor the Household participation of the kerbside recycling service. The aim of this survey was to establish the participation rate for the kerbside recycling and food collection service.
- 2.3.7 In total 26,301 households were monitored for the food waste collection and 27,486 properties monitored for dry recycling over three collection opportunities. The results showed that approximately 52.8% of households were engaged in setting out their food waste at least once over the three-week period and 79.6% of households set out dry recycling for collection.
- 2.3.8 Key conclusions that can be drawn from this research is that take up of the food waste service is very low. As a result much food waste is set out for collection within black sacks, thereby minimising the potential positive impact on reducing spillage through vermin attacks. Secondly, despite relatively high participation in the dry recycling service, a significant amount of targeted recyclable materials remain with black sacks, suggesting that whilst residents are willing to recycle the current receptacles used are not fit for purpose.

2.4. Progress made to increase recycling

- 2.4.1 In order to increase recycling and reduce disposal cost a food waste service was introduced in 2007. This was expanded borough wide over 7 phases between 2007 - 2012. In May 2007 a food waste trial was introduced for 1,800 households. This was increased to 8,200 in June 2009. Following a successful bid to WRAP for £300,000 the food waste service was rolled out to a further 30,000 households in February 2010. This was further increased in March 2010 by an extra 10,000 households. By 2011 the total number of households provided with a food collection service had increased to 50,000. Over 6 tranches between May – June 2012 the food waste collection was expanded to incorporate collections from flats.
- 2.4.2 To increase participation in the recycling scheme and generally increase recycling, the council launched the Mega Recycling Incentive Scheme. The scheme is being funded by a £650K grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government's Waste Collection Support Scheme. This is a web-based interactive scheme which engages with residents by offering the opportunity of rewards. The scheme has been heavily promoted through printed media, including posters, leaflets, JC Decaux, and press. Recycling advisors commissioned by the council have knocked on every door in the borough and have carried out face to face talks with over 30,000 residents.
- 2.4.3 To date 6,526 households have signed up to the scheme and an additional 3,853 new recycling boxes have been delivered to residents wishing to start recycling. This has been further supported by the request of 1,587 kitchen caddies and 1,803 outside caddies.
- 2.4.4 Disappointingly despite these initiatives our recycling performance has remained static over the past two years.

3 FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1. Due to reductions in our funding from central government the council needs to find £32m of savings over the coming years. There are current proposals within the service to look for efficiencies and drive down revenue costs whilst maintaining the acceptable standards of street cleaning. Achieving value for money must therefore be of paramount concern in relation to our refuse and recycling service.
- 3.2. The refuse and recycling service was comprehensively reviewed by Scrutiny in 2010/11 with a report on Efficient Household Waste Management and the Environment published in May 2011. This report recommended "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 greater value for money may be achieved, as well as meeting environmental and waste minimisation objectives."
- 3.3. Since 2011 there have been a number of technological and other changes and there are opportunities to increase value for money for the service by increasing our recycling rate, which would reduce spend on landfill and increase income from the sale of recyclables.

- 3.4. Current policy does not restrict the number of black sacks which can be presented for collection. In effect the council is significantly restricting capacity for the storage of recyclables — through the provision of small 55 litre boxes — whilst providing unlimited capacity for residual waste.
- 3.5. During adverse wet weather our recycling material is subject to contamination due to wet paper which can result in the entire collection being rejected and sent to landfill. A single dustcart can carry up to 8 tonnes of recyclables. If a load were rejected due to wet paper and sent to landfill, this costs the council between £736 and £856.
- 3.6. In October 2014 over 170 tonnes of wet paper was rejected and sent to landfill. It is anticipated that this level of rejection will continue over the next 3 months resulting in approximately 684 tonnes of wet paper being disposed of the landfill. This will result in a loss of c£10k revenue for the sale of this material and increased the cost of disposal by a further c£60k
- 3.7. From 2015 there is a legal issue with collecting materials in a commingled form. The European Union Directive 2008/98/EC on waste, the Revised Waste Framework, has specified that by January 2015 there is a requirement to collect glass, paper, metal and plastics separately, unless it can be shown that the current collection method is the most Technologically, Environmentally and Economically Practicable (TEEP)
- 3.8. It has been clarified in EU guidance notes that 'Technically practicable' means that the separate collection may be implemented through a system which has been technically developed and proven to function in practice. 'Environmentally practicable' should be understood such that the added value of ecological benefits justifies possible negative environmental effects of the separate collection (e.g. additional emissions from transport). 'Economically practicable' refers to a separate collection which does not cause excessive costs in comparison with the treatment of a non-separated waste stream, considering the added value of recovery and recycling and the principle of proportionality.
- 3.9. Officers have assessed the current operational model and have confirmed that the current service and proposed pilot methodology represents the most Technically, Environmentally and Economically practicable method at present.
- 3.10. Given a successful track record of joint working the South London Waste Partnership boroughs are considering opportunities for further joint working, principally around waste collection, street cleaning and parks' services. The principle of a shared procurement was agreed by Cabinet on Monday 10th November. It is anticipated, based on soft market testing that a joint procurement could generate savings of at least 10% on the costs of collection through lower service costs and deliver further benefits through increased recycle revenues.

4 SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

- 4.1. In order to maintain and potentially improve standards of cleanliness and step up levels of recycling, it is recommended that the council tests the potential benefits and disbenefits of the provision of appropriate containers with sufficient capacity to store recyclables. It is proposed that further work

be carried out to explore the potential benefits of wheeled bins through a pilot scheme covering a range of properties (approximately 1,200 – 1,400), based on a single round on a single day.

- 4.2. There are a number of expected advantages associated with the use of wheeled bins but the rationale of the pilot will be to test these expected benefits and to assess whether there are any disbenefits, with a particular focus on value for money. The expected benefits the pilot would test include:
- Cleaner streets through less wind-blown litter and reduced risk of animal attack and spillage from sacks
 - Positive environmental impact through increased recycling as a result of increased container capacity
 - Improved appearance: neater curtilage with single bin rather than multiple boxes
 - Weather resistant and improved quality of recycle
 - Improved working conditions for collection operatives and potential for reduced levels of sickness
 - Greater life span of containers and therefore reduced cost per litre of storage capacity
 - No requirement to adapt refuse collection vehicles as they are designed to pick up wheeled bins
 - Improved efficiency and greater productivity per litre of recycle collected
- 4.3. The proposed pilot will assist in determining the quantum of these benefits and assess whether or not the approach delivers value for money in the long term.
- 4.4. Each household in the pilot area will receive two wheeled bins, one for recycling and one for residual waste.
- 4.5. The introduction of a single 240ltr wheeled bin will increase the capacity to recycle whilst maintain the same footprint of required space.
- 4.6. To encourage recycling and limit residual waste it is proposed to provide a 180 Litre wheeled bin for this waste stream. This equates to approximately 2.5 standard sized dust bins.
- 4.7. The service acknowledges that a small percentage of households would not be suitable for a wheeled bin and in these areas the current box container will continue to be an option along with black sacks for the general waste. This will be a matter to be determined by the council as the Waste Collection Authority, in consultation with residents in the pilot area.
- 4.8. The implementation of the proposed pilot scheme would inform the appraisal of all future options with respect to waste management and maintaining clean streets. As part of this process residents in the pilot area will be consulted in order to understand the impacts, both positive and negative of the collection process. This will inform the learning from the pilot.
- 4.9. It is proposed that the initial pilot is carried out within the Lavender Fields ward, primarily as this area consists of a range of different types of dwellings

including terraced housing, flats and maisonettes and where there are minimal properties which would have a storage issue for wheeled bins. The area also reflects the need to consider levels of heavy footfall, outside of town centres and shopping areas which impacts on the level of street litter. Independent cleansing inspections and annual resident survey results also indicate that there is a need for interventions to improve standards and perceptions of cleanliness. There are also opportunities to incentivise additional levels of recycling as current participation rates are relatively low.

- 4.10. Officers are currently reviewing waste rounds to determine the most appropriate roads to be covered for a pilot scheme. It is advised that the final decision for the pilot should be taken by the Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1. The “do nothing” option is unlikely to provide any real analysis of options to achieve the overarching objectives of maintaining clean streets, maximising recycling and reducing our reliance on expensive landfill or other waste treatment services in a sustainable and cost effective manner. Furthermore, doing nothing will not allow us to assess options for improving the standard of cleanliness of Merton’s streets in the context of decreasing levels of council resources.
- 5.2. The way we store and collect waste needs to be improved. Following the review of disposal contract with Viridor the council now receives revenue for recyclable material. This income is dependent on the quality of the material recycled and the composition. Currently the quality of the material is negatively affected due to wet paper. A do nothing option is not considered viable in the long term and will restrict the service from moving forward in increasing recycling.
- 5.3. Alternative areas of the borough have been considered for the proposed pilot but it was felt that Lavender Fields provided the best opportunity for testing assumptions with respect to the potential benefits of the pilot and the disbenefits.

6 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 6.1. Consultation will be carried out as part of the pilot. High levels of participation can only be achieved if residents in the pilot area are engaged using effective communication tools.
- 6.2. It is proposed that Officers will report to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel in the first instance requesting the Panel consider the findings of the pilot and contribute to the final review to be reported to Cabinet following the completion of the proposed pilot.

7 TIMETABLE

- 7.1. It is envisaged that once approval has been given, final detailed research and mobilisation for the proposed pilot scheme proposed could be completed within 2-3 months.

8 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The pilot scheme would require a capital outlay of £48,000 for the procurement of bins. No provision exists for this scheme in the current Capital Programme and a new scheme would have to be created. The funding for this will be met by an underspend in Traffic and Highways, on bridges and structures. The scheme would need to be approved by the Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Environment and Regeneration and would be noted as an adjustment to the Capital Programme by Cabinet as part of the Monitoring Report.
- 8.2. The pilot scheme would also incur a revenue requirement of £67,000, which consists of two additional vehicles, each with a crew of three (one driver and two loaders). The funding for this would come from the £650,000 DCLG fund for the Mega Recycle project.
- 8.3. It is envisaged that the proposed pilot will run for a period of 6 months providing a weekly wheeled bin collection service for 1,200 households. The aim of this pilot scheme would be to accurately assess the participation rates and any impact on additional recycling and any contamination levels and whether wheeled bins offer opportunities to improve the cleanliness of the borough while ensuring value or money for council tax payers.
- 8.4. In order to minimise disruption to the service it is advised that the 1,200 households are contained to one geographical area allowing for the same day of collection to be maintained.
- 8.5. No assumptions have been made with respect to any additional recycling and the associated financial benefits. This will be tested as part of the pilot scheme.
- 8.6. Summary of Pilot scheme costings

	Cost	Description	Funding Source
Revenue Cost	£67,000	Additional Labour and vehicle hire	DCLG bid for Mega recycling
Capital cost (bins)	£48,000	Procurement of 2,400 bins	Funded from underspend within Environment and Regeneration Capital programme
Net Total	£115,000		Fully Funded

9 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 imposes a duty upon each waste Collection Authority (WCA) to arrange for the collection of household waste in its area. No charge can be made for performing that service. Section 46 allows the WCA by notice on the occupier to require occupiers to place household waste for collection in receptacles of a kind and number specified in the notice. The kind and number of these receptacles are to be 'reasonable' but may require separate receptacles for those parts of the household waste which are to be recycled from those parts which are not. The WCA can also determine whether the receptacles are to be provided free of charge by the WCA or to be provided by the WCA upon a single or periodical payment from the occupier, or are provided by the occupier. Once proper notice has been given to the occupier and the notice period of 21 days has expired without appeal the placing of household waste outside these receptacles without reasonable excuse constitutes an offence.

10 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. No two areas are the same due to varying social demographics leading to the need to tailor the service provision. We acknowledge the genuine differences in households' circumstances and are not proposing a one size fits all solution. It will be necessary to vary the scheme.
- 10.2. For example there are a number of flats above shops where there would be nowhere to store a wheeled bin. In these locations the service provides coloured sacks for recycling and a different coloured sack for general waste.
- 10.3. The service will continue to provide an 'assisted collection' and will work with these households in the trial area to agree a suitable solution.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. It is anticipated that the level of street litter and fly tipping will be reduced in the pilot area.

12 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. Appropriate risk assessments will be undertaken when designing the pilot schemes and these will be reviewed as necessary once operations commence to ensure good practice standards are adopted for the health and safety of operatives.
- 12.2. It is anticipated that wheeled bins could significantly reduce the level of manual handling required by the operatives, with less lifting involved. With the waste being contained there is less risk of glass and sharps related injuries. As a result there would be an anticipated improvement in levels of sickness. The service currently runs with a sickness level of 16 days per

staff member and has targets to reduce this down to 10 days per person. In achieving this, the service has put forward savings in agency cost of c£100k.

- 12.3. Our recycling crews are one of our greatest assets and a well managed and motivated crew are critical in managing a high profile service. Crews operating in the pilot area will need to be trained. Collection procedures will need to be approved and all staff working in the pilot area made aware of these procedures and policies.

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

- None.

14 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1. M-E-L – Kerbside waste composition Analysis
- 14.2. Waste Watch Participation Survey 2013