

Finance, Smart City & City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	30 th June 2021
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Waste and Recycling Services
Report of:	Raj Mistry – Executive Director for City Management
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cllr Melvyn Caplan – Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for City Management
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Cleaner and Greener
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1. Executive Summary

The climate emergency declaration, growing public interest in environmental issues and new legislation are set to transform how waste will be managed in Westminster. The Environment Bill currently going through Parliament will set legally binding environmental improvement targets and put the ambitions of the Government's '25 Year Environment Plan' and 'National Waste Strategy for England' on a statutory footing. Local authorities will play a key role in delivering these ambitions.

This report provides an overview of waste and recycling services, the impact of covid, new legislation and development work in progress to boost the council's recycling performance and reduce carbon emissions.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

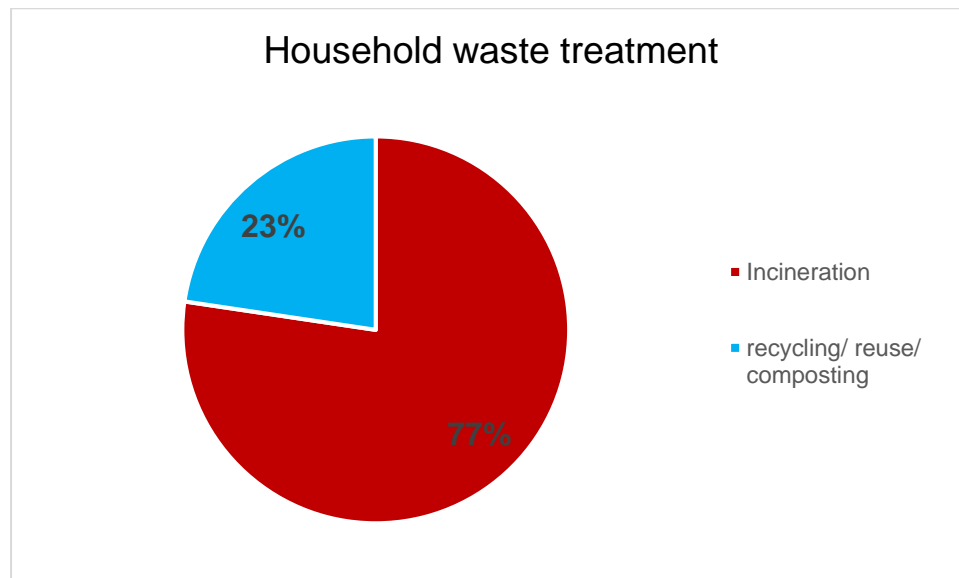
- Do members of the committee support the broad approach to boosting recycling and reducing carbon emissions described in this paper?
- Do members of the committee have any recommendations on which areas of the city should be prioritised for recycling promotional activities?
- Do members of the committee have any recommendations on how the city council can persuade residents to minimise their waste?

3. Background

3.1 Current Performance of Waste & Recycling Services

During 2020/21, 77% of household waste was sent for energy-from-waste incineration, 22% for recycling, 1% for anaerobic digestion (food waste). This gives the council a recycling rate of 23% for 2020/21.

Chart 1 – Waste Recycling and Treatment Performance 20/21



Westminster has a unique set of challenges to face delivering sustainable waste services, increasing recycling and reducing residual waste:

- 90% of households are flats in properties
- Due to the age of the building stock the options for waste and recycling storage are limited or non-existent
- Listed buildings and conservation areas cover 80% of Westminster which limits the ability to alter streets and buildings to incorporate sustainable waste management systems (e.g., recycling and containerisation)
- Security zones don't allow for any type of waste infrastructure in the public realm (recycling centres, litterbins etc)
- There is no legal obligation for households and businesses to recycle causing enforcement to be challenging or simply not possible
- Most other councils collect substantial volumes of garden waste for recycling which is not possible in Westminster since most properties do not have gardens
- Population and numbers of household are increasing
- Consumer behaviour is changing e.g., home deliveries (cardboard) and the 'Sharing Economy' - 1 in 20 properties in Westminster is Airbnb,
- Population transience sees a turnover of residents of around 34% per year

- Only 37% of residents have access to cars, which limits their access the household waste recycling centre at Smugglers Way to dispose of waste and recycling
- Waste is not managed by the householder but by 'gate keepers' such as care takers, cleaners, porters etc.

3.2 Impact of Covid

Waste & cleansing services were significantly impacted by covid and the reduced levels of visitors and business activity. Overall waste levels fell by 50% during 2020/21 - with all of this being due to reduced commercial activity and lower levels of litter in the West End and similar areas. It had been anticipated that residents would produce more household waste than normal during lockdown, but this generally was not the case other than a slight increase in Maida Vale and Harrow Road wards which is most probably connected to increased homeworking.

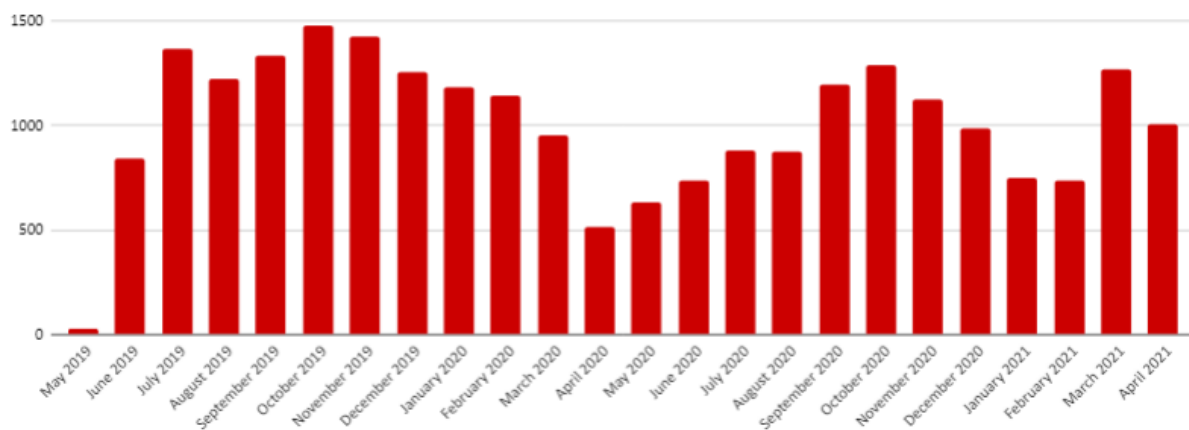
CHART 2 – MONTHLY WASTE TONNAGES APR 19 – MAY 21



At the start of covid waste and street cleansing resources were redeployed from the West End into residential areas to increase street sweeping and bin emptying frequencies. These changes had very positive feedback from residents with a notable reduction in complaints about fly-tipping and street cleanliness issues.

CHART 3 - FLYTIPPING INCIDENTS BY MONTH

Abandoned waste. May 2019 - April 2021.



Unlike many councils Westminster also continued to operate a bulky waste collection service for residents throughout lockdown and demand for this service remained at similar levels to pre-lockdown. For safety reasons collections of bulky items took place outside the front of properties rather than entering residences for the majority of requests. Bulky collections however still took place from within properties on an 'exception' basis i.e. from elderly / frail residents or where no outside space was available to leave an item.

3.3 Environment Bill and Resources and Waste Strategy

3.3.1 The Environment Bill and Resources and Waste Strategy set a very clear direction of travel for waste management based on the established concept of the circular economy i.e., to keep resources in use for as long as possible to extract maximum value from them rather than the linear 'take, make, use, throw' model that is still prevalent. The Strategy is based on five key principles:

1. To provide the incentives, through regulatory or economic instruments if necessary and appropriate, and ensure the infrastructure, information and skills are in place, for people to do the right thing;
2. To prevent waste from occurring in the first place, and manage it better when it does;
3. To ensure that those who place on the market products which become waste take greater responsibility for the costs of disposal – the 'polluter pays' principle;
4. To lead by example, both domestically and internationally; and
5. To not allow our ambition to be undermined by criminality.

3.3.2 'Polluter Pays Principle'

At the heart of the Government's strategy is the principle that waste producers (e.g. packaging manufacturers) pay the full costs associated with disposing of

their discarded products. How packaging producers will contribute to the costs of council waste and recycling collection operations is yet to be described in detail but will be positive for local authorities. Government are also proposing changes to the design of packaging to reduce the overall usage of materials, incentivise more recycled content in packaging and make it easier for consumers to recycle.

Government also proposes to introduce a Deposit Return Scheme for single-use drinks containers and measures to reduce the environmental impacts of disposable cups. There are numerous different types of DRS system in operation across Europe and the potential impact in Westminster is difficult to estimate in advance of the consultation. The most likely system will have return points in supermarkets and coffee shops etc. but could also potentially include on-street facilities or in public buildings.

3.3.3 Consistent Local Authority Collection Systems

The variety of collection systems and materials collected operated by local authorities is frequently cited as a barrier to driving up recycling rates and Government is seeking a consistent approach across council areas, subject to consultation ([this is currently open](#), closes on 4th July 2021). The key issues for WCC are:

- Requirement for all households and appropriate businesses to have a separate, weekly food waste collection in place by 2023.
- Requirement for some segregation of dry recycling materials to better promote the circular economy and the inclusion of plastic films from 2026/7
- Potential for free, fortnightly garden waste collections
- Requirement for all businesses to recycle from 2023.

All new requirements on the council would be assessed to account for new burdens on local authorities being funded appropriately (but likely to be offset against any additional funding that local authorities receive directly from packaging manufacturers).

3.3.4 Materials Collected for Recycling

The Environment Bill will introduce requirements for all local authorities to separately collect glass, metal tins and cans, plastic bottles/tubs/trays, paper and card. The current service offered to residents collects all of these materials already but they are collected co-mingled' in a single bag/bin rather than 'separately' as this is easiest for residents. Government is concerned that co-mingled collections reduces the quality/value of materials – paper/card being contaminated by glass fragments or food scraps/liquids from unwashed containers being the key issue. The council is responding to the Government's consistency consultation but anticipates needing to change services so that paper/card is collected separately from 'containers' or potentially to only collect glass bottles in street bottle banks rather than from residents' doorsteps.

Textiles are also very likely to continue to need collecting from dedicated street clothes bins rather than being added to doorstep services.

3.4 Member's Task Group on Waste & Recycling

Cllr James Spencer, Deputy Cabinet Member for Waste ran a detailed member task group in 2020 to examine potential new policy development to increase recycling rates to meet the new climate emergency ambitions. The outcome was 26 new policy recommendations (Appendix 1) and the priority actions underway are:

- Food waste expansion incl. communal sites
- Estates challenges
- Behavioural psychology / comms
- Cardboard Trial using different bin lids to tackle the huge increase in cardboard waste created during the pandemic (and ongoing)
- New graphics on bins and betterment of immediate locations of communal bin areas to encourage use
- Solar compactor litter bins and new metal litter bins – trial on Oxford Street
- Underground bins to improve street scene
- Driving forward commercial waste franchising/zoning with government (following the NYC/LA consolidation models)
- E-cleansing bike (based on Singapore)

3.5 Electric Waste Fleet

The council's current fleet of waste vehicles is nine years old and in need of replacement. The household waste fleet is located at Landmann Way depot in Deptford, south-east London and is directly adjacent to the SELCHP energy-from-waste plant which reduces vehicle movements. The council's broad intention is to procure an electric waste fleet that will be powered with electricity produced from the waste delivered to SELCHP ('closed loop').

Delivering an electric waste fleet is a complex project and preparatory works are in progress on a number of critical issues. The council has a 15-year lease on the Landmann Way depot and is in discussions with the landowner to further secure the council's medium-long term occupancy of the site. The site is in railway arches below a mainline railway and permission will need to be secured from Network Rail to lay electric charging cables at the site. Planning permission is also required from LB Lewisham for the electric infrastructure works and an application is scheduled to be submitted in July 2021. A power supply agreement will also need to be signed with SELCHP Ltd. SELCHP supplies the national grid 24/7 and is only off-line for two weeks every few years for planned maintenance. The next scheduled outage is June 2022 and the project plan is to connect the waste depot to SELCHP at this time and then operate an electric waste fleet from July/August 2022.

3.6 Waste & Social Value

Since Veolia's Road to Work pilot was launched in 2017, over 90 homeless and long-term Westminster unemployed people have been offered workplace opportunities with

Veolia in the form of street cleansing and admin roles. Candidates are supported with modified work hours to assist with the transition, and are given on and off the job support, to ensure the candidate has every opportunity to succeed. Veolia also holds Westminster Lion accreditation and fund environmental education trips for local schools and community groups.

3.7 End Destinations for Recycling

Table 1 below summarises where Westminster's recycling is sent for processing and re-use; around 80% of the materials we collect are reprocessed within the UK. We are very conscious of media reports showing piles of so-called recycling from the UK and other western countries polluting countries in Africa and South-East Asia so checking the end-destination of where Westminster's materials are sent remains a key priority and is regularly monitored.

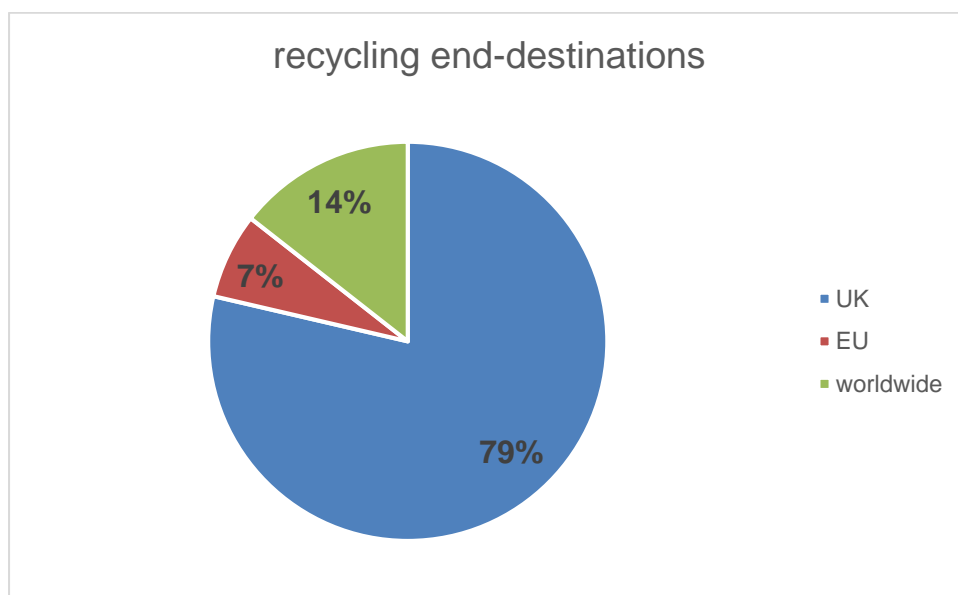
As a council and through trade bodies we also regularly lobby Government and industry to increase reprocessing capacity within the UK so that all recycling can be managed locally. Veolia's plastics recycling facility in Dagenham is a good example of this 'closed loop' approach ensuring Westminster's plastic bottles are reprocessed as close to the source of the waste as practical. The measures within the Environment Bill and the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy summarised above are expected to increase demand and local outlets for collected materials.

There is also growing interest amongst residents on where their recycling is sent and we regularly host visits by residents to the recycling sorting plant in Southwark. The council's network of Recycling Champion volunteers also help to educate residents on how to recycle and where items are sent alongside hosting regular events to reduce and re-use waste ('Give and Take' events).

Table 1 – End Destinations for Recycling Materials

Material	% by weight	Typical destination	Typical end-product
Paper & cardboard	50%	UK (Kent), Spain, India	Cardboard packaging
Glass bottles and jars	30%	UK (Tilbury)	New glass bottles and jars, road surfacing
Steel cans	2%	UK (Wales), Turkey, India	New cans, car parts, girders
Aluminium cans	2%	UK (Cheshire), Germany	New drinks cans
Plastics	8%	UK (Dagenham)	New plastic bottles, piping, fleece
Food waste	8%	UK (Bedfordshire)	Energy, fertiliser & soil improver

CHART 4 – BREAKDOWN OF RECYCLING END-DESTINATION COUNTRIES



**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Mark Banks – Head of Waste & Cleansing
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APPENDICES:

For any supplementary documentation; especially from external stakeholders or documents which do not fit this template.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

This section is for any background papers used to formulate the report or referred to in the body of the report.