

**Notes of stakeholder meetings taken place as part of the
London Assembly Environment Committee's
rapporteurship:**

**Why do recycling rates vary so widely
across London?**

October 2011

Contents

001	London Waste and Recycling Board	1
002	London Councils	2
003	London Borough of Bexley	3
004	London Borough of Harrow	5
005	London Borough of Havering	8
006	London Borough of Lewisham	9
007	London Borough of Newham	11
008	London Borough of Tower Hamlets	12
009	London Borough of Wandsworth	14
010	East London Waste Authority	16
011	North London Waste Authority	17
012	Western Riverside Waste Authority	19
013	West London Waste Authority	20
014	South London Waste Partnership	21

015	Serco Group	24
016	Veolia Environment	26
017	LRS Consultancy	28
018	WRAP	30
019	Informal Committee Meeting, 24 September 2010	31

Notes of meeting with Wayne Hubbard, Head of Business Development, LWARB – 17 May 2011

LWARB's position

- LWARB is developing a merchant market to enable the take up of newer technologies. The market is need of a market stimulator, the London Green Fund provided the model takes off will provide that enabling local authorities to participate in this shift towards a more flexible approach to procuring waste infrastructure/services? This could mean local authorities having to vary existing contracts in order to make it viable; this may prove difficult and they may find that they have to wait until existing contracts expire
- Historically JWDA's have tended to procure over a long period of time to help offset capital costs of the kit. At the end of the term the kit tends to reverts back to the Local Authority.
- LWARB has taken a bold decision to invest in infrastructure. This is a longer term approach and could leave it open to criticism that little is being achieved in the short term. LWARB is working on a standard model control framework of suppliers boroughs can call which will typically take between 3 – 5 years to fully develop.
- Schemes to incentivise residents are part of LWARB's portfolio of work. LWARB is supporting Local Green Points.
- Working to enhance recycling in flats on estates and flats above shops is an area for working partnerships with other boroughs.

Views on the disparity in recycling rates across boroughs

- Made in the context of two key points:
 - No two systems operate in the same way and on that basis are not comparable
 - The differences between inner and outer London
- In respect of communications, we now need to move the debate on from 'why' to 'how' to improve participation, that is what to do and how and when.
- Performance levels are also about doing the simple things well, that is, what is collected, where and when, and communicating all of that well
- Board is sponsoring the Recycle for London campaign going forward. The focus is on developing a trim headline London communications message with boroughs retaining responsibility for disseminating the message locally.
- Thinking is developing around devising a London look and fee to containers, that is harmonising the approach where possible to help drive up recycling rates

Waste governance arrangements

- Boroughs that are part of the JWDA are in a unique position to help influence the shape of waste governance (in the absence of legislative change to facilitate more flexibility) LWARB could be a useful partner in working towards greater flexibility.

Note of meeting with Cllr Canver, London Councils – 17 May 2011

- London Councils(LC) position is that recycling is very important but cannot be taken in isolation. It sits alongside other methods of the waste hierarchy.
- L C's view on the economic implications – LC has in the past emphasised that increasing recycling leads to savings but it is necessary to look at the relative costs of recycling and other methods of disposal
- Recycling has been LC's main focus over the last year, and is very much considered as part of the mix in expanding service provision, but given the current economic climate there has been a review of position.
- The debate is now moving on to waste minimisation; LC is looking to push this and waste prevention, strongly alongside recycling.
- The direction of LC's discussion on minimisation is that business need to take more responsibility for disposing of recyclable waste as for the model used for WEEE and batteries, which could be applied to plastics, bottles and cans.
- The importance of recycling varies from borough to borough and there are reasons for that – costs vary, priorities vary and responds to local population wants and needs. For example in inner London boroughs the per tonne cost for additional performance is quite high.
- Flexibility is important in joint waste disposal arrangements – joint waste authorities currently going through a procurement process and are looking to contract with a variety of contractors to build in flexibility.
- Could look to further develop the relationship and influence between the JWDA and its constituent boroughs.
- In general terms it would be fair to say that the costs of achieving the 50 per cent recycling target are likely to outweigh the benefits once the target has been reached. This therefore makes it an immense feat in the current economic climate.
- There is scope for the cross-pollination of ideas around waste collection and disposal. There is existing work which LC has been leading on over the past couple of years. LC is now looking to hold a Contracts Master Class to begin the process of transparency between waste managers across London. LC is also looking to work with boroughs and the London Waste and Recycling Board to possibly set up a recycling consortium to see how better value can be achieved from London's recyclates. This would look at contracts for recyclables to see where the market opportunities are, and include unitaries and JWDAs.
- LC would welcome the approach to increase waste management options.

Summary note of meeting with Bexley officers – 27 July 2010

Present: Mike Frizoni
Stephen Didsbury
Carmen Musonda
Richard Derecki
Stephen Greek

1. Bexley background and driver for improving recycling rates

- Driver was Cory's application to build an incinerator
- Crucial question was what would be the driver for moving waste up the political agenda – used financial projections (including savings and cost avoidance)
- Key factor was for the financial modelling to show what maintaining the status quo would mean and what improving recycling would do
- Key consideration is understanding the waste streams and what can be done about them the inconsistencies in outputs and yields and
- Bexley's approach – improving capacity for recycling and reducing capacity and frequency of collection of residual waste and, extensive publicity on the roll out of collection changes, including a press conference

2. Thoughts on workstream 1

How can a local culture of recycling be engendered and what examples are there of best practice?

- Key question – is the authority structured in such a way that waste/recycling can be driven up the agenda ie does it have an Environment Cabinet
- Would be worth attending the ALCO (Association of London Cleansing Officers) meeting on 17 September to get their input
- LEDNET/Capital Ambition have just commenced a data gathering exercise, gathering data on recycling covering all three workstreams – could approach them for access to data
- Would be useful to try and pull together borough data on relative level of investment in publicity and awareness raising ie percentage budget spend. This links back to workstream 3.

3. Thoughts on workstream 2

How do the structural, governance and management arrangements affect recycling rates?

- Need to consider whether the infrastructure in place encourages a positive recycling rate eg what bins in the street or collection containers provided. In Bexley the residual waste bin was reduced to 180kg and then collected fortnightly.
- Need to focus on Mayor's and National targets – Is there a measure that local authorities are using to give a high enough profile and is there a dedicated lead for that?
- WDA structure – there is an argument for economies of scale, but rates seemed to be linked to what can get and savings. Agreement for change to collection/disposal has to be reached by all boroughs. Is there a direct incentive to reduce waste disposal?

- SERCO and Veolia are the main contractors in London – would provide useful insight. Main contacts respectively, are Mike Bolt, MD Local Government and Paul Levette, Deputy CE.

4. Thoughts on workstream 3

How do financial drivers transform waste into a resource?

- CM not present for this part of the discussion – to receive feedback from Richard Derecki/Stephen Greek and feed into summary notes.

5. Other points

- DEFRA figures for 09/10 should be available around September

Scrutiny team
26 August 2010

Summary note of meeting with Cllr Susan Hall – 16 November 2010

Present: Cllr Susan Hall, Gareth Bacon, Stephen Greek, Richard Derecki, Carmen Musonda

- Harrow has a 3 bin system with weekly collections of food and garden waste, and alternate fortnightly collections of recyclables and residual waste. Harrow's collections are in-house.
- The key drivers for making the change were environmental and financial. The proposal for change was developed during the Labour administration pre-2006 and was largely officer-led. The changes were driven through during the Conservative administration 2006 to 2009. A pilot had been trialled in a couple of wards but was very confused and a borough-wide roll out completed in the summer of 2007. Flats were not included. The transition was poorly managed
- Despite the initial problems around organisational and information dissemination the Conservative administration persevered because it made environmental and financial sense to. The proposal was driven through by the passion of the individual councillor as opposed to collective political support for it. Political colleagues expressed doubts initially but were won over.
- The Council's approach to embedding a culture of recycling was to conduct road shows, attend residents' meetings, extensive press and media coverage. The Council's aim was to educate Residents but it did also send a clear message to residents that the 'stick' approach would be used if necessary ie £1000 fine penalty.
- On the lack of transparency issue around understanding costs of waste at an individual level and contract cost implications ie the relationship between the contractor and the borough the councillor felt that there was a limit to how transparent one can be because of the range of information involved.
- To increase recycling rates to around 50 per cent, the borough would need to look at additional measures most likely of the 'stick' variety. The Councillor is opposed to the idea of rewarding individual residents for recycling as goes against the 'Big Society' approach, and could encourage more waste production.
- Frustrations with the JWDA set up are:
 - that it apportioned costs on a demographic basis (it has since moved to apportioning on a tonnage basis)
 - the loss of flexibility ie you are unable to manage your own waste or its disposal and any decisions for change have to be agreed on a unanimous basis
 - that Harrow was able to secure cheaper deals with MRF operators as an individual authority, than were being achieved through WLWA

Scrutiny team

16 November 2010

Summary note of meeting with LB Harrow – 25 January 2011

Present: Jerry Hickman, Head of Service, Public Realm and Andrew Baker, Team Leader Climate Change, LB Harrow
Gareth Bacon, Stephen Greek, Richard Derecki, Carmen Musonda

Drivers for improving the borough's performance

- Landfill tax, to mitigate rising costs and put waste higher up the agenda in terms of investment
- National indicators – unlikely that Harrow would have achieved its 40 per cent target without changing the frequency of collections.
- Harrow now has a three-bin system, blue for dry recyclables, brown for kitchen and garden waste and green for residual waste. Recyclables and residual waste are collected fortnightly and kitchen and garden waste weekly.

Communications

- The frequency in waste collections was changed at the same time as the borough adopted the compulsory recycling approach. Did not realise how much the change to the frequency of waste collection would affect residents
- The combined effect was a sharp increase in initial demand for green recycling boxes and the quantities. The borough had not anticipated the extent of the demand.
- Harrow had a bumpy ride initially and officers needed 100 per cent political backing to ensure that they could properly implement the changes.
- It took some time for residents to be bought into the culture of recycling.

The joint waste authority arrangement

- Lewisham has had many discussions with Recyclebank and concluded that the scheme is not right for the borough. SK believes that there are a number of drawbacks
 - Encourages consumerism in contrast to waste minimisation
 - An estates based model would benefit from an incentive that improves the area as opposed to issuing individual vouchers
 - Cost savings ??clarify
 - High upfront costs; the borough would be tied into a 10 year contract which would cost millions. There is no value for money model that shows that the financing stacks up

Pros and cons of joint waste authorities

- Lewisham is in discussions to procure its own waste transfer station. This has political support
- The recycling contract is due to expire in December 2011 and there is scope to renegotiate ownership of the recycle . Lewisham is looking to introduce dual stream, separating out paper, asking for a profit share, writing a 95 per cent recycling target into the specification getting a view on whether this is achievable

Achieving 50 per cent recycling

- Lewisham is doing quite well on dry recycling but performance decreases with the absence of food and garden waste. SK believes that too much emphasis is placed on food and garden waste
- Constant communication is needed because of the high transient population. Has not proved too expensive because largely delivered through council officer resource and time.
- Use of planning legislation/ regulations – TH is planning to introduce underground refuse capacity in newer estates. Is working closely with RSLs on this
- Also attempting to work more closely with RSLs on other waste matters for eg the Berner estate initiatives where the council engage with estate caretakers.
- It would be helpful to bring the council's relationship with RSLs and private landlords on to a statutory footing.

Scrutiny team
3 March 2011

Summary note of meeting with LB Havering – 8 February 2011

Present: Paul Ellis, Waste and Recycling Manager and Bob Wenman, Head of Street Care LB Havering
Gareth Bacon, Stephen Greek, Richard Derecki, Carmen Musonda

Background

- Both officers have been in position for c. six years
- ELWA put targets in place at the beginning of the contract period with Shanks, ie 2002. The focus of the contract was diversion from landfill. Income from the recycling collected goes to Shanks
- Havering opted to put separate collection arrangements in place c. 2007 and now have separate trucks for residual waste and kerbside recycling (previously both were collected in the same truck)
- Officers needed to demonstrate to Members that the improvements would be value for money ie at a minimum costs
- Havering has focused on steering residents towards 'bring banks' for glass recycling. The take up is very good and has the added benefit of minimising collection costs
- Whilst recycling keeps disposal costs down collection costs are met by the Borough, so from a purely financial perspective the current set up for recycling could act as a dis-incentive to constituent ELWA boroughs to improve recycling rates. Under the current set up it would be difficult to achieve the 50 per cent target without increased collection costs. Havering could look to renegotiate the terms of the contract through ELWA, or opt out of it, at a cost.
- Waste minimisation is the key focus for the borough. The overall amount of waste has reduced and this has been as a result of extensive communication and education programmes, and taking a firm line on enforcement to ensure waste is redirected to the correct waste stream. The borough now has a dedicated waste enforcement team and working with ELWA and the other ELWA boroughs is controlling ELWA boundary waste by requiring proof of residency at Reuse and recycling centres
- Working towards the 50 per cent target – the diversion/disposal side of the service is good and will deliver benefits over the long-term. LB Havering only collects plastic bottles at the kerbside although dense plastics can be recycled at the RRC. There is an opportunity to introduce more products into the waste stream. A major challenge is getting people to understand the costs involved in waste services and also the gain
- Regarding joint arrangements – Havering is a member of ELWA. Levy calculation apportionment is tonnage based, including recycling, with a small proportion of it being council tax based. A revision of the levy calculation could help incentivise boroughs to increase their recycling rate.
- As a unitary borough Havering would have more flexibility from a recycling perspective but would lose the benefits of infrastructure.
- For Havering constant communications with a consistent message is vital. The borough has a 3 /4 year plan in place supported by Waste Watch and ELWA
- There is strong political support. The Deputy Leader is the Chair of ELWA.

Summary note of meeting with LB Lewisham – 15 February 2011

Present: Sam Kirk, Strategic Waste and Environment Manager, LB Lewisham
Gareth Bacon, Stephen Greek, Richard Derecki, Carmen Musonda

Efforts to boost recycling

- The reduction in the recycling rate over the past year is down to statistical discrepancy with figures received from the waste transfer station around recycling bulky waste. There have also been issues with figures being received from the MRF contractor.
- The borough has put much effort into improving recycling performance but with little impact – in recycling boxes were rolled out in 2004, many properties received dedicated recycling bins that they could request from 2005 and in 2010 there was a roll out of smaller residual waste bins and converting existing residual bins for recycling (green-lidded). Most of the borough (kerbside) now has 240l bins for recycling.
- Introduction of a pilot kerbside collection of textiles.
- Four satellite garden waste sites for nine months of the year.
- Huge push on waste minimisation including free home compost bins, Love Food Hate Waste Campaign, Real Nappies, set up a bulky reuse scheme and promotion of No Junk Mail stickers.
- Introduction of mattress recycling scheme, which is free to residents.
- Communications campaigns through Recycle for London as well as an overhaul of our recycling comms which in the main included all bins being stickered with a bin clearly stating what can and can't be put in the recycling bin and a letter being delivered to all households.
- We've since introduced six WEEE banks on the street.

Communications for rollout

- Extensive and varied communication approaches and literature eg information leaflets through doors, a sealed information pack on resident's bins, residents meetings road shows.

Importance of recycling

- Recycling is a priority but the programme of work is likely to be affected by cuts due in current economic climate (87 million cuts over next 3 years). It is likely that waste personnel will be reduced and some campaigns work cut. As an update the three waste advisor posts have been deleted.

Recyclebank and boosting recycling rates

- Lewisham has had many discussions with Recyclebank and concluded that the scheme is not right for the borough. SK believes that there are a number of drawbacks
 - Encourages consumerism in contrast to waste minimisation
 - An estates based model would benefit from an incentive that improves the area as opposed to issuing individual vouchers

- As Lewisham incinerates its waste the cost avoidance of landfill isn't there, which is where the funding for Recyclebank would come from
- High upfront costs; the borough would be tied into a 10 year contract which would cost millions. There is no value for money model that shows that the financing stacks up for Lewisham.

Future plans

- Lewisham is in discussions to procure its own waste transfer station. This has political support for the feasibility. An update – the costs are too high given the current economic climate
- The recycling contract is due to expire in December 2011 and there is scope to renegotiate ownership of the recycle. One option may be to look at introducing dual stream, separating out paper, asking for a profit share, writing a 95 per cent recycling target into the specification getting a view on whether this is achievable

Other issues

- Lewisham is doing quite well on dry recycling but performance decreases with the absence of food and garden waste . SK believes that too much emphasis is placed on a mixed recycling and composting rate, which penalises borough's who either invested in reducing landfill early on (incineration) and wants to reduce overall waste by not collecting garden waste for free.
- Constant communication is needed because of the high transient population. Has not proved too expensive because largely delivered through council officer resource and time.
- Attention needs to be drawn to issues affecting recycling rates such as the impact of the recession and improvements in packaging technologies which can have a negative impact on recycling rates, including lighter weight glass bottles and cans being replaced by tetrapaks, which currently aren't collected at the doorstep and the reduction in free newspapers means less recyclable material available.

Scrutiny team
3 March 2011

Meeting note: Tony Hammond, Waste Reduction and Disposal Manager, LB Newham

While Newham's poor recycling rate is well known it does well on diversion from landfill.

Historically Newham's recycling rate has been affected by the nature of the service offered ie small orange bags collected together with the black residual. These bags did not hold much and there were high contamination levels. Newham is changing the collection containers and moving to a bin for recycling at doorstep properties. There is money from LWRB to introduce bins for flats at some point in the future. The service changes have been heralded by an extensive comms. effort including leaflet drops, use of the in-house magazine and website. Already recycling tonnage rates are getting bigger. Will to make changes to get Newham up the league table are gathering steam – there is an announced target to get recycling up to 27% by 2011 – but is more likely to be met in 2012 – as they have started to late to drive this improvement forward.

There are a number of reasons why Newham's rate has lagged behind other boroughs – lethargy and a focus on diversion rates mentioned. But also comms issue significant given 100 languages used in the borough. Up to now the comms budget has been held centrally and the waste team have not been able to influence how that money has been spent. That will change in the future. Recycling is a brand product – it needs regular promotion and communication – can be expensive but is necessary – particular if set against possibility of central government passing potential EU fines (eg for missing 2013 landfill diversion targets) down to councils. However, the short term economics are working against this objective for example outreach workers have been cut.

ELWA has a fixed contamination apportionment rule which lessens the incentive on the boroughs to innovate. If Newham improves its contamination rate dramatically then the other boroughs might see their rates rise – won't be happy about that. In a sense the boroughs in the ELWA are "too equal" – the model was draw up for 4 boroughs but it doesn't allow them space to think for themselves and so limits the ability of the boroughs to introduce changes.

Recycling was never a core element of the contract; Shanks get the recylcate material and can earn an income stream off it. However, they also have a contract with a Waste to Energy company in Estonia to take their dried residual material. If boroughs want to collect any other material eg. glass separately, then they will have to pay more to collect it and pay more to Shanks to dispose of it. The economics of recycling benefits against the landfill tax don't work in such a situation. Transparency would be improved if recycling was a much clearer on Newham's budget sheet. There is very little to enthuse boroughs into boosting recycling – each of the 4 boroughs is constrained by the ELWA contract with Shanks.

There is interest in further conversations with Recyclebank particularly with their approach to boosting recycling rates in high-rise blocks. However Newham doesn't have many local large shops (like M&S) to provide vouchers. Also the upfront finances are likely to be difficult to argue for – though LWRB might be able to help.

Summary note of meeting with LB Tower Hamlets – 1 February 2011

Present: Mandy Scharer, Interim Head of Waste Management, Simon Baxter, Head of Clean and Green, LB Tower Hamlets
Gareth Bacon, Stephen Greek, Richard Derecki, Carmen Musonda

- During the introductory comments SB queried the use of 2007/08 recycling data in an Evening Standard article; Tower Hamlets has doubled its performance since then.

Importance of recycling

- A clear political vision has been set by Lead Members, and embraced by senior officers (Corporate Director and Director of Public Realm)
- MS/SB believe that clear political aspiration is part of the solution to developing a local culture of recycling
- TH had received Government attention on account of the borough's under performance prior to 2007/08
- It is approximately £80 per tonne cheaper to recycle than to send waste to landfill
- Communication has a large part of play in TH's improving recycling performance. The communication was specifically tailored and local residents were involved in campaigns.

Contractual arrangements

- Main contractor is Veolia. TH has an 11 year contract with Veolia, agreed in 2006 and expiring in 2017. Secured tonnage costs up to 2017 and negotiated a reduction in overhead costs resulting in substantial savings up to 2017.
- There is a considerable amount of flexibility in negotiating around collection, street cleansing and recycling services, but this is less so on disposal services.
- Officers would appreciate more transparency on the pricing structure and underlying reasons for any increases.
- In MS/SB's experience contractors are not unresponsive to changes but additional costs may be incurred.

Creating a local culture of recycling

- TH worked with Tower Hamlets Community Recycling Consortium with recycling collections in the past but from 2008 onwards collections have been undertaken by Veolia.
- The contractor has taken on board the borough's commitment to improved recycling rates.
- Sixty-four per cent of workers employed by Veolia live in the Borough.

Recyclebank and boosting recycling rates

- The borough has been in discussion with Recyclebank, however the decision was made not to implement the scheme at the moment due to the Council's medium term financial plan (efficiency savings).
- In terms of making the jump in recycling performance from 26 per cent to 32 per cent:

- MS/SB think that performance has probably plateaued and that the borough would have to rely totally on dry recycling, as the Borough is 80 per cent high rise properties, therefore there are limited opportunities to recycling green and food waste. The borough's focus is also on waste reduction
- The high transient population (19/20 per cent) also impacts performance.

Benefits of Unitary authorities/JWDA's

- Being a unitary authority allows for bit more freedom, but can see the pros and cons on both sides. TH was in discussions to join ELWA and have looked at joining NLWA.

Other issues

- TH is currently drafting its waste strategy for the next six years
- Constant communication is needed because of the high transient population.
- Use of planning legislation/ regulations – TH is planning to introduce underground refuse capacity in newer estates. Is working closely with RSLs on this
- TH are working more closely with RSLs on other waste matters for eg the Berner estate initiatives where the council engage with estate caretakers.

Scrutiny team
3 March 2011

UPDATED BY PETER BRENNAN 10.11.2010

Summary note of meeting with Peter Brennan, LB Wandsworth – 12 October 2010

Present: Gareth Bacon Peter Brennan, LB Wandsworth (PB)
 Stephen Greek Peter Robinson, LB Wandsworth
 Richard Derecki Shaun Morley, LB Wandsworth
 Will Haley
 Carmen Musonda

Background to LB Wandsworth and its approach to municipal waste management

- Wandsworth collects all waste streams apart from food waste. Green waste collection is dependent on demography and is therefore chargeable.
- PB thinks that recycling targets based on tonnage yield are misplaced and can skew results.
- For PB the priority should be to waste minimisation and prevention. That said to close down recycling would be suicidal because it is the most visible way for an individual to do his/her bit for the environment. There were few options to landfill in the 1980s, recycling filled a gap.
- PB has no problem with a 'zero waste to landfill' target, but believes that Authorities should have the freedom to manage their route to the target. They also need to show they are doing their best outside of landfill. PB believes that energy from waste is something that should be encouraged.
- PB considers incinerating food and green garden waste is the better, but not necessarily cheaper, option (LB Wandsworth's current incineration costs are circa £120 per tonne), and believes that most LAs are not going to get much past 50 per cent recycling rates.

Thoughts/views relating to work stream 1

How can a local culture of recycling be engendered and what examples are there of best practice?

- LB Wandsworth has never engaged in punitive methods, its biggest driver is the ease and convenience for the resident. Careful handling of these can persuade the most resistant resident to recycle, but upsetting residents on both can adversely affect attitudes to recycling.
- Being a more central location, it is more difficult to use a range of containers in the borough. (LB Wandsworth moved from a more complex 'Rainbow' collection system in the 1990s to a co-mingled collection *in 2000*). The spread of collection and method is therefore crucial. Several vehicles are used. LB Wandsworth follows a weekly residual and recycling collection model.
- LB Wandsworth has an ongoing campaign which draws a correlation between waste reduction and council tax costs, to incentivise residents to produce less waste. A slogan on the side of the authority's collection vehicles reminds residents that '*one kilo per household saves half a million off your council tax*' (confirm wording please)

Thoughts/views relating to work stream 2

How do the structural, governance and management arrangements affect recycling rates?

- PB would not say no to a Single Waste Authority for London believing that it could provide an effective link into collections, but feels that the size of grouping is important in terms of generating financial backing. PB is unsure that the investment needed would be available in the current economic climate.
- For PB the current WDA structure works well. There is a genuine will at political and officer level to make it work well. It provides strategic and operational focus but also flexibility. One example of where the WDA structure has contributed well to joint working is when a simple and enabling way to collect recyclables, using orange bag collections was agreed across the four boroughs.
- PB feels that it is difficult to ignore the London politics. It is unique. The big fear with mega contracts is that the visual appearance of a borough might be affected by third parties who may not consider it a priority issue.
- On costs, PB noted that transparency is important and that the introduction of a Gate Fee system c. two years ago has created more incentive to reduce/minimise waste. Less waste means less gate fee charges. Waste reduction was less of a priority in 1986 when Western Riverside came together.
- PB sees LATs purchases becoming increasingly important particularly post 2014.
- Hampshire/West Sussex is a good model and supports the argument for a more consistent approach. Residents moving around have greater understanding of what they need to do.

Other thoughts

- Thought processes developed in the 1990s have replicated the same path ever since. It is now time to re-think our approach to waste management. This should include a re-working of the legislation ie one new Act to cover all the disparate pieces of legislation governing waste management.

Scrutiny team
9 November 2010

Summary note of meeting with Paul Taylor MD (ELWA), 30 Nov 2010

The PFI contract that ELWA have in place was first specified some 10 years ago. The contract is tightly defined and dictates everything. The contract was not designed to boost recycling rates nor is the infrastructure it funds. There is no formal review process built in but there is a five year business plan horizon which allows for some changes on a consensual basis. The contract was designed to divert municipal waste from landfill to create a fuel – market for this fuel is only now beginning to emerge.

Recycling is important – “the public have got it” – but any attempts to change the contract to boost rates will cost. Recycling is a by-product – diversion is key as landfill tax is what is concentrating minds. LATS should be allowed to wither away. Boosting recycling would only benefit Shanks as they have all the risk for the recycling income. ELWA will not meet 50% but will do all they can to move in that direction.

Paul argued that the cost of recycling at the point of collection is expensive but the cost of recycling for disposal is the same as diversion.

The politics of collection - All four boroughs in the JWDA have separate recycling collections – Newham is moving to having wheelie bins in the new year. Two boroughs have bags and two have bins. Also two have outsourced services and two have DSOs. They collect the same material but in different ways – note glass in collected through bring bins not from kerbside. For some boroughs though they recognise that there are benefits to be had from changing the collection system but the risks are seen as too great

Wastewatch does the comms. for ELWA and they have an extensive programme of leaflets, door knocking and roadshows. There is the prospect of a new strapline “Recycle for London” which Paul hopes boroughs will adopt as he considers that it will be clearer for residents. This has yet to be agreed. Boroughs run their own comms for the collection. In Paul’s view it is absolutely vital to make the connection between increasing recycling and cutting council tax.

ELWA use the levy model (tonnage + Band D properties) – this does lead to cross-subsidising by some boroughs and if it was just a tonnage fee then it could lead to an increase in recycling rates. There have been complaints from one borough that they are in effect subsidising another. Calculations are two years out of date because the budgeting process requires finalised figures.

ELWA has won LWRB money for a scheme to boost recycling rates from flats – will use stronger bags at community collection points.

The politics of ELWA are largely based on unanimity but changes to the constitution have allowed decisions to be made on a majority of those present – but Paul felt this was only very rarely to be used and not for anything controversial. It is unwieldy in a number of ways – hard to address collection issues – should have been a collection and disposal authority. Must be greater flexibility for trucks to cross borough boundaries – joint liveries would be possible.

Tower Hamlets has expressed an interest in joining ELWA but this could require primary legislation and a new tender for the expanded contract.

Summary note of meeting with NLWA – 4 January 2011

Present: Andrew Lappage, NLWA and Neil Carrett, North London Boroughs
Gareth Bacon, Stephen Greek, Richard Derecki, Carmen Musonda GLA

- Loss of PFI credits was a significant blow. The project value is around £4bn, and the credits would have provided nearly £500m revenue support over the life of the contract. NLWA is progressing with procurement process. To do nothing would be the most expensive option. NLWA has informed the bidders and invited comments from them on how they could work with the change. In buying out LondonWaste Ltd, NLWA opened up options as for bidders to optimise local solutions (noting NLWA retain the freehold of the Edmonton site).
- AL sees recycling as a goal to strive for; it has both political and environmental importance and financial gains. The impact of recent budget cuts is being worked through but it is likely to fall on investment in waste infrastructure improvement.
- Recycling rates in NLWA boroughs have reached a plateau over the last few years. Achieving the mayor's 50 per cent recycling target is achievable if 100 per cent commitment and all available policy levers are put behind it.
- Given challenges of transiency, deprivation and housing density AL would expect recycling performance to be better in outer London boroughs. WRAP studies show links between deprivation and recycling rates. Three of the 7 boroughs in NLWA are in inner London.
- Recycling makes sense in terms of resource management and is therefore an end in itself as opposed to just another landfill diversion tool. A more positive picture of what London is doing needs to be communicated, and less focus placed on dissimilar comparisons. London is so different from other UK regions.
- More important is developing consistency in how recycling performance is measured and on providing clear guidelines. Targets need to be smarter; eg could look at apportioning the (regional) strategy targets at borough level; or could consider a household or per capita based target on residual waste (but would need a consistent approach to measuring household waste).
- There are incentives for boroughs in NLWA to improve recycling performance. The introduction of a tonnage based levy provides a fairer way of apportioning costs but there are still drawbacks – the two year lag in figure updates and the averaging of costs. The NLWA has an income share agreement within their MRF contract and this is passed on to the boroughs. NLWA also introduced an incentive scheme related to LATs allowances (06/07) allowing for incentive share between the authority and the boroughs.
- The pooling of costs through the levy does mean however that it is possible for an individual borough to negotiate a rate per tonne for some recycling services that is lower than the additional share of the tonnage-based levy it will have to pay if it works in partnership with the NLWA and other boroughs, notwithstanding that this may be cheaper in overall terms for the public purse.

- Beyond this individual boroughs are looking for ways to drive up recycling rates. An example was that of LB Enfield trialled service provision changes during 2010. Enfield say that recycling rates in the borough have significantly improved. Residents in the trial area are provided with x2 240L bins for i) food waste and garden waste and ii) dry comingled recyclates, collected weekly, and x1 180L bin for residual waste all of which is collected weekly (smaller households can have x3 180L bins).
- Joint waste disposal governance arrangements - AL strongly supports JWDA set up and sees the method of cost apportionment as the only drawback; the new contract is seen as the appropriate time to make it fairer and more transparent. AL thinks that JWDA's offer the following benefits:
 - Opportunity to deliver real economies of scale
 - Democratically accountable to boroughs on a sub-regional basis
 - Provide joined up finances, political approach and decision making
- Factors contributing to variance in recycling rates across London:
 - Deprivation/housing and green waste
 - Wider society issue relating to socio-economic disparity
 - Perhaps need to revisit/realign LWARB's core direction, which was initially to develop the municipal waste stream in a more coherent way. Now the focus seems to be very much on developing collection and treatment infrastructure through funding to the private sector and for commercial wastes. It is difficult to see how the funding will in feed through to and benefit the public sector.

Scrutiny team
4 January 2011

Summary note of meeting with Western Riverside Waste Authority – 7 December 2010

Present: Mark Broxup, Western Riverside Waste Authority
Gareth Bacon, Stephen Greek, Richard Derecki, Carmen Musonda

Recycling performance

- WRWA boroughs are among four of the best boroughs for dry recyclates
- For MB there are big differences between inner and outer London (green waste is not prevalent in inner boroughs)
- MB's view is that there is a misplaced emphasis on recycling, the focus needs to be on waste reduction and reuse and better design of products. Would therefore have expected to see more focus on reduction, reuse and redesign in the draft Municipal Waste Strategy.
- MB acknowledged that recycling has moved waste management up the agenda but recycling has its limitations.
- The constituent boroughs in WRWA have a unified collection method. All use the same colour sack (orange) but they do vary in size. They are working towards single procurement of the sacks.
- Process and advertising is uniform across all four boroughs. Recycle Western Riverside Campaign is procured by WRWA on behalf of the four boroughs.
- WRWA costs mirror the waste hierarchy.
- The leap from eight to 24 per cent was down to the orange bags plus a big advertising campaign. WRWA invested five million over four years in advertising.
- The public reception is favourable because of the ease
- Costs are tonnage based – this has meant that boroughs can add the true costs of disposal and treatment to arrive at a proper transparent cost. With the new system, the emphasis is on the boroughs and has incentivised them to go for the cheaper options.

Governance arrangements

- Levy is proportionate – change following unanimous agreement from the boroughs. They are now tied together contractually for seven years (now in the second year).
- Recyclates are mainly co-mingled but some source segregated. Income from source segregated recyclates is passed on to WRWA less a small handling charge, but majority are put through a MRF with the contractor bearing commodity risk.
- Benefits of a JWDA – MB believes that a statutory JWDA is best as benefit from local political control, sufficient size to benefit from economies of scale. Sensibly sized groupings are important, if too big can be unwieldy. Achieving political consensus can be a challenge. Unitary authorities are unable to benefit from economies of scale
- MB is of the view that uniformity in collection services across London will not work but does believe there is scope for some similarity even if it is in the colour of containers used for different materials.

Summary note

Jim Brennan: Director West London Waste Authority, 7 December 2010

WLWA has the highest average recycling rates of all the JWDA – yet 62 per cent of waste is still going to landfill. Brent is the poorest performer but is looking to introduce new service changes in the New Year. Across the boroughs from political leaders to officers recycling is very important. People understand this. For these boroughs the more they recycle the less they have to pay WLWA.

WLWA does believe that the 50% target by 2020 will be achieved. Higher recycling rates are complementary to meeting overarching waste targets.

The boroughs in the WLWA have structured their contracts so that the contractors keep their recyclate from the kerbside collections. This should therefore be incentivising the collectors to boost recycling rates. Three of the six boroughs use MRFs for sorting, 3 use kerbside sorting; 4 use external providers and two use DSOs. Five of the boroughs collect food, Hillingdon doesn't but does collect garden waste.

There are flexible arrangements for the WCAs in the WLWA than in other JWDA – the WLWA is very much borough-led. Kerbside collection rates are going well but what more could be done? They are looking to the WLWA to do its bit to generate higher recycling rates. For example, by looking at using a “dirty” MRF for black bags from flats can generate an additional 10 per cent of recyclate material. WLWA also help with therecycling/ disposal of other materials eg plasterboard and mattresses.

WLWA is looking to change its levy system by making a charge that is more reflective of the costs to WLWA of disposing of each type of waste. WLWA has created an internal LATS market but there's little external appetite for any surplus.

Political will is vital for looking for ways to boost recycling rates. Residents have bought into this. Many boroughs have developed home-grown cultures supportive of recycling - this has been catalysed by outreach teams from the boroughs but also by external factors such as active NGOs such as FOE.

In terms of finding ways to boost recycling rates this will be a challenge – the marginal cost of going over 50% is likely to be big. Financial pressures may in time prove a powerful driver – maybe contract length will come down to allow for greater flexibility and the adoption of the latest technology. There should be scope for harmonisation of collection, joint procurement and sharing of DSO services. Boroughs will cluster together – the problem is how to have a common message but to keep their identity? Perhaps over time the JWDA will become a JWA covering collection as well.

In terms of governance the WLWA is nominally structured the same as the others but implementation is different. There is one member per borough rather than two – it is possible to take decisions on a majority of votes and even on the casting vote of the Chair.

For Jim the key ingredients for boosting recycling rates are political will leading to the provision of funding for the development of the necessary infrastructure, the development of a strong brand and powerful communications message.

Summary note of meeting with South London Waste Partnership – 4 January 2011

Present: Peter O’Connell (PO), SLWP
Gareth Bacon, Stephen Greek, Richard Derecki, Carmen Musonda

- Sutton’s recycling performance has levelled off over the last few years. There are ways in which you could look to increase recycling rates such as expanding garden waste but is it desirable in terms of environmental impact? Collecting food waste may be another alternative – Sutton is trialling food waste to 2,500 properties but continuation or expansion will be decided based upon environmental and economical considerations. One needs to look at the desirability of expanding this service, in terms of total costs and the environmental performance of separate collection and treatment when compared to other collection and treatment options such as mixed collection with energy from waste treatment.
- LB Sutton has not chosen to focus on driving the economic argument with the public i.e. recycling more to generate a saving on the amount of Council Tax they would pay given the low cost per head/household of waste collection and treatment compared to other services such as adult social care. Public perception of what services their C Tax covers differs considerably to the reality. The focus should be on pushing the general messages about managing waste more sustainably, allowing for local variations in how the message is conveyed.
- PO believes that the target for 50 per cent recycling by 2020 is achievable but questions whether it is desirable in terms of economics and carbon performance. For PO the real challenge is around waste minimisation and meeting the challenge of delivering renewable energy.
- In Amsterdam the focus is on incinerating waste and deriving energy from it as part of a range of sustainable waste management practices including recycling. PO thinks that this is the way forward. Recycling is an important element, but not an end in itself. It has a significant part to play in engaging the public in the message of sustainable waste management and behaviour change.
- PO believes that there is a balance to be struck whereby those involved in the waste industry, particularly public sector officers truly perceive waste as a resource and recognise the potential gains to be had from it. This in turn needs to be shared by local politicians, and in turn conveyed to the public.

SLWP

- The demographics across the four boroughs are broadly similar. The partnership works well at Member level, however the current procurement programme for residual waste treatment is likely to present challenges.
- The main drivers for the partnership were economics and maximising the skills and knowledge across the boroughs. The threat of escalating costs in landfill tax was real. The timing was opportune – three of the four boroughs’ contracts were terminating. Plus there was recognition that partnering with other boroughs would

bring economies of scale and the opportunity to utilise specialist skills across partner boroughs – technical expertise from Sutton, procurement skills from Kingston, legal expertise from Merton and financial expertise from Croydon.

- The partnership has provided the incentive for the different boroughs to get on with what they needed to do. It provides a platform from which to take a more holistic approach.
- The boroughs in SLWP have made a conscious decision to work together towards a common aim, as opposed to the statutory arrangement based on geographical boundaries. PO believes that that this psychological position impacts positively on the commitment to the relationship, the development of shared objectives and services, and on overall efficiencies that can be gained, including improved recycling rates. Partnership arrangements are likely to extend to include collection services and the boroughs are sharing information which will allow comparisons of cost and performance of the various collection regimes that are in place at present. Standardisation is one potential benefit along with a rationalisation of depots and improved procurement of goods and services.
- Flexibility of arrangements – SLWP is flexible if wishing to join the partnership but less so if wishing to leave; mostly due to issues around contractual commitments. Nb current contracts for recycling, composting and landfill are 14 years with a seven year break clause. The next contract for residual waste treatment will be for a minimum of 25 years in recognition of the high capital investment required.
- PO thinks that it would be possible to replicate the partnership model elsewhere, or even to look at adjusting current statutory arrangements, but the feasibility of such moves would come down to local political support. Mechanisms would have to be found to address any potential legacy issues from current contractual commitments.

Private Finance Initiative

- The withdrawal of PFI credits was unfortunate, but did not affect the decision to continue with the current procurement. The main concern was that the withdrawal of funding across the seven projects nationally might reduce capacity, with more local authorities vying for contractor services possibly causing the latter to drive up their charges. Opportunities have arisen from the change. These include the ability to be more flexible in relation to the project agreement documentation and in negotiating commercial terms and in allowing contractors to look to commercial viability over the longer term given that the assets do not have to revert to the partnership at the end of the contract period.
- To help address waste management issues over the next three years (when current procurement comes on stream), SLWP is asking bidders about provision for interim treatment capacity and negotiating revisions to current landfill prices. There is unlikely to be any increased focus on recycling over the next three years except where food waste is shown to be economically and environmentally better than other options. PO thinks that treatment of residual waste is the real challenge and how energy generation can be used to benefit local residents and businesses.

Optimum recycling

- It is likely that recycling rates will plateau – there is an optimum level after which it becomes economically, technically and environmentally unfeasible to increase further. Unitary authorities are in the valuable position of being able to communicate and engage with residents, provide reliable collection services and organise efficient treatment contracts in a holistic fashion that best fits the local situation.

Thoughts on why recycling rates vary

- Recycling services costs to date – they cost more but this is changing as landfill tax continues to increase.
- Political aspirations and priorities
- Deprivation – studies show that the less affluent produce less waste but recycle lower proportion of their waste
- Language – for eg in Wakefield, NE England Communications are more picture-based to engage eastern European residents.
- Transiency – for eg LB Newham has a 30 per cent churn. This makes it difficult to engage with people and build an affinity with the local area.
- Housing density and related issues eg storage, capacity etc

Scrutiny team
5 January 2011

Summary note of meeting with Mike Boulton, SERCO – 5 October 2010

Present: Mike Boulton
Gareth Bacon
Richard Derecki
Will Haley
Carmen Musonda

Thoughts on work stream 1

How can a local culture of recycling be engendered and what examples are there of best practice?

- For Mike, while political will is very important and influential, strong officer level commitment and input has a significant part to play, and it is from officers that you are more likely to get the level of continuity and service needed for longer term waste management planning.
- Mike believes that co-mingling is an inevitable way forward for driving up recycling rates as there are easy wins, → cheaper and easier to collect → ease for resident → increased participation → higher tonnage yields. Over time MRF costs will decrease as technology develops and efficiency improves.
- The nature of the property/housing stock composition, are top factors on in performance discrepancy in London.
- Transiency can be an inhibitor to recycling, the main issues here are around communication/awareness, for example the infrastructure built into somewhere like Hammersmith and Fulham makes it difficult for the transient population to get to grips with what they need to do.

Thoughts on work stream 2

How do the structural, governance and management arrangements affect recycling rates?

- A common theme emerging from observations/feedback is a clear distrust/dislike of WDAs and lack of evidence that they are really working. The WDA set up is seen as a barrier to change. Mike agreed that a WDA set up is more constrained but argued that the issue is more around the length of the collection and disposal contracts and the inflexibility that comes with that, rather than around the structural arrangement. Contracts tend to be prescriptive. The loss of flexibility makes it difficult to drive up recycling rates.
- SERCO has worked round the long-term inflexibility issue in its recent contract with Sandwell MBC. SERCO is at the front end taking responsibility for meeting the recycling targets etc. To accommodate for the changing landscape of waste management, provide flexibility on both sides, and the opportunity to take advantage of the best short-term deals for disposal, the 25- year contract is broken down into more manageable phases, typically five years, by inserting review clauses. Mike gave the example of being able to negotiate a nil rate MRF gate fee with this approach.
- For Mike contract negotiation is about understanding the driver for business for all parties and advising and consulting on that basis. This was the approach taken with

Sandwell (*ie concept of informed/intelligent client and the moving away from contract prescription*)

- Mike believes that an adequate realisation of the relationship between collection and disposal and the costs impact, not evident in most London boroughs, is needed. There are clear differences in approach between unitary and collection authorities.

Thoughts on work stream 3

How do financial drivers transform waste into a resource?

- There is clearly scope for economies of scale in terms of collection (*please let me know if there is further information that should be inserted*)

Other thoughts

- Mike thinks that we need to recognise that not all boroughs are going to perform at the same level and that some have more chance of improving than others. We need to capitalise on the high performers to do more and encourage boroughs at the low end to improve.
- Mike believes that the current taxation regime should be revised, towards developing a pooling arrangement around LATS penalties and treating them differently. We need to reward/incentivise the better performing boroughs. A borough that is making more effort on service provision (for e.g. collecting garden/food waste) should be able to pay a lower rate of landfill tax than the borough that chooses not to. Boroughs that improve recycling levels will receive a rebate from a common pool of money.

Scrutiny team
7 October 2010

Summary note of meeting with Paul Levett, Veolia – 28 September 2010

Present: Paul Levett
Gareth Bacon
Stephen Greek
Richard Derecki
Carmen Musonda

Thoughts on work stream 1

How can a local culture of recycling be engendered and what examples are there of best practice?

- For Paul there comes a point in terms of fine-tuning the collection system to get the maximum amount of recycling when you have to begin to look at ways of incentivising the consumer – this led into a discussion about Recycle Bank
- Recycle Bank offers a way through a chip system in the wheelie bins to weigh the amount of recycling each household achieves – there are rewards for points collected – the rewards are given free by participating companies who want the kudos of being associated with recycling and who benefit from associated purchase (eg free cinema tickets – leads to popcorn sales). Rewards are capped at £135 a year to create a balance between incentivising behaviour and limiting the opportunities for cheating. Recycling yields (ie weight collected) in Windsor have increased by 35% and in the Merseyside pilot by 60%.
- Over the long term Paul argues for a defined set of products to be collected across London which would ease communication and reduce contamination rates.

Thoughts on work stream 2

How do the structural, governance and management arrangements affect recycling rates?

- Some of London recreates the worst of the two-tier system elsewhere in the country where collection is not aligned tightly enough with the treatment/processing contract. How does the top tier influence the lower tier on collection systems?
- The NLWA is in procurement now, as is South London partnership, WLWA - Spring next year, Western Riverside is commissioning in 6 weeks time – this PFI process usually takes up to 2 years
- (Point to note - is worth us checking the collection waste streams across the WDAs – are they the same?)
- There is an issue around rationalising services as some authorities keen to retain individual identity/branding
- Paul thinks that there needs to be consistency between collection and treatment. There is probably an opportunity for boroughs to jointly procure and share learning

Thoughts on work stream 3

How do financial drivers transform waste into a resource?

- When Veolia decide to build a MRF they look for a core client who can guarantee 30-40% capacity usage – then they look for other clients – so for the Greenwich

MRF – Greenwich and Lewisham use it and even material from the South West is processed there. There is MRF over-capacity in London now. The typical MRF costs £10m+.

- There are separate contracts for collection and for treatment/processing and disposal. Typically contracts for collection are for 5-7 years and for treatment and disposal 25-30 years. Given the requirement to build processing plants.
- Paul argued that the contracts that local authorities put out to tender are too prescriptive – they should just set the broad objectives and use waste contractors expertise to innovate.
- There is resistance amongst some officers to change – want to keep things as they are. They often take a short term view eg. they want to use the same bins or trucks which limits changes that can be made to the collection process which then has a knock on effect as to what treatment they can carry out.
- The collection side is highly competitive and where there are the lowest margins. The focus for Veolia here is to get the quality side right (eg on time, no missed bags etc...) and to benefit from experience of a wide range of different systems and environments throughout UK.
- There is clearly scope for economies of scale in terms of both collection (could have fewer trucks covering the same area if borough boundaries were ignored) and disposal – Veolia is tied in for mega contracts to supply re-processing firms in India or China and benefit from better prices for large amounts – but a significant number of councils in UK continue to negotiate individually around small quantities. Contracts can and are structured so that there is a profit share with boroughs to stimulate greater recycling rates.
- Paul believes the way forward is for the majority of local authorities to put out one contract for collection and treatment/processing – do a weekly food waste collection and alternate week collection of recyclates and residual waste – use wheelie bins and do a co-mingled collection. Obviously this system would need to be modified in some cases due to differences in demographics, housing stock, road layout etc. We need a contract that incentivises increased recycling rates and increased quality of recycling material – this will lead to lower landfill fees and boost income from selling the recycled materials.

Scrutiny team

30 September 2010

Why do recycling rates vary so much across London?

Meeting with Dee Moloney, LRS Consultancy Ltd: Friday 29 October 2010

Dee outlined how LRS Consultancy (formerly a subsidiary to London Remade) and Waste Watch were employed by Cory Environmental on behalf of WRWA and the constituent boroughs (funded through landfill tax credits) to harmonise the collection systems of the four boroughs involved. A key element of the programme was the development of consistent and cohesive communications strategies and activities, alongside harmonised services.

Dee stated how nationally the landfill tax escalator (and LATS) has been the key driver and focused attention on driving up recycling rates. Recycling has to date been an important and visible way of getting the public to think through the consequences of their use of different materials; it's now commonly the one thing which the public say they do which is 'environmentally' friendly.

Dee felt that London (and in fact the UK) still has a long way to go to engender a true culture of recycling and valuing the materials that we 'throw' away. She believed that all the boroughs had taken important strides over the past 10 years or so - all had focused recycling programmes but success was often dependent upon resources available and political will.

Gareth made the point that for Bexley the threat of future possible LATS fees drove them to restructure their waste collection and management processes. But why wasn't this such a driver for other boroughs. A number of calculations came into play - for example the cost of the necessary infrastructure, the cost of re-focusing waste services on driving up recycling rates versus the opportunity cost of the spend of other areas where the political interest might be higher.

Dee spoke about a project that LRS was working on with a waste management contractor client - implementing the collection of food waste on estates in a London Borough - this project was looking at using communal bins and they were working closely with caretakers, estate managers and residents - it was very resource intensive in order to ensure the effectiveness of the scheme.

Dee explained that how boroughs structure contracts is important; does the borough want to dictate how the contractor should deliver services, or set a target and allow the contractor to decide the best method. Dee mentioned that LRS has experience of projects where there is a target that is set, but that the local authority client is unwilling or unable to allow the contractor to devise the best method of achieving the target, and this can result in slower or less effective outcomes.

A standard collection contract lasts for 7 years – and this in the past has generally been linked to the length of a vehicle’s life. Disposal contracts tend to be longer because of the necessary investment in infrastructure.

There are important lessons to be drawn from looking at the team that is involved in waste management within a council – do the people have the right training/expertise? Is the political leadership focused on this issue?

Dee suggested that if boroughs are to work together, their values and objectives have to be aligned to the same goals. An example was the experiences of working with the WRWA boroughs; on some occasions it took time to broker agreements across the boroughs, due to their different objectives.

Dee suggests that UDAs can design the collection system to suit their own needs WDAs should be able to generate economies of scale because they have bigger bulks to play with.

On the issue of surveys Dee argued that in all the WRAP surveys there were standard questions about whether recycling was a high priority – however such standard questions about recycling did not always feature in broader council surveys.

Summary note of meeting with Beverley Simonson, WRAP – 12 October 2010

Present: Gareth Bacon Beverley Simonson
 Stephen Greek Carmen Musonda

- WRAP encourage charging for garden waste
- On whether recycling targets are sensible or just a blunt instrument BS thinks that targets have a purpose and that more emphasis is needed to deal with commercial waste.

On barriers

- The main barrier to improving recycling rates is finance, backed up by political persuasion. The example was given of one inner London borough which benefited from political support and good funding and improved recycling. A change in political focus (to climate change) and reduced funding means that the waste team is now limited in what it can do.
- Contract obligations can also be a barrier and sometimes re-negotiation may be necessary
- Infrastructure may be connected to the demographics ie proximity and storage issues
- The geographical make-up in some areas makes it difficult for certain collection schemes; need to properly assess desirability and practicality
- Poor service levels and customer care. Combined work by WRAP/LARAC and the LGA on developing waste commitments has been poorly supported by London boroughs, only four have signed up to it.
- Communication between boroughs is patchy. There is no central source of information, though there are sources to draw on – Waste Data Flow (previously audited but a year behind), Capital Waste Facts (now run by LRS Consultancy), and LEDNET survey information.
- Communication at borough officer level seems to work well through the established networks, but again this limited in terms of what boroughs are represented. Useful networks include ALCO, LEDNET, London Recycling Officers Group (Chair – Amy Harris, LB Sutton /Rachel Riding, Hackney), Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee

Scrutiny team
9 November 2010

Environment Committee – Recycling Rapporteurship
Engendering a Local Culture of Recycling – informal meeting
8.15am on 24 September 2010 in Committee Room 4

Present:

- Gareth Bacon AM, Rapporteur
- Carmen Musonda, Scrutiny Manager
- Dale Langford, Committee Officer

- Andrew Richmond, Policy and Programmes Manager (Waste), GLA
- Dee Moloney, Managing Director, LRS Consultancy
- Samantha Heath, Chief Executive, London Sustainability Exchange
- Beverley Simonson, ROTATE Adviser, WRAP
- Matthew Thomson, Chief Executive, London Community Resource Network
- Rangen Momen, Principal Policy and Project Officer, London Councils
- Stephen Didsbury, Head of Waste & Street Services, LB Bexley
- Tim Burns, Head of Community Engagement, Wastewatch

1. Gareth Bacon AM introduced the meeting and gave a background to the rapporteurship. Asked by Samantha Heath why the investigation was not also looking at waste reduction, Gareth Bacon AM explained that the rapporteurship needed to be quite focused and there was not the scope for it to be all-encompassing on an issue such as waste and recycling.

Barriers to Recycling - information

2. Beverley Simonson indicated that barriers to recycling can vary significantly between boroughs, but that it is often down to costs. People often recycle more when they are reminded to, so when communications budgets are reduced, that can have a direct impact on recycling rates.
3. Dee Moloney commented that it is important to understand at a more strategic level across different departments in a borough what the local culture is and how people want to receive information, so that communication of all kinds can be disseminated in the most effective way. Samantha Heath added that boroughs were also not doing enough to share information with each other.
4. Samantha Heath said that the issue is about attitudes and awareness, and that boroughs could do more to understand how to relate to particular market segments. She pointed out that there is a plethora of good practice and insights from Defra and WRAP about behaviour change, and these insights are not commonly used when local authorities and contractors design their behaviour change programmes.
5. Dee Moloney mentioned that some boroughs' planning departments charge for looking at planning applications in advance, but that waste teams do not. She suggested that this was a

missed opportunity. She also highlighted Tower Hamlets Council's Partnerships Department, which organised focus groups and surveys and ensured that everything was shared across departments.

6. Matthew Thomson raised the issue of boroughs' elected members and officers sometimes having different agendas and suggested that members were more likely to divide along tribal lines.
7. Stephen Didsbury suggested that waste authorities do talk to each other and exchange ideas, and that the Association of London Cleansing Officers (ALCO) is another means of sharing experience at a senior level. He drew attention to the fact that some authorities actively discourage their officers from attending and talking to counterparts in other authorities and suggested that there is a correlation between those authorities and boroughs with poor recycling rates. Dee Moloney praised the very high level of sharing and learning between London boroughs.
8. Samantha Heath referred to research carried out around the Smarter Travel Sutton initiative, which found that knocking on doors – still a common mechanism for engagement in many boroughs - was the least effective method of getting messages across. Stephen Didsbury said that although Bexley does not rely on that method alone, they found it quite effective, about 40 per cent of people were in and those people will often tell their neighbours. He also reported that work in schools to get messages across was also very effective, harnessing 'pester power'.
9. Beverley Simonson recalled working in a west London borough where the council had paid someone to design material that was very similar to material already produced by WRAP, just so that it would be in house style. Matthew Thomson drew attention to research by MORI that found that over 90 per cent of public perception of a council's work can be related to waste and recycling, so it was not surprising that the issue gets so politicised.

Barriers to recycling - perception

10. Matthew Thomson suggested that there is a problem with the way recycling is measured – measuring what goes in and not what comes out successfully recycled, means that contaminated material still gets measured. He explained that one of the barriers to recycling is therefore the lack of faith people will have that material will be properly recycled. He argued that a focus on the quality of material being collected would make a difference.

Barriers to recycling - legal

11. Mathew Thomson pointed out that legislation/the legal framework was possibly a barrier to doing more communicative work. He talked about how schools could have events where parents and pupils come in at the weekend to collect and sort paper for recycling, but that there are concerns about the legality of what could be considered mixing commercial and domestic waste and setting up an informal 'waste transfer station'. Stephen Didsbury said he would prefer to encourage people to recycle at home than to bring it in to schools.

Service provision/infrastructure

12. There was a discussion about differences between boroughs in what can be recycled – whether it is a bleach bottle or a Tetra Pak carton. Samantha Heath said that the public were fed up with the differences between boroughs and that an appetite for convergence would be "really quite

useful". Dee Moloney spoke about boroughs that would have previously not considered contracting jointly for waste and recycling services, but which might do so in the current drive to save money, and that there are examples of this happening.

13. Samantha Heath raised the issue of ease of recycling, particularly for people living in flats, and suggested that installing proper infrastructure such as envac chutes or other waste disposal mechanisms should be a priority, rather than focusing on 'less directive' messages about "I'm doing my bit". Matthew Thomson commented that the biggest single difference would be to separate out food waste – separate it out and the recycling rate goes up.
14. Gareth Bacon AM asked if waste is seen as a burden or a resource. Matthew Thomson questioned whether burning waste made it count as a resource.
15. Gareth Bacon AM described how the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) was going to cost Bexley Council £2 million just to keep recycling at its current levels, so it had to look at longer term costs. Dee Moloney said that recycling infrastructure should not be a political point and ought to reflect what the community or region wants and needs and that is usually one simple way to recycle.
16. Samantha Heath said that politicians could lead on recycling but they fail to. She felt that creating a consensus around the issue would help, which should include not demonising the microchip in the wheelie bin – and suggested that an honest cross party dialogue with the Taxpayers' Alliance could achieve this.
17. Asked about benefits of waste disposal authorities, Stephen Didsbury replied that the finances can take a long time to come back to the borough – as long as three years, so it makes it a lot harder to do long-term planning. Matthew Thomson stated that Bexley's starting point had been knowing the true costs, but that some councils are not on top of the issue enough to go down the same route.

Contractual issues

18. Matthew Thomson raised the issue of commercial confidentiality making it hard for councils to share basic details of contracts and specifications. An intelligent client is key to the success of waste contracts. Dee Moloney reported that she had run a workshop a few years ago on LATS and found that officers needed to be sufficiently commercially aware if they were going to understand how to take advantage of the LATs situation at the time, or to work closely with their finance officers. In addition, being more commercially aware would allow councils to effectively develop commercially based contract specifications.
19. Stephen Didsbury indicated that there is a lot of pressure from contractors to collect recycling co-mingled, but the Bexley prefers to keep it separate, with residents separating material themselves. He believed that by keeping it separate waste had been reduced.
20. Stephen Didsbury also stated that setting a fixed, or long-term price for material will give councils the confidence that it will pay. A fixed price can mean the council can spend more money collecting it, so that increased income can be attained from the higher quality material collected.

Food Waste

21. Matthew Thomson claimed that recycling food waste can have the biggest impact on both recycling rates and overall waste levels – he referred to Bridgend Council in Wales where the introduction of food waste recycling had led to not just a 20 per cent increase in recycling, but a 40 per cent decrease in waste disposal.
22. Beverley Simonson talked about trials in Hackney to collect food waste, which had also led to improved awareness about the amount of food people were wasting. She talked about one resident who bought a bag of potatoes each week, throwing away half a bag of uneaten potatoes each time. Recycling of food waste had caused the resident to change her buying habits.
23. Matthew Thomson stated that levels of commercial and industrial contamination of waste on housing estates was very high.
24. Gareth Bacon AM said that Bexley Council was reluctant to fine people for failing to recycle properly, but they would put a red tag on any recycling box or bin that contained contaminated waste and would not take the material away until it had been sorted properly. Matthew Thomson agreed, saying from a personal viewpoint that “this is not the time for penalties”. Samantha Heath commented that people need to see that the issue is being taken seriously.
25. Dee Moloney spoke about a recent Wandsworth Council communications campaign to encourage residents to put less in their bins, with a link to the reduction in the level of Council Tax. She explained that the result of the campaign indicated there was a resultant drop in the amount thrown away.
26. Samantha Heath raised the point that a business can choose who collects its waste, but a householder does not have that choice. Dee Moloney challenged that moving towards a pay as you use system where consumers treat waste disposal in the same way they do with shopping around for utilities services would start the shift in culture.

Waste reduction

27. Matthew Thomson went on to state that recycling targets were not the question, as it is the total amount of waste that matters. He pointed out that the 25 per cent fall in waste to landfill in the Home Counties was not on target to reduce to zero even in 25 years. He called Newham’s zero waste strategy “brilliant”, connecting traders to city farms and turning market traders into waste ambassadors.