

**Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy Development**

**SUMMARY**

This report provides details of the development of a new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for the Authority and the Boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Richmond upon Thames for the years 2020-2035.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The Authority is asked to:-

- 1) Note the progress to date, and
- 2) Approve the direction of travel

**1. Background** – The Authority and Boroughs committed in 2005 to a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) which included waste prevention, reuse, recycling, infrastructure and contracts. The action plans were reviewed and updated in September 2017 and approved by the Authority. The remaining key aims were to support boroughs to deliver a 50% recycling target and to ensure availability of appropriate waste treatment and recycling infrastructure to meet future needs.

The Authority developed a new Business Plan which was approved in March 2017 and committed to develop a new JMWMS from 2020-2035 in partnership with the constituent Boroughs.

**2. WLWA Business Plan** – The Authority's Business Plan activities which will inform the new JMWMS 2020-2035 can be categorised as data analysis and understanding, waste prevention, reuse and recycling, infrastructure, procurements and materials marketing.

**3. Data analysis and understanding** – The Authority and constituent Boroughs are all able to see part of the data picture in West London. Bringing it together into WLWA we can take a holistic view of the waste system in west London, understand the effect of different policies and the whole system cost. Through WLWA this information is available to all Boroughs and can be interrogated at the Borough Partnership meetings to inform strategic decision making. Progress in this area has been slower than anticipated but is vital to the development of a joint strategy.

WLWA is providing funds and resourcing for the West London Alliance project to develop a joint collections strategy and has offered a professional service to the constituent Boroughs in managing the input of waste data flow reporting (WDF). To date only Hounslow has accepted this offer. The Authority members are asked to proactively support the move of WDF into WLWA to help us ensure Borough comparisons are carried out on a like for like basis.

**4. Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling** – Population growth and society finding ways to develop convenient and cheap goods leads to continuous waste growth pressure on the Authority. Disposal is paid for by the taxpayer and therefore the incentive to produce cheap and disposable goods is stronger than the incentive to take back and reuse or remanufacture. Population growth increases population density with less space to sort waste in the home. The restructured Waste Minimisation team is very project focused, creating new data streams to demonstrate the cost, impact and long term result of small but scalable projects which actively treat waste as a valuable resource.

Strategic objectives have been developed around seven material types: Food, Dry mixed recycling, textiles, small waste electricals, nappies furniture and single use plastics. There are three different types of objective: Cost savings, Increased efficiency and behaviour change which are intended to either increase the quantity and quality of recycling or reduce the proportion of valuable materials ending up as waste. Success in this area relies on government policy decisions which help to actively reduce the kgs per household of waste collected. The data collected will be used to inform the next JMWMS.

The Authority response to the recent government consultation on tax incentives for plastics can be found in appendix 1. This response was in line with responses sent by LARAC and NAWDO.

**5. MRF Recycling Capacity** – Four Boroughs collect dry mixed recycling; two Boroughs collect source separated recycling. All Boroughs manage recycling materials independently and individually bulk, haul and manage recycling contracts. WLWA can offer efficiencies, bring economies of scale and has proposed a joint procurement for a contract to start in 2020 which focuses on best value and does not specify a solution. A recycling procurement relies on creating a new single specification for recycling materials in west London. This will have the added benefit of allowing clear, simple, recycling messages for residents and our waste minimisation experience has taught us that the more we focus on making it understood and easy for residents, the more recycling we will collect. It is important to note that household recycling is an area of significant change across the UK with multiple consultations being launched by Defra leading up to the publication of the resources strategy later this year. eg the recently announced DRS scheme, changes to extend producer responsibility and the PRN system will change the composition of local authority collected waste but until the scheme is determined the results cannot be predicted.

**6. HRRC sites** As we separate more waste into different resource streams to replace the use of raw materials, the more space is needed for sorting. The HRRC and Transfer Stations can be an efficient, local method of increasing waste prevention, reuse and recycling but different policies across the WLWA area may prevent continuous improvement. WLWA can increase efficiency, reuse and recycling, put waste minimisation resource into all Borough HRRCs with additional training and supervision as support and monitor and share progress monthly.

**7. Procurement and marketing of materials** – The Authority has demonstrated increased efficiency through economies of scale by jointly procuring contracts for waste treatment and disposal. Similar efficiencies and economies of scale can be found by jointly procuring outlets for recycling materials through a dynamic purchasing system (DPS) which will enable WLWA and Boroughs to be more dynamic and flexible in a fast-changing market.

**8. Regeneration and growth** – The Boroughs regeneration and growth strategies will have an impact upon waste and recycling across the WLWA area. In addition, the Authority and Borough Partners will need to consider the impact of growth associated with the old oak common development, Heathrow, HS2, Crossrail, commercial waste, planning for a circular economy and emerging government and mayoral strategies.

**9. Financial Implications** – These will be incorporated in the annual process of long term financial planning and budget setting. Individual projects will incorporate full financial evaluations.

**10. Legal Implications** – Evaluated as part of annual business planning and normal project process

**11. Impact on Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy** – This work will develop a new strategy from 2020.

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## Appendix 1

# Response to: Tackling the plastic problem Using the tax system or charges to address single-use plastic waste

### About West London Waste Authority

West London Waste Authority's (WLWA) purpose is to be leaders in treating waste as a valuable resource.

WLWA was created as a statutory joint waste disposal authority (WDA) in 1986 to dispose of waste collected by the London Boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Richmond upon Thames.

About 1.7 million people live in this area, which covers 38,000 hectares.

### Q1 How should the government define single-use plastics, and what items should be included and excluded, and why?

Single use plastics should identify items that are:

- not designed for reuse,
- not made from 100% recycled plastic,
- made from a combination of plastic polymers eg a PET bottle with a non-PET lid
- dark coloured or black plastic PET and HDPE
- plastic film, polystyrene, straws and plant pots

Easily recycled items should be excluded eg items made of a single polymer of PET and HDPE without colour added.

### Q2 What are the most important problems associated with single-use plastics, and why?

•Which polymer types are particularly problematic?

•Which items are particularly problematic?

**Design of the product;** Manufacturers don't consider/explain how the end use of the product should be managed and how the product can continue to have value by being reused, recycled or recovered for energy.

**Use of recycled plastics:** Manufacturers making plastic items but not using recycled plastic in the manufacture of their products are perpetuating a system where recycled plastic has little value.

**Complexity of the system;** There is an exponentially growing list of material types being produced. Some are part recyclable but in a different way to other products that are part recyclable. Some are claimed to be recyclable but no system exists to be able to manage them. Control needs to be exerted, either by the manufacturers themselves or representatives of the taxpayer which funds domestic waste management in the UK.

**Material types:** (Plastic #3: Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC), Plastic #4: Low Density Polyethylene (LDPE), Plastic #5: Polypropylene (PP), Plastic #6: Polystyrene (PS) and Plastic #7: Other) should be targeted as single use and encouraged to be reused. Plastic #1: Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) Plastic #2: High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) are all suitable for recycling as long as they do not have multiple polymers in a single product or dark colour additives.

**Cost of capture:** Items recycled at home are more easily and efficiently captured than when on the go. A drinks bottle is single use if placed in a litterbin yet recycled if taken home. Removing litterbins can increase recycling without increasing litter if managed properly. Items that are designed to be used and disposed for convenience are particularly problematic because the collection systems on the street are shared and therefore susceptible to mistakes and lack of care. Secondary sorting is more expensive and less productive than primary sorting. The taxation system will increase productivity if it is focused on preventing waste rather than paying for the added cost of secondary sorting and disposal.

**Q3 Are there more environmentally friendly alternatives, currently available or possible in the future, to these types of single-use plastic items or their manufacturing processes, and can they still offer similar benefits?**

There are more environmentally friendly alternatives which can't compete commercially against cheap disposable items which manufacturers rely on householders to dispose of "free" through the municipal waste system. Taxing single use items will encourage innovation of reuse items. Reusable coffee cups and water bottles are gaining real traction socially but the problem remains when you run out of water and need a refill. Revenue from taxing single use drinks bottles could be put into creating and maintaining water fountains for public use.

**•Should the government encourage biodegradability in plastics, and if so, how?**

The taxation system should focus on the single use and not give any preferential treatment to biodegradable single use plastics. There may be some areas where biodegradable plastics would be useful (eg only allowing biodegradable plastic in the manufacture of tea bags or for separate food waste capture) but this should be subject to a separate consultation.

**Q4 Are there single-use plastic items that are deemed essential by their nature or application, which cannot be substituted or avoided?**

There will be and requiring these to be made from 100% recycled plastic will ensure they are not single use and have had a pre-life.

**Q5 What factors influence the choice of polymer, or polymers, in the production of single use items?**

Weight based packaging targets is driving down the weight of packaging. Plastic is lighter than glass and cans and so the use of plastic has increased.

**Q6 What proportion of the plastic is made of recycled plastic, and what are the barriers to increasing this?**

This is a very important area to tackle. Recycled plastic needs more value to ensure it is captured and clean. This will only change if the use of recycled plastic in product is required.

**Q7 What proportion of the plastic is commercially recyclable and what are the barriers to increasing this and improving the grade it can be recycled to?**

The main barrier is cost. It costs more to recover and recycle plastic than to use virgin material. Until recycled plastic has a value, manufacturers won't pay the premium to use it. The constituent parts of some items are commercially recyclable but the cost of splitting them down into components so they can be recycled is prohibitive although they will be claimed to be 100% recyclable.

**Q13 What factors influence consumers' choices related to single-use plastic items?**

**Free items:** Anything that is given away free is perceived to be low value eg if coffee costs the same in a single use or a china cup, plastic bags to wrap vegetables in supermarkets cost nothing therefore they are easy to take and dispose. Adding a cost either to take or dispose will affect consumer decisions. Requiring anything given free to be taken back will affect commercial decisions.

**Lack of choice:** Water bottles have replaced free water fountains and although the cost differential is significant, people have become used to paying it. Funding a public system of water fountains will cost significantly less than is currently spent on bottles of water.

**Q17 What are the barriers to the collection of single-use plastics and more environmentally friendly methods of waste treatment, including barriers to any existing technologies?**

The more complex it is, the harder it is for the individual to get right. It works at home, but not on the street.

**Q18 In your opinion, how can the tax system or charges play a role in delivering better environmental outcomes?**

By focusing on items that do not fall into one of the following categories:

1. Designed for reuse: Any item that has been designed to be reused either by the owner which pushes up the cost of the item and gives it a residual value, or by the manufacturer who must take the item back into its ownership to be sold again, replacing raw materials.
2. Made from 100% recycled plastic: It is difficult to sell products made from 100% recycled plastic but items that are by necessity disposable eg medical products are bought for functionality not looks and so could avoid a plastic tax in this way. The tax will establish the true cost of using 100% recycled material and manufacturers will innovate to find the cheapest solution.
3. Made from single polymer, uncoloured PET and HDPE: These polymers are easily recycled and will feed the plastic recycling market.
4. Plastic taken back by the manufacturer: To be reused or recycled into new product.

**•What would be the impact on Local Authorities and business?**

Please don't cut across existing recycling at home. It is currently easiest for people to recycle at home as infrastructure is in place. Any replication or addition of new systems will add to complexity and cost and will reduce productivity.