

Environment Committee Response
Mayor's Draft Waste Management Strategy

March 2010



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**Greater London Authority
March 2010**

Published by

Greater London Authority

City Hall

The Queen's Walk

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London SE1 2AA

www.london.gov.uk

enquiries 020 7983 4100

minicom 020 7983 4458

ISBN

This publication is printed on recycled paper

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Context

London's Wasted Resource, the Mayor's draft Municipal Waste Management Strategy (the strategy), sets out his approach to managing London's waste over the next two decades. Given the tremendous amount of ground that needs to be covered in the short and medium term a determined and comprehensive approach must be taken, and this is to be welcomed. However, delivery of the strategy will require strong leadership, a strong communications strategy and well-defined approaches to assessing its impact and progress against the targets set, all of which need to be explicit in the strategy.

This report sets out the Environment Committee's response to the Mayor's first draft of the strategy. The Committee has the remit to respond to consultations on environmental matters on the Assembly's behalf.

Context of the draft strategy

The Mayor published his draft strategy for consultation with the London Assembly and Functional bodies on 18 January 2010.¹ A second draft of the strategy is due to be published for public consultation in summer 2010. The strategy is one of three documents, setting out the Mayor's proposals for managing London's waste. A vision document was published alongside the draft strategy, and the third document, a draft business waste strategy will be published later in the year.

The draft strategy follows the Mayor's environment statement *Leading to a Greener London* published in July 2009 which set out a London-wide, cross-sector approach to reducing the impact on climate change. Municipal waste management will play a crucial part in the overall approach.²

The draft strategy should be read in conjunction with the draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for London, and the draft Climate Change

¹ Available at <http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/mayor/publications/environment>

² Pages 33 – 42, <http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/mayor/publications/environment/leading-greener-london>

Mitigation and Energy Strategy, published on 9 February 2010.³ The draft strategy should also be read alongside the draft replacement London Plan with particular focus on minor amendments relating to waste arisings.⁴

The draft strategy focuses on reducing the amount of waste produced, increasing recycling and reuse of waste, and managing waste produced in London within the capital's boundaries. It sets out four key targets, and a number of proposals towards achieving the targets below six overarching policy areas.

The key targets are:

- i. To achieve zero municipal waste direct to landfill by 2025.
- ii. To reduce the amount of household waste produced in 2008/09 from 970kg per household to 790kg per household by 2031 - equivalent to a 20 per cent reduction per household.
- iii. To increase London's capacity to reuse or repair municipal waste from approximately 10,000 tonnes each year in 2008 to 40,000 tonnes a year in 2012 and 120,000 tonnes a year in 2031
- iv. To recycle or compost at least 45 per cent of municipal waste by 2015, 50 per cent by 2020 and 60 per cent by 2031⁵

The six policy areas are:

- i. Informing producers and consumers of the value of reducing, reusing and recycling municipal waste;
- ii. Setting a greenhouse gas standard for municipal waste management activities to reduce their impact on climate change;
- iii. Capturing the economic benefits of waste management;
- iv. Achieving 45 per cent recycling or composting performance by 2015, 50 per cent by 2020 and 60 per cent by 2031;
- v. Catalysing waste infrastructure, particularly low carbon technologies;
- vi. Achieving a high-level of street cleanliness.

³ <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/climate-change/climate-change-mitigation-strategy>

⁴ The draft replacement London Plan, available at <http://www.london.gov.uk/shaping-london/london-plan/docs/london-plan.pdf>

⁵ We note the House of Commons Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee recommendation from January 2010, that DEFRA should raise its household recycling target to 50% by 2015 and 60% by 2020, a decade earlier than the Mayors strategy

Through the strategy the Mayor is aiming for no overall increase in the municipal waste produced in London over the time span of the strategy and for zero waste to be sent to landfill by 2025.⁶

Context of the committee's response

The Committee welcomes the call for a step change in the way London's municipal waste is managed. London's comparatively poor performance to date – lowest recycling and composting rates across the regions, high landfill and incinerator dependency, with half of its waste being sent to landfill and a quarter incinerated – means that we cannot continue to manage our waste in this way.⁷

This response identifies a number of areas where we wish to see further work take place before the public version of the strategy is released. It will need to provide:

- Clarity and greater details of the leadership role the Mayor will play
- Details of the communications strategy he will promote
- Greater details on how the strategy will be delivered including funding sources, key partners, lines of responsibility and levels of accountability
- Robust and specific proposals for improving municipal waste management across London, including on improving recycling and composting, flats/estate based recycling, tackling food waste and bringing forward new infrastructure

⁶ Page 10, Transcript of Environment Committee meeting dated 9 February
<http://legacy.london.gov.uk/assembly/envmtgs/2010/feb09/minutes/transcript.pdf>
Pages 9 and 26, The Mayor's draft Municipal Waste Management Strategy, London's wasted resource (hereafter the draft strategy)
<http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/mayor/publications/environment>

⁷ Pages 19 – 22, the draft strategy

Leadership and communication

The Committee believes that a major overhaul in how we manage London's waste is needed. The draft strategy stresses the need for radical change in how London manages its municipal waste, setting out key drivers for change – the need to stem rising costs in waste management, particularly to landfill, and to minimise the impact of waste disposal on CO₂ emissions.⁸ We welcome the Mayor's robust stance.

However **the strategy will also need to build on its strong message of change by identifying clear steps needed to realise the Mayor's goals.** This will mean including key messages on how the Mayor intends to tackle the fragmented approach to waste collection, define clear pathways and mechanisms for developing workable partnerships, and bring forward new infrastructure.

The fragmented approach to waste collection in London poses significant challenges. The Mayor's Environment Adviser told the Committee that it is a "constraint (to) handling London's waste in the most cost effective and efficient way".⁹

Early agreement on fundamental elements of waste management for example, consistency in signage, will need to be secured. **We believe that simplification measures should be considered, if cost effective, such as the adoption of a common signage across London, including colour coding and symbols from Recycle Now.**¹⁰

The Mayor has a pivotal role to play in encouraging 'on the go' recycling. We welcome the Mayor's broad acceptance of the recommendations in our report – '*On the Go' Recycling*, published in May last year.¹¹

After kerbside collection, the next logical step is to increase ways for people to recycle when they are out and about. Most waste disposed of 'on the go' is recyclable and it is essential that it does not end up in

⁸ Page 22, the draft strategy

⁹ Page 4, transcript of Environment Committee meeting dated 9 February

¹⁰ See http://www.wrap.org.uk/downloads/brand_guides_07_071.32eaa4d8.1977.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.london.gov.uk/archive/assembly/reports/environment/on-the-go-may09.pdf>

landfill. **Alongside his communications strategy, the Mayor can direct Transport for London and London Underground to provide recycling bins, encourage the use of a simple common signage, and support investment in a new mixed plastics recycling plant.**

Delivery

Partnerships

Strong cross-sector partnerships will need to be in place. The strategy places much emphasis on working with a wide range of partners including the boroughs, the third sector, businesses, and the waste industry; and the Committee welcomes this. However, of a large proportion of Mayoral proposals, a crude count reveals just under half, will be reliant on the Mayor working with a partner or range of partners to deliver on the policies in the strategy. **The strategy needs to be clear about how the Mayor intends to make the collaborative approach work in practice.**

Exhortation is unlikely to achieve much. Clearly defined mechanisms are required to spur the cooperative work needed to bring about change in managing London's municipal waste. The Committee was informed that the Mayor will be looking to 'generate... momentum' on existing discussions (with boroughs) in a more formal collaborative way from May onwards. We look forward to hearing of the outcome of that initiative.¹²

We would wish to see a clear specification of the expectations, responsibility and accountability of partners and resource implications both financial and otherwise detailed in the implementation plan due to be published in the public draft of the strategy.¹³

Funding

The Mayor's advisor confirmed that alternative waste management facilities will need to be 'up and running quickly' if London is to achieve self-sufficiency.¹⁴ The strategy estimates that London will need an additional 3.6 million tonnes of infrastructure capacity by 2031. Capital costs for the additional infrastructure are likely to be in the region of £0.5 to £1 billion, with annual operational costs of between £71 million and £116 million. The strategy acknowledges that funds from the London Waste and Recycling Board (LWaRB) alone will not be sufficient to develop the infrastructure needed, and that funding will need to be met through a mixture of public and private

¹² Page 20, Transcript of Environment Committee meeting dated 9 February

¹³ Page 98, the draft strategy

¹⁴ Page 8, transcript of Environment Committee meeting dated 9 February

investment.¹⁵ It is noted that funding for the LWaRB is secured to 2012 and future funding should be considered at an appropriate time.

Again we are concerned that there is no clear statement on funding allocations for the delivery of the strategy, including sourcing and phasing of funds.

The LWaRB has a pivotal role to play in delivering the strategy and is to fund a range of infrastructure development projects, including provision of waste collection, treatment or disposal facilities, supporting the reuse infrastructure and developing infrastructure to increase recycling in flats.

We would wish to see more readily identifiable dovetailing between the draft strategy and LWaRB business plan. **The strategy will need to identify key delivery areas for the Board and these should be tied into the implementation plan to be produced alongside the next draft. The Board should undertake phased monitoring and provide interim annual data on all the Mayor's waste targets to enable objective assessment of progress.**

New infrastructure

The Mayor's vision document presents a strong message on the role to be played by new infrastructure to achieve the Mayor's targets, specifically to achieve zero municipal waste to landfill by 2025 and to achieve 60 per cent recycling or composting rates by 2031.¹⁶

The message is echoed in the draft strategy but is somewhat diluted in that, other than the move to update mass burn incinerators with combined heat and power,¹⁷ it is not clear what definitive action the Mayor will be taking to bring forward waste to energy infrastructure, nor how it would be financed and in what timescale.¹⁸ Neither has the Mayor included a waste to energy target despite the priority placed on securing economic value from waste, energy generation being one of the main methods noted.¹⁹

¹⁵ Page 75, the draft strategy

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Pages 20 - 21, 40, the draft strategy

¹⁸ Refer to pages 16 – 19 of the transcript of Environment Committee meeting dated 9 February

¹⁹ Pages 11, 49, 75-77, the draft strategy

The Committee approves the move to upgrade incineration capacity with combined heat and power facilities to ensure the waste heat generated is utilised. But to achieve the outcome and carbon based approach set out in strategy new infrastructure will need to be brought forward speedily. Policy 5.8 of the Mayor's draft replacement London Plan confirms the Mayor's support for more widespread use of innovative technologies and notes that the Mayor will work with boroughs to maximise the uptake of advanced conversion technologies such as anaerobic digestion.²⁰ Active promotion of technologies such as anaerobic digestion is one area in which the Mayor can practically demonstrate his ambition for London to become a world leader in waste management utilising innovative techniques and technologies. **As part of his communication strategy, the Mayor should promote development of advanced conversion technologies and identify possible locations for them across London.**

As recommended in our report on waste to energy schemes in London we believe that the strategy should set out what role the Mayor could play to coordinate the development of an effective and cost efficient waste to energy infrastructure.²¹ Furthermore, the Committee would welcome a statement from the Mayor as to the climate impacts of the different conversion methods. This would then help to underpin the decision by local authorities and developers as to which technologies to support and where they should be sited.

We would wish to see the implementation plan set out the Mayor's proposed action for bringing forward the waste to energy infrastructure, including details of the timescale and how it will be funded.

A mixed plastic recycling facility is needed in London as part of the move to manage its own waste. According to WRAP, "mixed plastics packaging is one of the most visible remaining components of

²⁰ Page 126, draft replacement London Plan <http://www.london.gov.uk/shaping-london/london-plan/docs/london-plan.pdf>

²¹ Where there's muck there's brass, waste to energy schemes in London, October 2009 <http://www.london.gov.uk/archive/assembly/reports/environment/waste-energy-schemes-09.pdf>

the waste bin”.²² There is no standard way of collecting mixed plastic across London – only two boroughs collect mixed plastics.²³ Once collected, there is no facility in London to process the material. Trials show recycling mixed plastics, such as yoghurt pots, plastic cups and punnets, is economically and environmentally viable.²⁴

²² WRAP’s Domestic Mixed Plastics Packaging Waste Management Options report, http://www.wrap.org.uk/downloads/Mixed_Plastic_Final_Report.6485d133.5496.pdf

²³ Southwark and Ealing – Source: LWaRB 2009/10 Business plan

²⁴ Ibid

Waste Management

Recycling and composting

The Committee recognises that London's overall recycling rate is much improved. We have seen a significant increase since 2000/01 from eight per cent to 25 per cent in 2008/09. We commend the efforts of individual boroughs that have achieved over and above the 25 per cent and above the national average of 37 per cent. However the fact remains that **London is the worst performing region in England** and among the poorest performers in Europe.²⁵

Earlier in the response we noted the need to tackle the fragmented approach to waste collection where possible. Research suggests, and the Committee accepts that it is unlikely that a 'one size fits all' approach will work in London, but consideration should be given to how structures could be simplified including signage and methods of recycling. However this should bear in mind issues of cost and existing contractual arrangements. The London wide recycle for London campaign will need to address these issues of consistency as an integral part of its message in raising public awareness.

The Committee would like to see a stronger approach to galvanising boroughs into improving recycling rates, which could include some form of league table commending achievement and identifying where improvement is needed and the support the Mayor could offer. This may also help to increase cross-borough sharing of good practice and information.

The Committee is pleased to note the draft strategy's emphasis and focus on specific areas of recycling – on flats, food and small businesses, and welcomes proposed work in these areas.²⁶ **We urge the Mayor to go further by setting a clear target date for when the boroughs should make provision for recycling food waste.**

Given that one of the key obstacles to raising overall borough recycling rates is improving recycling rates in flats and multi-occupancy dwellings which according to the draft strategy is around 10%, the

²⁵ See figure 2 Mayor's draft Municipal Waste Strategy

²⁶ As noted in discussions during the meeting. Pages 20,21 transcript of Environment Committee meeting dated 9 February.

Mayor, working with the boroughs, should produce a clear roadmap of how he will improve recycling rates in flats.

During the Committee's inquiry on 'on the go' recycling last year we heard of work being done by large retailers. Marks and Spencer is making use of more sustainable sources for their packaging, by sending packaging waste to the closed loop plant and using even more recycled plastic in their packaging.²⁷ The Committee heard that if the composition of plastic is simplified, the collection and recycling process becomes more straightforward. In order to support **the strategy's target to reduce the amount of household waste produced, we would wish to see greater levels of engagement with the retail industry to reduce the types of plastics used.**

Waste reduction

The Committee welcomes the inclusion of a target to reduce household waste. More clarity is needed on what role the Mayor will play in translating the commitment from proposal to action. The strategy will need to set out more detail on the practical steps that will need to be taken to achieve the target.

²⁷ Page 12, 'On the go' recycling
<http://www.london.gov.uk/archive/assembly/reports/environment/on-the-go-may09.pdf>

Concluding comments

The Mayor's draft strategy – London's Wasted Resource – sets out firm goals for managing London's municipal waste over the next 20 years. A high level of ambition is necessary if London is to reduce the amount of waste it produces and achieve regional self-sufficiency. But as the Mayor notes a radical re-focus will be needed to tackle the complex system Londoners currently contend with.

This strategy is crucial to kick-starting a more streamlined and coordinated approach to managing London's municipal waste over the next couple of decades. There is little margin for error. It is vital that the strategy is underpinned by strong partnerships with clear levels of accountability, a robust funding base for taking forward the proposals and the appropriate range and capacity in new infrastructure to handle London's waste in the most environmental and economical way.

We believe that the recommendations outlined in this response will go some way to assisting the Mayor in delivering a strategy that will meet London's municipal waste management needs. We look forward to receiving the Mayor's response.

Appendix 1 Principles of scrutiny page

An aim for action

An Assembly scrutiny is not an end in itself. It aims for action to achieve improvement.

Independence

An Assembly scrutiny is conducted with objectivity; nothing should be done that could impair the independence of the process.

Holding the Mayor to account

The Assembly rigorously examines all aspects of the Mayor's strategies.

Inclusiveness

An Assembly scrutiny consults widely, having regard to issues of timeliness and cost.

Constructiveness

The Assembly conducts its scrutinies and investigations in a positive manner, recognising the need to work with stakeholders and the Mayor to achieve improvement.

Value for money

When conducting a scrutiny the Assembly is conscious of the need to spend public money effectively.

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