

Subject: Circular Economy, Waste and Recycling

Report to:	Environment Committee
Report of:	Executive Director of Secretariat
Date:	15 November 2021
Public Access:	This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides background information for the Environment Committee meeting on the circular economy, waste and recycling in London.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Committee notes the report as background to putting questions to invited guests and notes the subsequent discussion; and**
- 2.2 **That the Committee delegates authority to the Chair, in consultation with the Deputy Chairman and party Group Lead Members, to agree any output arising from the meeting.**

3. Background

- 3.1 London generates an enormous amount of waste and a rising population means even more waste and an increasing challenge to waste infrastructure in London. This growth will be unsustainable and exert an increasing strain on waste infrastructure, land and resources.
- 3.2 The Mayor has acknowledged that the way London creates, handles and disposes of waste must change. The London Environment Strategy (LES) forms part of the planning framework for the capital and sets out an ambitious target for London to be a zero-waste city.¹ By 2026, no biodegradable or recyclable waste will be sent to landfill and by 2030, 65% of London's municipal waste will be recycled.

¹ GLA, [London Environment Strategy](#), 31 May 2018

- 3.3. Part of this will be underpinned by developing a low carbon circular economy to facilitate the ultimate goals of the LES. The concept of a circular economy advocates a shift from the linear economy of 'take, make and dispose' to a low carbon circular economy where products and other resources will need to be designed and recycled to keep them in use for as long as possible. This will yield long-term resilience, business and economic opportunities and environmental and societal benefits for London by reducing the city's carbon emissions to reach net zero.
- 3.4 The primary aim of this Committee meeting will be to explore to what extent the LES is on track to meet its targets in respect of managing waste and more broadly its progress towards a low carbon circular economy.

4. Issues for Consideration

- 4.1 Today London is facing a host of environmental challenges and waste management is no exception. An expected growth in population has repercussions for waste management, both environmentally and financially. We know that boroughs are already struggling, recycling rates are stagnating, and waste being sent to incineration is increasing, but we also know that London has a wealth of resources to maximise the value and minimise the impact of waste.
- 4.2 Waste management is key to London's environmental and economic stability. This investigation will focus on how to improve and promote the circular economy, waste and recycling in order to boost London's green economy and deliver sustainable growth.
- 4.3 London's primary strategy for municipal waste and business waste is through the Mayor's LES, published on 31 May 2018. This sets out the Mayor's vision to protect and improve London's environment. It also sets a direction of travel for the Mayor and his partners who need to collaborate to achieve these ambitions.
- 4.4 The Mayor also published an Implementation Plan, which set out those actions that the Mayor has prioritised to take forward directly between 2018 and 2023. The 'London Environment Strategy: One year on report' was published in December 2019, covering the period from the beginning of the Mayor's term (May 2016) to October 2019.
- 4.5 As a result of COVID-19, a London Environment Strategy Implementation Plan year two report was not produced, however the 'London Environment Strategy: Second Progress Report (2019-2021)' was produced in September 2021. Therefore, it is a timely opportunity for the Committee to assess current progress against the initial aims and ambitions of the original LES. The Committee will also consider to what extent delivery plans and targets have been met or may need to change.
- 4.6 The Environment Committee has a body of past work on waste and recycling. In March 2018, the Committee produced a report called Wasting London's Future following a large-scale investigation. This report set out several recommendations on preventing waste, on increasing recycling and reducing waste. Three years on and considering the publication of the LES Second Progress Report, it is an opportune moment to review progress against the Committee's earlier recommendations.
- 4.7 Non-GLA actors also play a crucial role in waste management and recycling, including local authorities and private waste management companies. The private sector is responsible for most of the economic activity that brings materials into the economy and there are many third sector organisations involved in service delivery. The Committee meeting will look to involve some of these key delivery partners in order to highlight areas of innovative best practice and to more broadly consider what more the Mayor may need to do in this area.

4.8 The following guests are invited to answer questions at the meeting and inform the Committee's investigation:

- Andrew Dunwoody, Policy and Programmes Manager Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority;
- Rachel Ledwith MBE, Head of Community Engagement, The Felix Project;
- Sarah O'Carroll, Cities Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation;
- Ugo Vallauri, Co-founder and Policy Lead, The Restart Project; and
- Wayne Hubbard, CEO, ReLondon.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

List of appendices to this report:

None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers: None

Contact Information

Contact Officer:	Luis Alvarado, Senior Policy Advisor
Telephone:	07733 305 791
E-mail:	luis.alvarado@london.gov.uk