



Report to: Cabinet
Date: 30 April 2009
Subject: Recycling
Report of: Select Committee No 2
Contact officer: Andy Donnelly (01942 827046)

Purpose / summary: To report the findings of Select Committee 2 investigations into recycling within Wigan Council and propose a set of recommendations for improvement.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:

Recommendation / decision: That Overview & Scrutiny Committee support the recommendations

Key Decision: This report does not involve a key decision. The decision made as a result of this report will be published within **48 hours**

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	none
Staffing:	none
Policy:	none
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	Not applicable at this time but impact would need to be considered as part of any implementation plan.
Wards affected:	All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local

population?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **N/A**

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? **N/A**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **N/A**

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	X
Discussion leading to a decision	
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

	X
Discussion	
Decision	
Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
	9 February 2009		

Proper Officer Martin Kimber

Date 18 September 2008

1.0 Background:

1.1 This select committee first convened on 26th September 2008.

Co-incidentally, the Environmental Services Department was undertaking a review of the council's recycling operations within the wider context of producing a Municipal Solid Waste Management Strategy for 2009-2030.

Members therefore decided to take the opportunity to focus on the recycling element of this emerging strategy, seeking an opportunity to inform and influence Wigan Council's future direction.

The draft strategy is currently out to consultation. This report is the select committee's response.

2.0 Proposals

2.1 Members sought to gain a broad understanding of recycling policies and practices, before looking in detail at the draft strategy.

The draft strategy outlines how the council intends to manage Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) in a more sustainable, environmentally-friendly manner – and how it will meet tougher targets and avoid stiffer landfill taxes.

Members are broadly supportive of the aims and objectives, but a number of further recommendations and comments on specific proposals are included in this report.

3.0 Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:

4.0 Conclusions:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Select Committee No 2

Recycling

Final Report

1. Introduction

Recycling was chosen for review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its 16th June 2008 meeting.

The Recycling Select Committee held its first meeting on 26th September with Councillor Fred Walker in the chair and councillors Gareth Fairhurst, Lynn Holland, Jonathan Miller, Neil Whittingham and Gary Wilkes attending over the coming months. A co-opted member, Brian Turrell, was also a regular attendee.

Co-incidentally, the Environmental Services Department was undertaking a review of the council's recycling operations within the wider context of producing a Municipal Solid Waste Management Strategy for 2009-2030 in response to changing local, regional, national, European and global trends.

Members therefore decided to take the opportunity to focus on the recycling element of this emerging strategy, seeking an opportunity to inform and influence Wigan Council's future direction.

This report is the select committee's response to the council's draft Municipal Solid Waste Management Strategy for 2009-2030.

The committee wishes to thank waste management staff Gail Robinson and Nick Deakin for their assistance.

2. Executive summary

2.1 Wigan borough generates enough waste to fill a football stadium each year; adding to it is not an option.

The European Landfill Directive and subsequent Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) place requirements on local authorities to significantly reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste being sent to landfill or face significant fines.

And, despite occasional turbulence in the market for recycled materials, there remain many other good reasons why we must continue to recycle, for example to save resources and energy, to protect the environment, to support charities and to create jobs.

2.2 The preparation of the council's draft Municipal Solid Waste Management Strategy for 2009-2030 represents an opportunity for members to inform and influence the future direction of recycling policy in Wigan. This report is the select committee's response to that draft.

2.3 Immediate consideration, however, was given to the suggestion that members investigate the wider waste collection and treatment issues beyond recycling. Although the consultation deadline for responses to the draft did not allow this, the critical importance of waste minimisation and prevention was explicitly acknowledged by the recycling select committee and recognised as an area for further council attention.

The committee welcomes steps towards Wigan borough being able to deal with all its residual waste more sustainably, but the issue of waste prevention must urgently be addressed: manufacturers should be compelled to use less packaging; consumption must be reduced. The effect of doing nothing? More waste; more landfill.

Moreover, as the select committee neared the conclusion of its work the price of recyclable materials was being hit by a global recession, further emphasising the fact that real efficiency – and sustainability – depends just as much on creating less waste in the first place.

In recent years, the amount of waste collected from households in Wigan has declined or remained level – but the amount of waste collected per household remains high. Zero waste growth by 2020 is a stated aim with the draft strategy – the select committee hopes that future waste minimisation measures will see a decline.

2.4 Terms of Reference

The following terms of reference were agreed.

- To gain a broad understanding of recycling policies and practices nationally.
- To examine the extent of recycling activity in the borough and evaluate current council performance.
- To identify best practice at comparable authorities.

- To scrutinise and advise upon the progress of the draft recycling strategy.
- To explore opportunities for waste minimisation within the borough, for instance among partner organisations via Wigan Borough Partnership.
- To identify areas for improvement and make recommendations, with a view to 'quick wins' where appropriate.
- To understand the resource implications of any recommendations.

2.5 Officers are preparing Wigan Council's waste management strategy against a background of shifting political, social and economic conditions.

The 1999 European Union Landfill Directive, which requires the UK to reduce the amount of biodegradable waste (BMW) going to landfill to 35% of the 1995 figure by 2020, is the long-term statutory driver behind household waste reduction.

But the government's Waste Strategy for England 2007 has now emerged as the principle policy driver, setting much sterner recycling targets for local authorities: 40% of household waste by 2010; 45% by 2015 and 50% by 2020.

There are also two crucial financial drivers: Landfill Tax and the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS).

Landfill Tax, currently £32 per tonne, is set to increase by £8 each year until it reaches £64 per tonne – costing Wigan Council an additional £375,000 per year if waste to landfill is not reduced.

Under LATS, tradable landfill allowances are allocated to waste disposal authorities like Wigan each year. But local authorities will soon find themselves subject to penalties of £150 for every tonne of biodegradable waste sent to landfill in excess of an authority's permitted amount.

By 2020, Wigan Council could find itself exposed to an annual penalty of more than £6.5million unless more action is taken on recycling.

2.6 Before looking at policies and practises closer to home, members explored recycling in its European and national context.

Only two EU countries – Greece and Portugal – send more waste than the UK to landfill and recycle less, although the high rates of incineration in some states did not escape the committee's attention.

Most of the 330 million tonnes of waste produced annually in the UK is eventually consigned to landfill.

A quarter of the waste comes from households and businesses – 'municipal' waste. Councils are responsible for dealing with this and about three quarters of it can be recycled, including biodegradables/recyclables such as paper/cardboard, glass, plastic and metal cans.

England has made significant progress in recycling in recent years, with local authorities – and local residents – at the forefront. Last year, 94% of councils recycled and composted more of their waste than ever before.

Regionally, England's east, east midlands and south-west are at the forefront of the recycling effort, with Lincolnshire's East Lindsey (58%) and Devon's South Hams (57%) leading the way. Both are district councils.

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council showed the greatest improvement in its recycling rate: up from 14% in 2006/7 to 32% in 2007/8. This has been attributed to the introduction of a single bin for 'dry' recyclables and alternate weekly refuse collections.

90% of councils are meeting or exceeding their recycling targets – Wigan is one of them.

2.7 The council collects household waste every week from 138,300 households, with fortnightly collections of paper from almost as many properties.

There are also fortnightly collections of garden waste and clean brown cardboard from nearly 100,000 homes, and, on a trial basis, glass, cans and plastics from 13,500 properties. Collections will extend to 87,000 properties during the course of 2009 and to the remaining 50,000 properties in 2010.

In addition, Waste Recycling Group manages five Household Waste Recycling Centres across the borough, where residents can deposit a wide range of materials. There are also 175 'bring' recycling points across the borough, the majority of which are situated at supermarkets, car parks and public houses.

Wigan Council's recycling and composting has increased from just 2% in 1998/9 to 26.31% in 2007/8.

2.8 The draft Municipal Solid Waste Strategy 2009-2030 outlines how the council intends to manage Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) in a more sustainable, environmentally-friendly manner – and how it will meet tougher targets and avoid stiffer landfill taxes.

After some consideration, including presentations and question and answer sessions with key witnesses, the select committee fully endorses the aims, objectives and targets set out within the document.

Most attention focussed on the various tactics being proposed in order to achieve those objectives, specifically:

- the select committee noted the increasing success of kerbside recycling collections and support proposals to extend collection of plastics, glass and cans, and green waste, to all suitable properties by December 2010;

- the introduction of a bin, rather than a bag, for paper and cardboard collection is endorsed, as is the plan to work with householders to find recycling solutions appropriate to each type of property;
- members also queried the physical storage options i.e. bins, bags. The council plans to offer residents a choice of size of brown bins, with smaller bins (half the normal size) being offered to residents who want them;
- the committee pointed to the success of a trial in Worsley Mesnes as evidence of a more flexible approach to storage solutions, in this case for communal bulk bins to serve flats;
- the committee wishes to see the 2015 for the collection of compostable kitchen waste to be brought forward – if the opportunity arises;
- proposals to improve Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) – for the benefit of customers and recycling rates – are welcome, although committee members express concerns over opening hours and maintenance;
- members feel that increased staffing levels and longer opening hours will lead to an improvement in customer service, with physical improvements also helping to drive up recycling rates;
- there is concern over proposals to close the popular Frog Lane site, but an understanding of the rationale behind it (e.g. impact on local traffic, site navigational difficulties);
- the intention to open a new, purpose-built HWRC is welcome;
- proposals to improve the cost-effectiveness, recycling and re-use of bulky waste collections, and to seek to work with the third sector to deliver social benefits from the material collected, are welcome – and urgent;
- members are concerned that, from the household bulky waste collections, only segregated WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) is presently recycled;
- information on the role of the third sector is too vague and proposals to work with charities should be clarified as quickly as possible, as there are obvious socio-economic benefits. Perhaps Wigan Council could underwrite the deal with a minimum guaranteed rate so that charities do not lose money?
- proposals to produce planning ‘guidance’ to ensure appropriate recycling facilities within new developments are considered vague and non-committal. Suitable storage facilities to support recycling should be built into the planning application process for housing developments, for example through planning conditions;
- refuse collection is one of the most high profile and popular – and increasingly contentious – services that local authorities provide, and members welcome the introduction of a formal, written policy.

- the committee believes that current arrangements for promoting recycling do not go far enough. Members are especially keen to see much more community education on recycling, particularly in schools;
- members want effective management/maintenance regimes are in place at the 170 'bring' recycling sites – for the benefit of users, residents living nearby, landlords and business proprietors.

2.9 The select committee concludes that the draft Municipal Solid Waste Management Strategy for 2009-2030 is a welcome development towards a more sustainable approach to waste management.

Adding to the borough's waste is not an option.

And there are many good reasons why we must strive to recycle more – to save precious resources, save energy, protect the environment and create jobs from 'green growth' – aside from the obvious financial penalties.

There has undoubtedly been a major shift in attitudes and behaviour towards the environment, but one in five households still do 'nothing' to reduce the amount of waste they produce.

The select committee supports proposals to address this through much more effective use of education and communication, giving stubborn non-recyclers an opportunity to change their ways.

But the committee also understands that local authorities are to be consulted on the removal of a ban preventing them from introducing household financial incentives for waste reduction and recycling – and believes Wigan Council should support this move. Perhaps householders who do recycle their waste could in future receive payments funded by householders who choose not to?

The select committee welcomes the direction towards Wigan borough being able to deal with all its residual waste more sustainably.

The targets within the strategy are challenging; only time will tell whether the measures proposed will be enough.

And the much wider issue of waste prevention must urgently be addressed.

3. The report

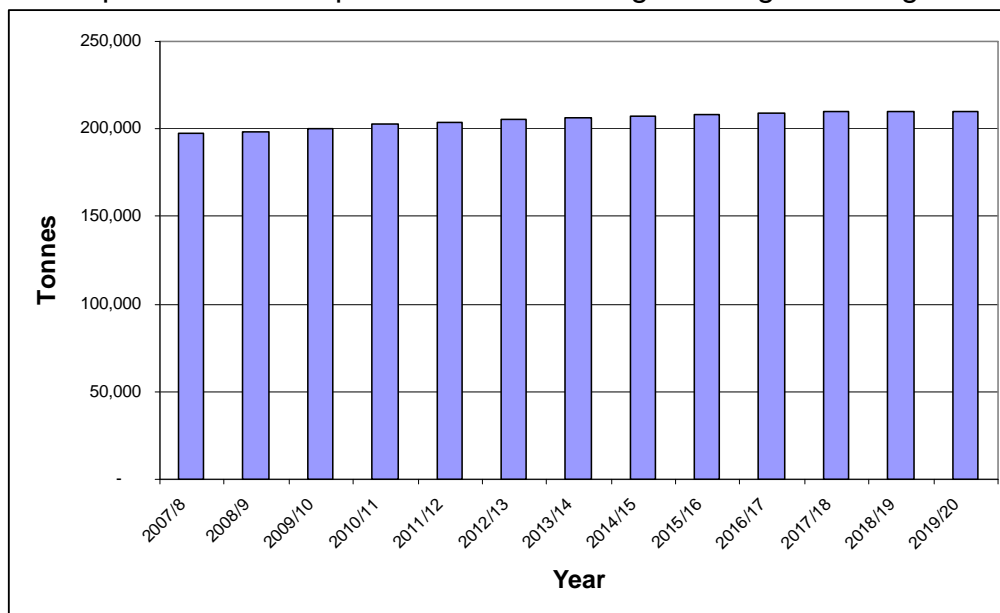
Introduction

3.1 Immediate consideration was given to the suggestion that members investigate the wider waste collection and treatment issues beyond recycling; the critical importance of waste **prevention** was acknowledged at the outset and became a recurring theme throughout the investigative process.

3.2 As the select committee reached the conclusion of its work the global financial downturn had seen the price of recyclable materials plunge, highlighting the plain economic fact that although recycling has become the populations' most popular environmental activity, real efficiency – and sustainability – depends just as much on creating less waste in the first place.

In recent years, the amount of waste collected from households in Wigan has declined or remained level – despite increasing housing numbers. But the amount of waste collected per household is still high and, as the projected figures for waste 'arising' indicate (see 3.4), waste prevention is critical if the borough is to achieve zero waste growth.

Future predicted municipal solid waste arisings for Wigan borough:



The committee notes that **reducing** the amount of waste generated will impact on:

- the cost of waste management;
- the need for new facilities; and
- the amount of material requiring treatment to meet various targets.

3.3 With the process of producing a revised recycling strategy already underway and a rigid timetable for approval early in 2009, it was decided that wider study into waste minimisation and prevention would run counter to the need – and opportunity for – quick wins and influence upon the final plan.

The committee would therefore scrutinise, inform and influence the formation of the council's revised recycling strategy.

3.4 Terms of Reference

- To gain a broad understanding of recycling policies and practices nationally.
- To examine the extent of recycling activity in the borough and evaluate current council performance.
- To identify best practice at comparable authorities.
- To scrutinise and advise upon the progress of the draft recycling strategy.
- To explore opportunities for waste minimisation within the borough, for instance among partner organisations via Wigan Borough Partnership.
- To identify areas for improvement and make recommendations, with a view to 'quick wins' where appropriate.
- To understand the resource implications of any recommendations.

Most of the above terms have been addressed. Where they have not, specific recommendations for further action are made.

3.5 Business environment

3.5.1 Wigan Council's waste management strategy – and, as a consequence, this report – is being prepared against a background of shifting political, social and economic circumstances:

- a major, positive shift in public attitudes and behaviour towards the environment;
- turbulence in the market for recycled materials;
- the re-assessment of Wigan's long-term waste disposal options as the council's contract with Waste Recycling Group Ltd (WRG Ltd) draws to a close;
- Wigan Council's Local Area Agreement (LAA) commitment to reduce household waste year-on-year to 2011; and
- the increasing cost of sending waste to landfill.

The following table lends clarification to the final point. It shows the extent to which Wigan Council would be subject to increasing landfill costs in the coming years.

Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS)

Year	LATS allocation from Central Government (tonnes)	Estimated amount of biodegradable waste sent to landfill (tonnes)	Shortfall (extra biodegradable waste to be sent to landfill for which Wigan Council does not have permits) (tonnes)	Potential Cost to Council (£) @£150 per tonne fines
2005/6	127,850			
2006/7	119,710			
2007/8	108,856	99,816	-9,040	0
2008/9	95,289	100,314	5,025	*753,800
2009/10	79,008	97,953	18,945	2,841,778
2010/11	70,213	97,335	27,122	4,068,238
2011/12	61,419	96,764	35,345	5,301,823
2012/13	52,625	96,062	43,437	6,515,555
2013/14	50,367	91,830	41,463	6,219,475
2014/15	48,110	87,076	38,966	5,844,957
2015/16	45,853	84,485	38,632	5,794,796
2016/17	43,595	82,780	39,185	5,877,813
2017/18	41,338	82,488	41,150	6,172,462
2018/19	39,081	81,952	42,871	6,430,712
2019/20	36,823	81,337	44,514	6,677,099

*The council has sufficient allowances carried forward from previous years to meet the landfill liability in 2008/09 without the need to pay any fines. Currently 2009/10 allowances are being traded for £30 a tonne, although it is recognised that the trading price will increase in future years when the allowances allocated by Central Government reduce markedly as illustrated in the table above.

A levy of £6.7million at current council tax levels would amount to an extra £54 on every Band B bill.

3.5.2 The main statutory driver behind household waste reduction is the **1999 European Union Landfill Directive**, which aims to prevent or reduce the environmental effects of land-filling waste. It required the UK to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) going to landfill as follows.

- By 2010 to reduce the amount of BMW going to landfill to 75% of that produced in 1995.
- By 2013 to reduce the amount of BMW going to landfill to 50% of the 1995 figure.
- By 2020 to reduce the amount of BMW going to landfill to 35% of the 1995 figure.

These targets are mandatory. Failure to meet them will expose the UK to fines of up to £0.5 million per day from the European Court of Justice – costs that will be passed on to local authorities and, therefore, council tax payers.

3.5.3 The **Waste and Emissions Trading Bill** put in place a system to allow the UK to meet these targets, tackle climate change and move towards more sustainable waste management. The bill set limits on the amount of BMW that local authorities may send to landfill.

3.5.4 In England, the **Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS)** regulates and monitors compliance with the **Landfill Directive** obligations.

The scheme sets an amount of BMW that can be sent to landfill by each council until 2020. Councils have to ensure that the amount of BMW sent to landfill by them in any particular scheme year does not exceed the amount allowed by the scheme.

3.5.5 The **Landfill (England and Wales) Regulations** subsequently came into force in 2002, aiming to deal with the social, environmental and economic impacts of landfill over its whole life cycle. The regulations contain a mix of strategic objectives for reducing the amount and nature of waste going to landfill, together with strict provisions for the regulation and management of landfills.

3.5.6 The **Household Waste Recycling Act 2003** requires councils like Wigan to provide kerbside collection of at least two recyclable materials for all householders by 2010 – hence the ongoing roll-out of glass, cans and plastics collection in Wigan (the council's collection policies are explained on page 15/16).

3.5.7 The government's **Waste Strategy for England 2007** recognises the associated problems of landfill and climate change – and the urgency to act. The overall aim is to reduce waste by making products with fewer natural resources.

It says:

- we must break the link between economic growth and waste growth;
- most products should be re-used or their materials recycled; and
- energy should be recovered from other wastes where possible.

More urgent recycling targets have been set, hence the need for Wigan to update its own strategy.

Recycling targets		
	Previous	Revised
2010	30%	40%
2015	33%	45%
2020	50%	50%

The **Waste Strategy for England 2007** sets out key proposals for action.

- Incentivise efforts to reduce, re-use and recycle waste, and to recover energy from it.

- Reform regulation to drive the reduction of waste and diversion from landfill while reducing costs to compliant businesses and the regulator.
- Target action on materials, products and sectors with the greatest scope for improving environmental and economic outcomes.
- Stimulate investment in collection, recycling and recovery infrastructure, and markets for recovered materials that will maximise the value of materials and energy recovered.
- Improve national, regional and local governance, with a clearer performance and institutional framework to deliver better co-ordinated action and services on the ground.

3.5.8 There are also crucial financial drivers.

The **Landfill Tax Regulations 1996** impose a duty based on the weight of waste deposited. The rate of tax varies according to the type of waste disposed, with a lower rate set for inert waste than active wastes.

Between 1996 and 2005, Landfill Tax for active wastes increased at a rate of £1 per tonne per year. Between 2005 and 2007, the tax increased from a base of £15 per tonne by £3 per year.

Landfill tax is currently at £32 per tonne and will increase £8 every year until it has reached £64 per tonne, with further increases likely. This alone will cost Wigan Council an additional £375,000 per year if waste to landfill is not reduced.

3.5.9 The **Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003** is intended to ensure the country meets its national targets for reducing the amount of BMW disposed to landfill. It is implemented through the **Landfill (Scheme Year and Maximum Landfill Amount) Regulations 2004**, which came into force on 22nd July 2004.

The act provided a framework for the **Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS)** – a system launched in full in April 2005.

Under LATS, tradable landfill allowances are allocated to waste disposal authorities each year. Each waste disposal authority is able to determine how to use its allocation of allowances in the most effective way. It enables allowances to be traded with other authorities, saved for future years (banked) or use some of its future allowances in advance (borrow).

Inter-year trading is allowed (i.e. authorities can use allowances issued in one year in a different year – banking and borrowing). In each of the three 'target' years (2010, 2013 and 2020), authorities are only able to use the allowances issued in that specific year, thus ensuring that the UK meets **Landfill Directive** obligations.

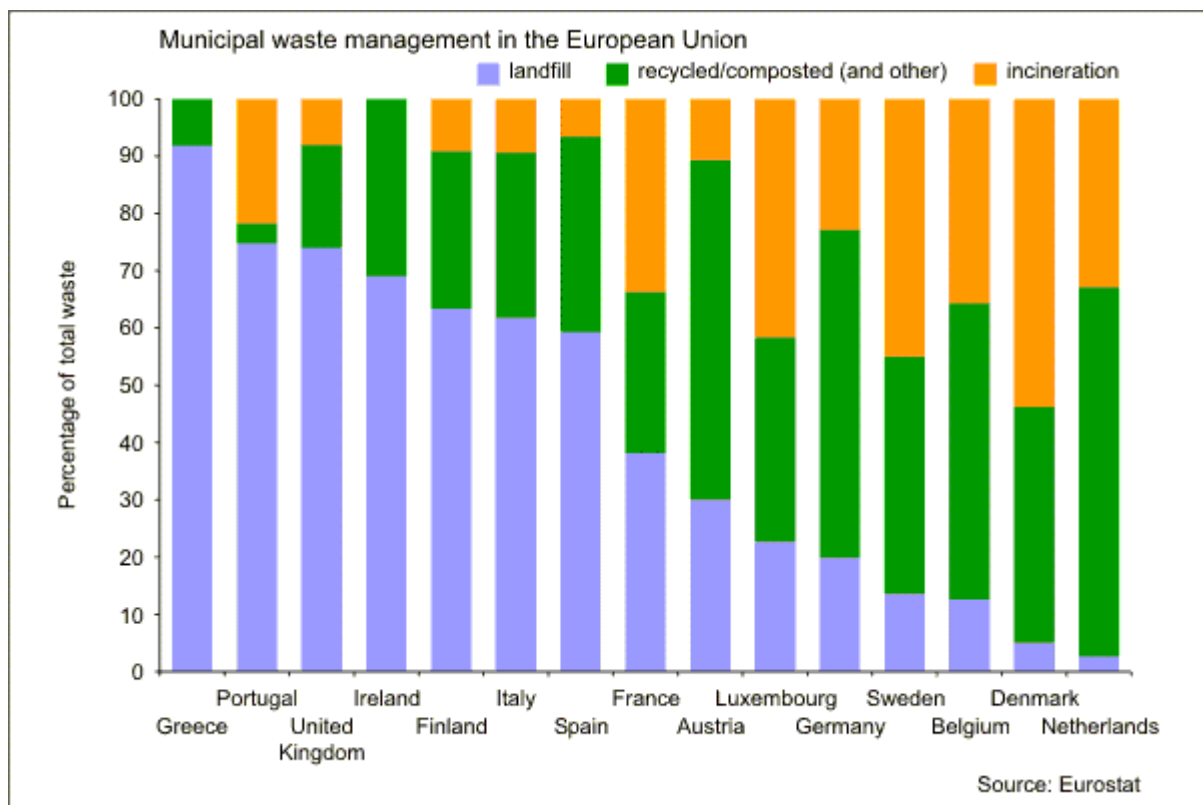
If local authorities do not have sufficient permits for the waste they landfill, a fixed penalty of £150 per tonne of excess BMW landfilled will be enforced (see table at 3.5.1).

3.6 Recycling in context

As well as exploring relevant policy drivers, members considered recycling in its historical context, looking at the European and national pictures.

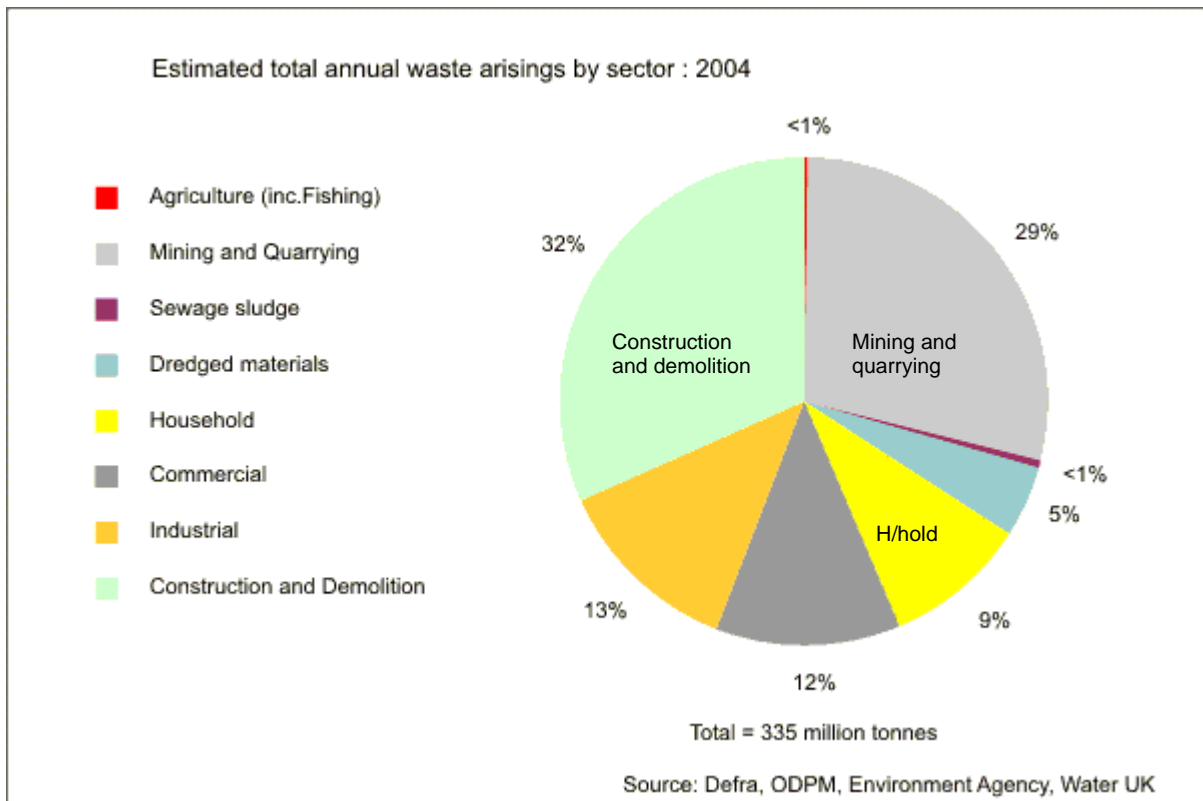
3.6.1 Latest available figures showed that only two EU countries – Greece and Portugal – were sending **more waste** than the UK to landfill and **recycling less**. Members noted the comparatively high levels of incineration in countries such as Luxembourg, Sweden and Denmark, but understood that the issue of incineration was beyond the scope of this review.

Municipal waste management in the European Union (2003)



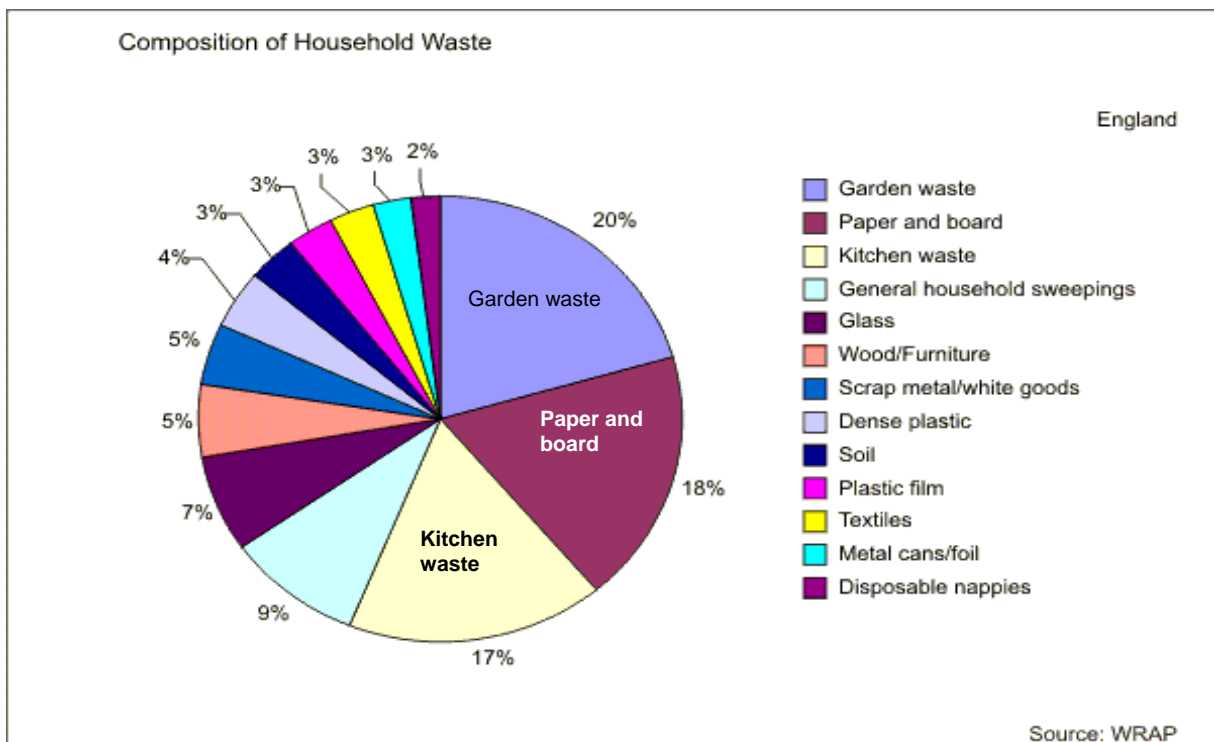
3.6.2 The UK produces over 330 million tonnes of waste annually, consisting mostly of construction and demolition waste, sewage sludge, farm waste, and spoils from mines and the dredging of rivers. Most of it ends up in landfill sites.

Estimated total annual waste arisings by sector: 2004

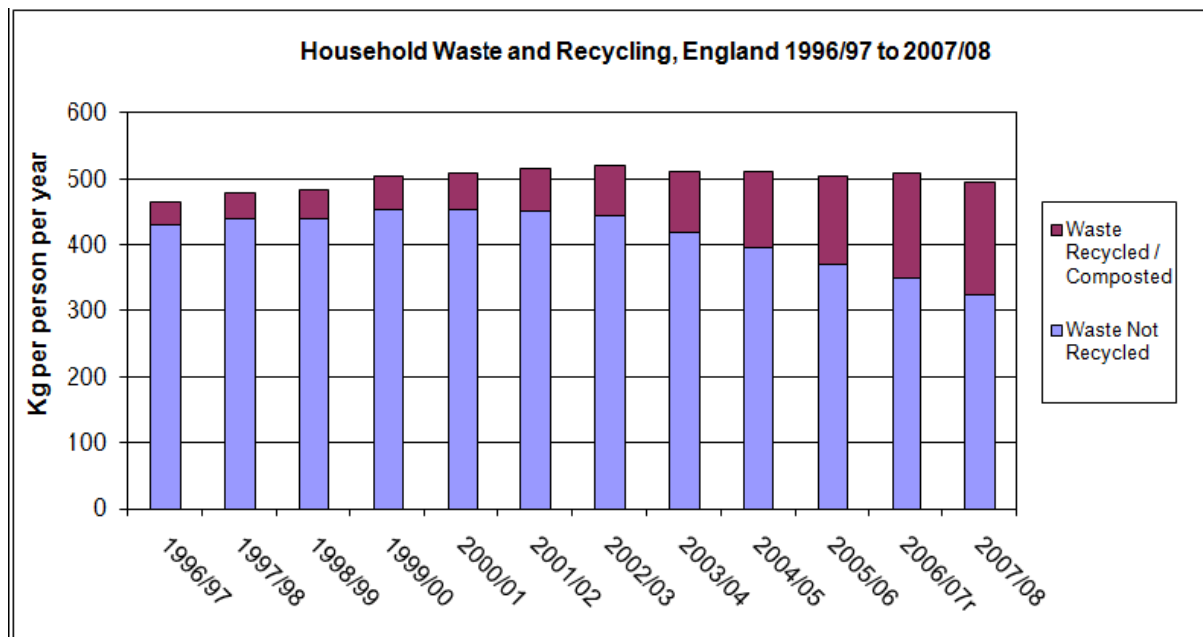


3.6.3 A quarter of the waste comes from households and businesses – so-called ‘municipal’ waste. Councils are responsible for dealing with this and about three quarters of it can be recycled. These recyclable materials are:

- biodegradable waste (kitchen, garden soil);
- biodegradable/recyclable (paper/cardboard, glass, plastic, metal cans); and
- other (wood, textiles, white goods, nappies, non-combustibles).



3.6.4 Since the turn of the century, England has made significant progress in recycling (Appendix 6). Most recently, the rate of household recycling and composting increased from 31% in 2006/7 to 34.5% in 2007/8.

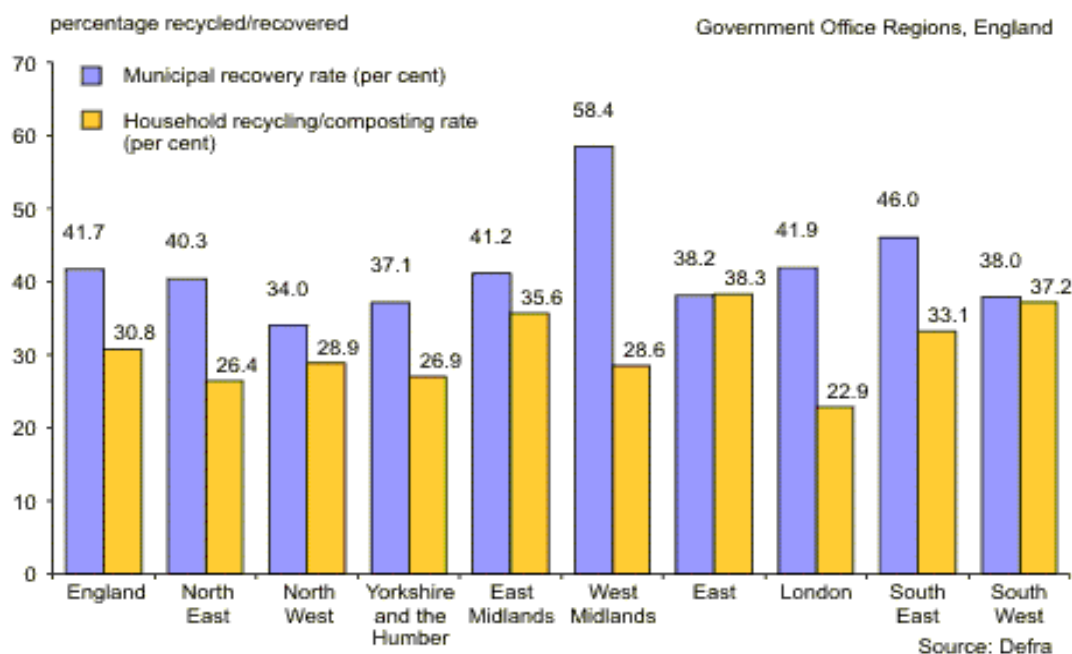


3.6.5 In 2007/8, 90% of local authorities collected **less** residual waste than in 2006/7, while 94% recycled and composted **more** of their waste, demonstrating that local authorities can – and are – taking the lead on recycling.

However, according to Defra (www.defra.gov.uk/environment/statistics/wastats/bulletin08.htm) the *rate* at which household waste recycling rates are growing fell for the first time in three years, suggesting that many ‘quick wins’ may already have been won.

Regionally, England’s east, east midlands and south-west are at the forefront of the recycling effort.

Regional household recycling and municipal recycling rates, 2006/07



Lincolnshire's East Lindsey and Devon's South Hams district councils lead the way, recycling 58% and 57% respectively.

Notably, Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council showed the greatest improvement in its recycling rate: up from 14% in 2006/7 to 32% in 2007/8. This follows the introduction of a single recycling bins for plastic bottles, glass bottles, jars, card, paper, magazines and newspapers, and an alternate weekly collection under a new waste contract with Biffa.

3.6.6 The urban conurbations of the north-west, north-east, Yorkshire and London may still lag behind, but 90% of councils are meeting or exceeding their recycling targets.

Wigan is one of them.

3.6.7 Wigan Council collects household waste weekly (black 240l bin) from 138,300 households, with fortnightly collections of paper from almost as many properties (white, reusable sack). Over 7,000 tonnes of paper was collected in 2007/8.

There are also fortnightly collections of garden waste and clean brown cardboard (green 240l bin) from the most suitable properties (nearly 100,000 homes), and, on a trial basis, glass, cans and plastics from 13,500 properties (brown 240l bin). Collections will extend to 87,000 properties during the course of 2009 and to the remaining 50,000 properties in 2010.

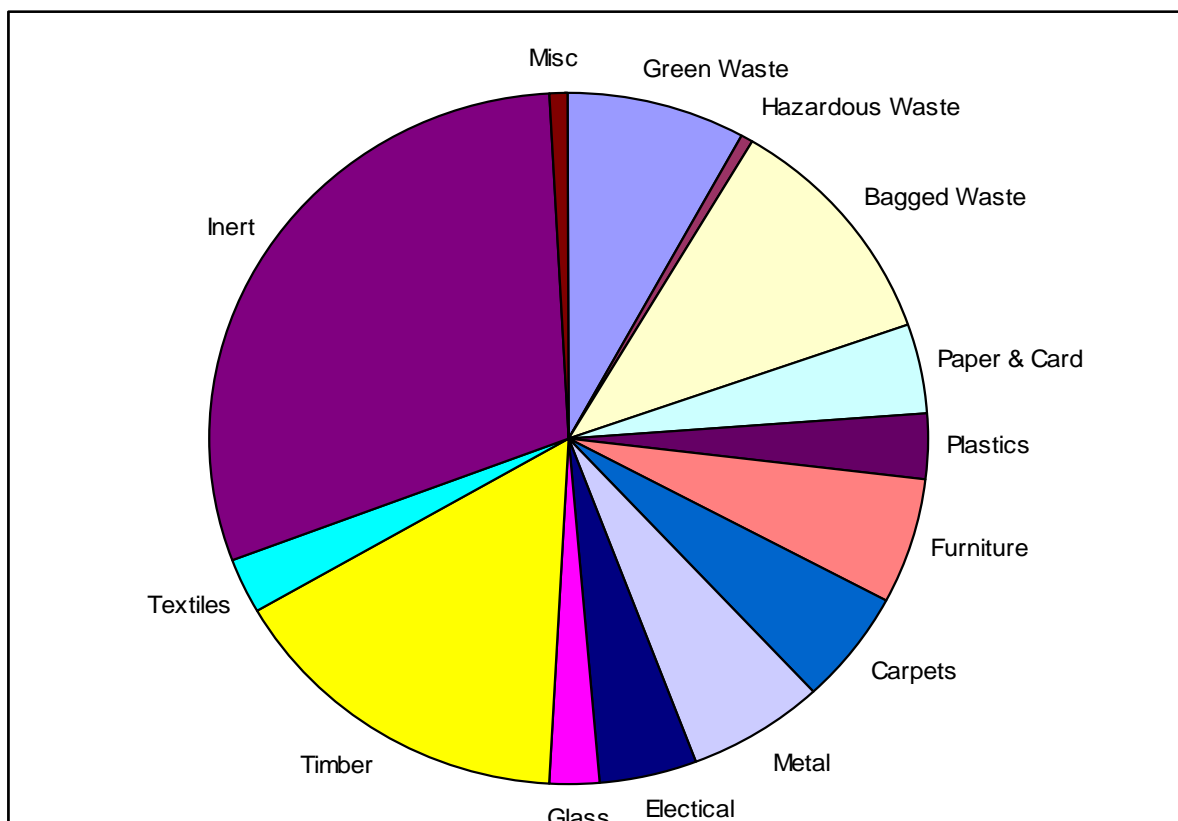
In 2007/8, 12,963 tonnes of cardboard and garden waste were collected – and composted to be used as a soil conditioner. In the same year, brown bins were emptied of 121 tonnes of recyclables.

3.6.8 In addition, Waste Recycling Group manages five Household Waste Recycling Centres across the borough, where residents can deposit a wide range of materials, including:

- paper;
- glass bottles and jars;
- cans/food tins;
- books;
- textiles/shoes;
- metals/scrap metals;
- garden waste;
- timber;
- bricks and rubble; and
- engine oil.

In 2007/8, the centres processed 44,845 tonnes of waste.

Composition of materials collected at HWRCs:



175 'bring' recycling points, the majority of which are situated at supermarkets and public houses borough-wide, offer various recycling facilities. Residents brought three and a half thousand tonnes of waste to these sites in 2007/8.

Eight tonnes of waste was collected at the kerbside by voluntary groups within the borough for reuse and recycling in 2007/8.

3.6.9 The amount of municipal waste generated within Wigan borough is decreasing, while recycling and composting has increased from just 2% in 1998/9 to 26.31% in 2007/8.

Wigan Council's present recycling rate is 26.31%, putting the authority on schedule to recycle 30% by 2010 – a key objective of the government's own '**Waste Strategy 2000**' – and the council's own **Waste Management Strategy**, published in 2006, commits the authority to attaining a recycling and composting rate of 50% by 2020.

Now however, with the advent of the government's **Waste Strategy for England 2007** – the latest in a long line of recycling policy drivers – it is already out of date. The goalposts have moved.

Recycling targets		
	Previous	Revised
2010	30%	40%
2015	33%	45%
2020	50%	50%

3.7 Draft Municipal Solid Waste Strategy 2009-2030

Many of the government's latest recommendations, the select committee noted, have been taken forward in the preparation of Wigan Council's **Municipal Solid Waste Strategy 2009-2030**.

The draft strategy states how the council intends to manage Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) in a more sustainable manner, lessen the impact it has on the environment, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and gain the greatest environmental benefit possible from residual waste.

Within the strategy are plans to meet the revised government recycling and composting targets and avoid stiffer landfill taxes by reducing the amount of biodegradable waste buried in the ground.

3.7.1 Wigan Council's objectives are to:

- reduce the both amount of MSW produced and the amount sent to landfill;
- manage waste following the principals of the waste hierarchy;
- deliver a service that provides best value;
- fulfil all statutory obligations;
- provide proactive education to and engage with residents and stakeholders;
- ensure that services are accessible to all service users and provide encouragement for community involvement;
- recognise the need for conservation of natural resources and protection of the environment; and
- seek to continually improve performance.

The select committee fully endorses these aims and objectives.

3.7.2 The draft strategy contains the following specific targets.

- Stabilise municipal waste growth (volume of waste including recycled material) to 1% by 2010 and reduce it to 0% by 2020.
- Achieve recycling and composting standards of 45% by 2015 and 50% by 2020.
- Recover 67% of waste by 2015 and 75% by 2020.
- Reduce biodegradable municipal waste landfilled to levels consistent with those set for Wigan Council by LATS.
- Serve all households with a recycling collection of at least two materials by December 2010 to meet the requirements of the Household Waste Recycling Act 2003.
- Increase recycling and composting at HWRCs to 70% by 2013.
- Reduce residual household waste per household to 887kg per household by 2008/9, 791kg by 2009/10 and 776 kg by 2010/11.

After some consideration, the select committee endorses these targets.

However, members wish to see a commitment to achieving targets ahead of schedule, rather than have performance dictated by the prospect of financial penalties. Indeed, members wish to see officers explore opportunities to *profit* from landfill allowances if at all possible.

3.7.3 The council's [draft] strategy is to meet or exceed government recycling and composting targets through the implementation of a series of recycling and composting initiatives outlined below.

The select committee considered the various tactics intended to achieve these objectives and later invited Waste Management Manager Gail Robinson to provide further clarification.

Draft strategy proposal	Select committee comment
<p>Provide all suitable properties with recycling collections of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plastics, glass, cans by December 2010; • green waste (for properties generating green waste) by March 2010; and • compostable kitchen waste by March 2015. <p>Continue to provide collections of paper from all properties and increase pulpables collected to include cardboard and other suitable paper-based waste by</p>	<p>The select committee notes that kerbside recycling collections have been increasingly successful and, whilst understanding that extending collections will result in additional costs to the authority, the committee believes such costs will be outweighed by additional landfill charges.</p> <p>Clarification was sought on the term 'suitable'. It is proposed that officers will assess properties and work with householders to understand what storage space is available both for additional containers and for putting containers out for collection. Together they will try come up with solutions suitable to each type of property.</p> <p>Members also queried the physical storage options i.e. bins, bags.</p>

<p>March 2011, using a bin instead of a bag.</p>	<p>The council plans to offer residents a choice of size of brown bins, with smaller bins (half the normal size) being offered to residents who want them.</p> <p>The committee understands that where properties that do not have sufficient storage for bins (e.g. flats), householders will be provided with alternative containers, such as communal bulk bins. The committee noted the success of a trial in Worsley Mesnes.</p> <p>Members expressed some concern over the March 2015 target for rolling-out compostable household waste collection. It was explained that it would require a specially built facility (anaerobic digestion or in-vessel composter) to treat the kitchen waste and that access to such a facility was unlikely in the short-term. The committee therefore considers 2015 to be a pragmatic target as by then it should become clear where such facilities are available. However, the committee wishes to see this date brought forward – if the opportunity arises.</p> <p>The committee asked what other options, apart from additional bins, might be considered. It is accepted that, as most authorities that have tried alternative collection containers have discovered, there are few options that work as well as bins. Boxes are bulky, take up space and, for residents and collections crews alike, are heavy to shift when full. Collection crews risk injury from repeatedly lifting heavy boxes. It is felt that smaller boxes and sacks will not carry the necessary volume, will fill up too quickly and actually discourage recycling and create more waste as householders simply throw the excess into the their black bin.</p>
<p>Improve existing Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) to increase accessibility to recycling for residents and increase recycling and composting rates at all sites.</p>	<p>The committee inquired about the nature of these improvements, with members expressing particular concerns over opening hours, and maintenance/cleanliness issues.</p> <p>Members welcome proposals to increase staffing levels and improve customer service at these sites, and the planned physical improvements to make them more accessible. Moves to extend the breadth of materials that can be recycled on site</p>

	<p>are also endorsed.</p> <p>Members are anxious that improved customer service also means extended opening hours. It is understood that site opening hours are presently governed by Environment Agency-issued licenses, which take account of local factors such as proximity to residential areas and potential disturbance. For this reason, operational hours at Orrell and Frog Lane are significantly less than, for example, Slag Lane.</p>
<p>Replace the HWRCs that are unsuitable for current and future needs and are poorer performing (Frog Lane and Orrell) with a new purpose built HWRC that will meet future needs.</p>	<p>Members expressed concern over proposals to close the [apparently popular] Frog Lane site, but accept the reasons provided: restricted opening hours; traffic backed-up on the main road at busy times; limited capacity for waste storage onsite; site navigational difficulties for visitors and comparatively poor recycling performance with little prospect for improvement.</p> <p>The intention to open a new, purpose-built HWRC is welcomed.</p>
<p>Improve the cost-effectiveness, recycling and re-use of bulky waste collections and seek to work with the third sector to deliver social benefits from the material collected.</p>	<p>Members expressed surprise and concern that, from the household bulky waste collections, only segregated WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) is presently recycled. Proposals to increase the amount of material re-used and recycled are, therefore, as urgent as they are welcome.</p> <p>Plans to eliminate the £10 collection charge are very welcome, but there is a need for clarity and communication about what constitutes 'bulky rubbish'.</p> <p>Members also asked for more information on the role of the third sector.</p> <p>Vague proposals to work with charities to recover and re-use materials for the benefit of local residents should be clarified as quickly as possible. As well as obvious benefits to people on low income (e.g. recycled furniture), the current economic climate also brings sharply into focus the potential benefits of people being trained to recondition and repair items such as recycled furniture and electrical goods.</p> <p>In view of recent events, perhaps Wigan Council could guarantee a minimum rate so that charities do not lose money?</p>

<p>Produce waste planning guidance for new developments to ensure appropriate recycling facilities can be provided.</p>	<p>'Guidance' is considered too vague and non-committal. Waste management officers must work with planning colleagues to ensure that suitable storage facilities to support recycling are built into the planning application process, for example through planning conditions.</p>
<p>Actively seek to maximise cost-effective recycling and composting of waste, before utilising residual waste management technology.</p> <p>Utilise residual waste treatment technology (either energy from waste or mechanical biological treatment) to meet the medium to long term requirements of the borough under LATS (Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme). Consideration will be given to partnership working with other authorities if this can provide demonstrable benefits to the council.</p>	
<p>Introduce a formalised refuse collection policy.</p>	<p>Members sought clarification on this point and welcome the explanation received. Essentially, this refers to a 'contract' between the council and residents, so that each knows what the other expects from waste collection (e.g. when householders can expect us to return if we fail to collect their rubbish or how we expect them to present their bins for collection). Members recognise that refuse collection is one of the most high profile and popular – and increasingly contentious – services that local authorities provide, and welcome the introduction of a formal, written policy.</p>
<p>Undertake proactive local community education schemes to increase awareness of the issues driving the need to recycle, the details of the recycling schemes operated and the materials collected.</p>	<p>Again, information in this area appears vague. Members believe that current arrangements for promoting recycling (and the wider waste issues) do not go far enough. The committee is especially keen to see much more community education on recycling, particularly in schools.</p>
<p>Actively promote waste minimisation and movement up the waste hierarchy.</p> <p>Continue to promote home composting of green and</p>	<p>The committee recognises the significance of placing increasing emphasis on waste minimisation.</p>

<p>kitchen waste through the continued provision of reduced price compost bins and support for residents composting their waste.</p> <p>Continue to promote the authorised recycling and disposal of commercial waste, while actively enforcing the access policy for HWRCs (through the use of the permit scheme, CCTV and Automated Number Plate Recognition systems).</p>	
<p>Ensure that all residents in the borough have access to a 'bring' recycling site (recycling point) by providing them within 1km of all residences.</p>	<p>Although these sites are now inspected more frequently than they ever have been, members are anxious that effective management/maintenance regimes are in place at these sites so that any problems are resolved as quickly as possible – for the benefit of users, residents living nearby, landlords and business proprietors.</p>

4 Conclusions

Wigan borough already generates enough waste to fill a football stadium each year; with the costs of sending waste to landfill set to increase, adding to it is not an option.

Furthermore, sending recyclable waste to landfill – even for a short time – could deal a fatal blow to public confidence in recycling schemes.

4.1 And there remain many other good reasons why we must continue to recycle. Here are five.

1 Save resources Much of what we throw away is made from raw materials that are slowly running out or cannot be replaced quickly enough because of the amount we consume. Every tonne of paper recycled saves 17 trees.

2 Save energy Making new goods out of recycled material saves energy. For example, making new aluminium cans from recycled cans uses 20 times less energy than making new cans from the raw material.

3 Protect the environment Recycling (as well as reducing) what we use reduces the need to dig up or mine new raw materials, which often damages the surrounding environment.

4 Support charities Many charities and community groups raise money through reusing and recycling.

5 Create jobs Many contend that a 'green' revolution could be the answer to the world's present economic woes, re-focusing and re-energising the global economy towards investment in clean, green technologies that bring about sustainable growth – and combat climate change.

4.2 In Wigan and across the country, there has been a major shift in attitudes and behaviour towards the environment – as increases in recycling rates testify.

However, according to a report by the Open University (www.defra.gov.uk/environment/statistics/waste/research/download/ou-rpt-200802.pdf), more than one fifth of households do 'nothing' to reduce the amount of waste they produce.

To counter this, local authorities are increasingly turning to compulsory recycling schemes, under the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act (1990). Methods vary, but ultimately this means prosecuting householders who do not recycle.

The select committee does not favour this somewhat confrontational approach – at least for the time being. Rather, it accepts proposals contained within the draft strategy to establish new recycling policies on a voluntary basis and to support these with much more effective use of education and communication – the key to changing attitudes and behaviour.

This approach must be given a chance to work; stubborn non-recyclers have an opportunity to change their ways.

Furthermore, any changes to policy and direction must, as the draft strategy proposes, depend upon customer satisfaction balanced with the probability of achieving significant cost savings to the council.

4.3 The committee understands that local authorities are to be consulted on the removal of a ban preventing them from introducing household financial incentives for waste reduction and recycling. Wigan Council should support this move. Perhaps householders who do recycle their waste could in future receive payments funded by householders who choose not to?

4.4 With Wigan Council's contract with WRG Ltd set to expire in 2012, the following long-term waste disposal options have been identified within the draft strategy.

1. Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) with Anaerobic Digestion (AD) producing Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF).
2. Energy from Waste (EfW) with electricity production.

The document states that both of these options could utilise Combined Heat and Power (CHP) which improves the thermal efficiency of the processes and increases the environmental benefits of treatment by further offsetting the need to burn fossil fuels for space heating.

4.5 The select committee welcomes the direction towards Wigan borough being able to deal with all its residual waste more sustainably, but the issue of waste prevention must urgently be addressed: manufacturers should be compelled to use less packaging; consumption must be reduced.

4.6 Community education and engagement within Wigan must also include positive images and messages about waste prevention – changing habits and lifestyles through social marketing.

4.7 One of the terms of reference that this report does not address in detail is best practice at comparable authorities. Members suggest as joint Select Committee/Environment Panel to Wirral MBC, which has seen an incredible improvement in recycling performance over a short period of time.

Learning from other authorities will allow Wigan to improve its own performance sooner, putting the authority in a better position to react to any political, economic or social changes beyond its influence.

4.8 Recycling is no longer an abstract or arms-length area for members – the environmental and financial imperatives have made it part of the council's core business. Through the Local Strategic Partnership, the council should encourage a collective approach from its public, private and third sector partners.