

EDUCATION, AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
WDA/04/12

Recommendation

That:

1. Members approve the Education, Awareness and Engagement Strategy for the Authority; and
2. Members agree the revised objectives and targets for educational opportunities at the Authority's facilities identified in paragraph 5 of this report.

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Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider and approve the Education, Awareness and Engagement Strategy (attached at Appendix 1) to support the delivery of the Joint Recycling and Waste Management Strategy; and
- 1.2 To consider the key proposals in the Education Improvement Plan and approve the revised visitor targets identified in paragraph 5 of this report.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Joint Recycling and Waste Management Strategy (JRWMS) was ratified by Members on 18th November 2011 (Report WDA/39/11) following two public consultations. A programme of ratification by the districts is in progress and completed by four of the partner districts (including MRWA). The ratification should be completed by the outstanding partners during summer 2012.
- 2.2 There was widespread public support for a focus on engagement, information and education to help residents participate in recycling and waste services including waste prevention and reuse. A core project objective of the public consultation was to improve the quality of policy and decision making in developing and implementing the JRWMS by taking account of the views of residents and stakeholders.
- 2.3 Government policy and legislation, including the Localism Act 2011, has focussed on encouraging greater involvement by residents and local communities in the public services they receive. As part of the

Government's review of waste policy in 2011, it was made clear that Local Authorities should work with and incentivise their householders to participate in their local waste services.

- 2.4 The Authority has had an established Education and Awareness Strategy to support the delivery of the Authority's education programme since 2008.
- 2.5 Members received a Special Focus report on Waste Prevention with the related Action Plan in Autumn 2011 (report WDA/4011);

3. Current Position

- 3.1 The feedback from the public consultation on the JRWMS demonstrated support by residents of Merseyside to do more to participate in recycling and other waste management programmes such as waste prevention. However, in order to do so the public considered it to be vital to expand their knowledge and awareness and supported more engagement, consultation and information provision on waste management services.
- 3.2 This is important as the JRWMS covers some complex issues for residents to understand and for them to be willing to make practical changes in their behaviour to help meet the Strategy targets particularly for recycling and waste reduction. Engagement with residents and stakeholders is also important in the development of new and changing waste management services provided by the Authority and districts so they understand and can buy into new proposals through participation.
- 3.3 The Authority will also need to demonstrate its commitment to supporting residents and stakeholders to help achieve the objectives and targets of the JRWMS. A matrix of key Authority policies and plans which reflect the need for effective education, awareness programmes and engagement are listed in the Strategy. Key objectives and targets which are underpinned by education, awareness and engagement activity include:
 - 50% recycling of household waste by 2020;
 - Reducing the total waste arisings per household by 120kgs to 1,180kg by 2030 (from 1,300kgs in 2010);

- Demonstrate continuous improvement in the reduction of carbon emissions for the local authority collected municipal waste service on Merseyside;
 - Promote behavioural/cultural change that delivers the Strategy objectives; and
 - To engage with our customers and stakeholders and identify opportunities to optimise education and awareness resources.
- 3.4 MRWA should ensure that the principles and methods it uses to engage with residents and stakeholders are in line with current best practice and meet the requirements of recent Government legislation such as the Localism Act and recent Best Value guidance on engagement with the voluntary and community sector. The JRWMS public consultation and the development work on the Merseyside Textile Forum and the Community Fund are good examples of MRWA's engagement with local communities and the third sector.
- 3.5 The need to engage with strategic stakeholders to support the delivery of services has also been identified in the Authority's strategic review, particularly to add value in joint working or shared delivery. This is particularly pertinent for education and awareness programmes and campaigns. Resources are limited in the current economic climate but there is still a need to reach out to a population of 1.4m residents with clear and consistent messages if the Strategy targets and legal requirements are to be met.
- 3.6 It is important to establish the cost benefits and direct environmental, economic and social benefits of education and awareness activities and campaigns. An assessment matrix is currently used to determine those projects and activities which give greatest 'value' to the Authority objectives. Members and the public need to be confident that the funding used to support these initiatives is value for money and would contribute to a significant reduction in longer term costs, particularly through reduced waste arisings and increased quality and quantity of recyclates. These benefits can often be difficult to achieve in isolation from other activities being undertaken or masked by the economic climate. Officers therefore continue to work with DEFRA, WRAP (the national Waste Resources Action Programme) and waste partnerships in England to develop tools to assist the Authority in its prioritisation of schemes.

4. Education, Awareness and Engagement Strategy

- 4.1 The Education, Awareness and Engagement Strategy highlights the issues for the Authority, identifies the key principles and recommends a range of activities to be undertaken. A number of delivery plans will sit beneath this over-arching Strategy including the Waste Prevention Action Plan and the Education Improvement Plan.

The key aim of the Strategy is that:

- MRWA will engage effectively with its customers and stakeholders and promote a co-ordinated education and awareness programme of activities each year to encourage residents and business to do more to increase recycling and re-use and cut down on unnecessary waste.

The objectives of the Strategy are for MRWA to:

- Engage with residents, stakeholders and community groups to increase their awareness and understanding of waste and resource management and related environmental and economic impacts;
- Engage with local communities in the development and delivery of waste and resource management services, particularly in the provision of waste prevention, re-use and recycling educational activities;
- Support residents to make practical changes in their behaviours and make it easier for everyone to contribute to sustainable waste management activities. This will help to increase participation and get better quality materials from waste management schemes which are required to meet the JRWMS objectives and targets; and
- Identify future joint working opportunities with the Merseyside and Halton Waste Partnership, Veolia Environmental Services, the appointed Resource Recovery contractor, education and business sectors and other strategic bodies and organisations across Merseyside to ensure the Authority's services and programmes being delivered are value for money.

5. Education Improvement Plan

- 5.1 The Chief Executive has led a joint MRWA/Veolia officer working group since January 2012 to review the current performance of the education

programme and set out a plan to deliver a revised target for the number of visitors to the Authority's facilities and to provide a consistent high quality experience for all visitors.

5.2 Progress towards the previous target of 7,500 visitors by 2013 was less than expected and was falling short. An analysis of the reasons for this highlighted a number of factors:

- a) the refurbishment of the Bidston Recycling Discovery Centre (taking 3 months) had not been taken into account;
- b) there was only a rudimentary process for marketing, planning and delivering the 'pipeline' of supply in terms of activity getting schools to commit to a visit;
- c) the target was set in good faith, however, it was something of a trial as the service was new;
- d) the target was set with insufficient emphasis on the quality of the learning experience;
- e) there was a lack of 'follow up' monitoring to improve the experience and deliver repeat visits;
- f) there should be a recognition that the target for the RDCs is part of a wider Community Involvement programme.

5.3 The working group established three main areas for improvement:

- Marketing and communicating the service;
- Improving and diversifying the RDC offering; and
- Audit, review and measurement.

5.4 A project improvement plan, Project Manager and delivery team has now been established.

5.5 The delivery has improved in recent months and feedback shows that the visits are very well received. However, two further specific challenges remain to further growth in visitor numbers: visibility to, and contact with, interested groups so they understand the Recycling Discovery Centre (RDC) concept; and expanding the potential of the two RDCs at Gillmoss

and Bidston to cater to other interested groups (i.e. other than school children).

5.6 The revised targets will see 7,500 visitors per year being achieved by 2014, one year later than the original target. However, the revised target is felt to be much more realistic and deliverable with a greater degree of certainty of delivery, having a more robust project management structure and plan behind it.

5.7 A wider Community Involvement Strategy is also in development, which will see a larger number of people directly engaged through the suite of projects delivered by the Authority. This will draw together under one programme all the community involvement activity and look to improve the benefits to the Authority through greater community involvement. Last year over 7,000 direct engagements were made through initiatives such as Love Food Hate Waste, i.e. other than through the RDCs. A report will be provided to Members in due course.

5.8 **Five core objectives** have been identified to realise the improvement plan and assist in the growth of the RDCs:

- To set out a new marketing programme targeted at gaps in the various groups who visit the RDCs (schools and community groups) but also target new groups, particularly adult and child community groups;
- To diversify the offering at the RDCs so that it is 'a better fit' to the particular target audience and themes such as secondary and higher education schools;
- To use existing schools networks and new RDC teacher panels;
- To establish a collaborative working group between MRWA and Veolia to delivery the education plan; and
- Change the measurement and monitoring of performance against targets to a formal and regular mechanism.

- Revised annual targets have been identified.
- The revised targets for the RDC visitors are:
 - 5,500 visits by December 2012
 - 6,500 visitors by 2013; and
 - 7,500 by December 2014

- 5.9 Longer term target setting will be delivered through the establishment of a formal review mechanism. The programme to improve the visits at the RDC's will be ongoing over the plan years and will be shaped by the success and challenges of each work phase.

6. Risk Implications

Identified Risk	Likelihood Rating	Consequence Rating	Risk Value	Mitigation
Failure to deliver the JRWMS (and potential fines at local level in 2020 if the 50% recycling target is not met),	2	4	8	On-going engagement and delivery of education and awareness programmes for the local communities which leads to increased participation and better quality materials
Failure to provide opportunities for residents and stakeholders to engage in service development and delivery.	2	4	8	Ensure appropriate engagement mechanisms are in place to allow public contributions to the development of Authority policies and activities.
Failure to support residents and stakeholders to make practical changes in their behaviours	2	4	8	Identify appropriate joint working opportunities with other stakeholders to ensure the delivery of behavioural change programmes to

and easier to contribute to sustainable waste and resource management activities.				residents, local communities and businesses.
Failure to provide a quality education programme and visitor numbers at facilities remain low	2	4	8	Education Review led by Chief Executive and improvement plan established for future delivery.

7. HR Implications

7.1 There are no HR implications associated with this report.

8. Environmental Implications

8.1 There are no direct environmental impacts associated with this report but delivery of education and awareness programmes will have positive environmental benefits for Merseyside which will be identified as outcomes in individual projects.

9. Financial Implications

9.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report but future budget provision for education and awareness programmes will be subject to Member agreement of the annual delivery plans associated with this Strategy. If successful in the longer term, this will contribute to changes in behaviour and reduction in the Levy.

10. Conclusion

10.1 This Education, Awareness and Engagement Strategy has been developed in response to the results of the extensive consultation with

residents and stakeholders on Merseyside for the JRWMS. It also reflects the need to update the existing Education Strategy and improvements to the Education Delivery Programme.

- 10.2 A wider Community Involvement Strategy is in development to seek to increase the impact on behavioural change of the Authority's Programme of Activity. The Authority is already engaging effectively with the local community and in line with current Government legislation for engagement. This can be demonstrated by the best practice methodology used for the public consultation to the Strategy, the development of the Textile Forum in conjunction with Charities and local organisations and by the increased support being given to local activities through the Community Fund.
- 10.3 The Strategy identifies the issues and options for the Authority to undertake education, awareness and engagement programmes which will help to move the activities of the Authority and the behaviour of individuals higher up the Waste Hierarchy with potential environmental and financial benefits.

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The background documents to this report are open to inspection in accordance with Section 100D of The Local Government Act 1972:-

Appendix 1: The Education, Awareness and Engagement Strategy 2012.