

## THE EXECUTIVE

15 AUGUST 2006

### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

WASTE SERVICE INSPECTION REPORT AND ACTION PLAN	FOR DECISION
<p><b>Summary:</b></p> <p>This report presents the Audit Commission's report following its recent inspection of waste services in the Borough, together with the Action Plan produced in response to the inspection findings and recommendations.</p> <p>This inspection has been a very positive experience for the waste service as it moves through the process of transformation described in the Waste Strategy agreed by the Executive on 5 April 2006.</p> <p>The waste service was scored as fair with promising prospects of improving.</p> <p><b>Wards Affected:</b> All</p>	
<p><b>Implications:</b></p> <p><b>Financial:</b> The financial implications of delivering the findings of this review will be contained within existing departmental resources.</p> <p><b>Legal:</b> There are no legal implications arising from this report</p> <p><b>Risk Management:</b> The management of the risk associated with the delivery of the three recommendations will be built into the overall risk management of the waste programme</p> <p><b>Social Inclusion and Diversity:</b> There may be some changes to current policy as a result of this report. The Communications Strategy that accompanies the waste inspection anticipates consultation with all community groups on changes being proposed.</p> <p><b>Crime and Disorder:</b> There are no specific implications as far as this report is concerned.</p> <p><b>Recommendation(s)</b></p> <p>The Executive is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Note the Audit Commission's Inspection Report, as attached at Appendix A, and in particular the three main recommendations as set out in paragraph 2.9; and</li><li>2. Approve the Action Plan, at Appendix B, produced in response to the inspection findings and recommendations</li></ol>	

<b>Reason(s)</b>		
<p>This report is being brought to the Executive so that they can note the results of the review and how this was positively affected by the service's approach to the process and preparation for the review and inspection. Also to note the affect this positive review will have on achieving the Corporate Priorities.</p>		
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## 1. Background to the inspection

- 1.1 In May 2006, the Audit Commission carried out an inspection of Waste Management Services under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999
- 1.2 Waste Management service is one of the councils most visible and high profile services and forms the cornerstone to the delivery of a cleaner, greener, safer borough.
- 1.3 Members have also been very clear that this area of service is a key council priority and agreed a comprehensive waste management strategy in April 2006.
- 1.4 This message has been reinforced by additional investment in the 2005/06 budget in additional street cleaning, graffiti removal and environmental enforcement through the street warden service.
- 1.5 The process of preparing for this audit commission inspection has generated real momentum for improvement and developed a service fit to make the transformation described in the waste strategy.

## 2. Inspection Findings

- 2.1 The audit Commission concluded that the waste management service was one star or 'fair' service with promising prospects for improvement.
- 2.2 The inspection report and detailed findings can be found at Appendix A. The inspection took place over a week in early May 2006. It included a comprehensive tour of the borough and interviews with Members, senior and middle managers, partners, front line staff and our customers.
- 2.3 The inspectors made reference to the commitment and support they had witnessed from Members to make the review a success and to improve services in general. In particular they were impressed by Member's commitment to the Cleaner, Greener, Safer initiative
- 2.4 As part of the inspection we completed a self assessment based on the audit commission key lines of enquiry. The inspectors were particularly complementary about the self awareness and understanding of service priorities contained in the self

assessment. They felt that the primary message contained in the assessment that we are on a journey to service excellence was validated by talking to customers, staff and partners at all levels.

- 2.5 They were also particularly impressed with our willingness during the tour of the borough to take them to sites where there were significant environmental crime issues, but to then explain with confidence our approach to find long term preventative solutions by working across services and partners.
- 2.6 The inspectors were keen to highlight that we had given them consistently clear messages about where we were and where we wanted to get to. Their feedback on the staff they had interviewed was that they were confident, honest and open and that they clearly believed in what they were doing as being worthwhile and of benefit to the community.
- 2.7 They also felt that our preparations had learnt well from previous inspections and our waste management strategy, linked to a robust medium term financial strategy and excellent awareness and support from Members, was fit for purpose to drive service transformation.
- 2.8 It was noted as proactive the work done on our workforce development strategy and in particular our move to minimise the use of agency staff and the work carried out in the learning centre at Frizlands. The inspectors felt that this investment in basic skills training, in partnership with the GMB union had resulted in a dedicated and motivated workforce that are now well able to move to the flexible modern workforce we needed for improvement.
- 2.9 In summary the inspector's three recommendations are:
  1. The Council should extend its knowledge and understanding of the specific needs of all community groups and stakeholders in the borough on waste management issues:
    - Engage with users and non-users; and
    - Engage with the business community and explore their needs
  2. Communicate key waste management issues to residents and stakeholders more effectively by developing a fully costed action plan with short, medium and long term targets setting out how the Council will:
    - Inform residents, businesses etc of all services that are available
    - Develop a better balanced approach between enforcement and education; and
    - Integrate targets with individual work plans
  3. Establish the Council's strategic approach to reducing their own environmental impact, and set appropriate targets which are publicised to staff and councillors. Covering:
    - A corporate commitment to deliver policies on internal environmental stewardship; and
    - A co-ordination of departmental initiatives

2.10 Officers are now reviewing the waste strategy implementation plan Appendix B to incorporate the actions and outcomes as recommended in the inspection. Below are the broad principles we are working to;

1. The first recommendation from the waste review is based upon including the needs for stakeholders and community groups in planning and developing waste services. We are doing this by ensuring each project considers consultation within the planning and execution so that the future of waste planning is fully informed. The outcomes will show that we have consulted with stakeholders and community groups and have taken account of their views and requirements in each project.
2. The second recommendation is around ensuring effective communication, education and performance management of the key waste management issues. We are achieving this outcome by planning a project into the programme that incorporates briefings, road shows, literature and forums.
3. The final recommendation is the need for the Council as a whole to lead on environmental stewardship. We are working with Regeneration to build into the programme as a series of projects which will co-ordinate departmental initiatives and policy making.

2.11 The programme to deliver all of the actions in the waste strategy and from the inspection will be monitored by the Corporate Project and Programme Board monthly.

**Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:**

Local government – service inspection report: Waste Inspection LBBD  
The Waste Management Strategy

**Officers consulted in producing this report**

- Sandra Hamberger
- Ruth Du-Lieu