

Waste Inspection

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

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Service Inspection

This inspection has been carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 and is in line with the Audit Commission's strategic regulation principles. These principles embody the objectives of our Strategic Plan and Strategic Regulation. They also reflect the principles from *The Government's Policy on Inspection of Public Services (July 2003)*.

Audit Commission service inspections should:

- focus on public service outcomes from a user perspective;
- act as a catalyst to help inspected bodies improve their performance;
- concentrate inspection work where it will have most impact, so that it is proportionate and based on an assessment of risk;
- be based on a rigorous assessment of costs and benefits, with a concern for achieving value for money both by the inspected organisation and within the inspection regime itself;
- be, and be seen to be, independent of the inspected organisation;
- report in public, using impartial evidence to inform the public about the performance of public services so as to enhance accountability;
- involve collaborative working with other inspectorates and external review agencies to achieve greater co-ordination and a more holistic approach to the assessment of performance by audited and inspected bodies;
- share learning to create a common understanding of performance that encourages rigorous self assessment and better understanding of their performance by inspected organisations;
- be carried out objectively by skilled and experienced people to high standards and using relevant evidence, transparent criteria, and open review processes; and
- enable continuous learning so that inspections can become increasingly effective and efficient.

We assess services using published key lines of enquiry (KLOE) to inform our judgements. The KLOEs can be found on the Audit Commission's web site at www.audit-commission.gov.uk.

This report is issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under Section 13 of the 1999 Act.

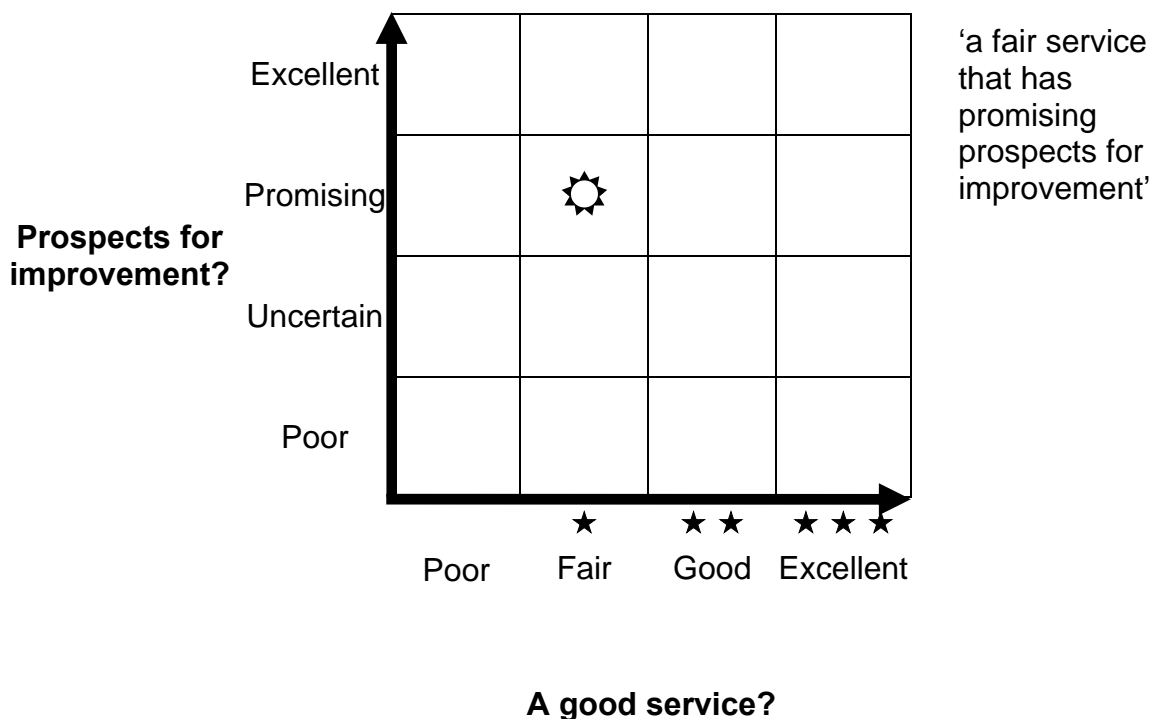
Summary

- 1 The London borough of Barking and Dagenham (the council) is a unitary authority to the east of London on the north bank of the Thames. The borough has significant areas of deprivation, with 14 wards in the 20 most deprived nationally and unemployment stands at 6.4 per cent, just below the London average.
- 2 Making Barking and Dagenham cleaner, greener and safer is a corporate aim and a key priority for the council and residents.
- 3 Overall, the council is delivering waste services which meet minimum standards. The service is a key council priority, and investment has been made in services following consultation with residents. There has been rapid improvement in many aspects of the service. However, some service areas such as recycling come from a low base in terms of service performance and delivery and the council did not meet its statutory recycling targets.
- 4 Members, senior managers and staff are committed to the cleaner, greener, safer agenda and the waste management strategy, adopted in April 2006, has a clear and comprehensive action plan to enable its delivery over the medium and long term across all areas of the service.
- 5 Resident consultation has been extensive. However, the council needs to engage more specifically to ensure that it has a clear understanding about the needs of all community groups in relation to waste services to inform service planning. The council's work around raising awareness and promoting its services to all stakeholders is insufficient and unco-ordinated.
- 6 Overall, services are reliable and meet local needs. A range of service improvements have been made, including the extension of street sweeping to cover the evenings. Partnership working is helping to address key anti-social behavioural problems and the impact of these on the environment such as graffiti in areas such as Mark's Gate.
- 7 Prospects for improvement are promising because the council has the resources and capacity to deliver what it is setting out to do. It has shown strong leadership at both political and officer level which has been instrumental in delivering recent improvements targeted at priority areas, such as recycling.
- 8 Most of the key performance indicators show a positive direction of travel, many from a low base, and the council can point to a track record in delivering service improvements such as the call centre, Barking and Dagenham Direct.

Scoring the service

- 9 We have assessed London Borough of Barking and Dagenham as providing a 'fair', one-star service that has promising prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Table 1 Scoring chart¹



Source: Audit Commission

- 10 The service is a fair, one-star service for the following reasons.
- Cleaner, greener, safer is a key priority for the council informed by consultation with residents.
 - Overall the service is accessible to residents.
 - The council has increased the opportunities for residents to participate in recycling through the expansion of kerbside collections to include flats.
 - The council provides a reliable refuse and commercial waste collection service.

¹ The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a service that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent service (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

- The council is using effective procurement practices to achieve value for money.
- Residents are generally satisfied with the services provided.
- Overall the service is delivering average value for money.

11 However:

- recycling levels have continued to improve and are currently at 16.5 per cent but the council did not reach its recycling target of 18 per cent for 2005/06;
- there has been a minimal focus on waste minimisation and reuse;
- there is no reuse facility at the Reuse and Recycling Centre;
- there has been improvement in the standard of street cleaning but this is still below the national average;
- the level of municipal waste arisings produced in the borough is high;
- access to assistance for waste collection is limited;
- there are no clear targets for recycling and minimising the amount of waste produced by the council itself;
- the councils promotional activities are short term and unco-ordinated;
- the council does not make full use of its own assets to promote the cleaner, greener, safer, priority; and
- the council has lagged behind in making the council 'green'.

12 The service has promising prospects for improvement because:

- there is clear member, senior manager and staff commitment to the cleaner, greener, safer priority;
- the waste management strategy contains a clear, comprehensive action plan and measures to project manage its implementation have been strengthened;
- the council has established a track record in delivering service improvements such as the swift establishment of its call centre, Barking and Dagenham Direct;
- resident satisfaction with the waste management service is above the London average and view the council as doing a better job than a year ago;
- most service key performance indicators show a positive direction of travel;
- the council has established an innovative and successful learning centre which has increased the confidence, capacity and commitment of its front line staff; and
- expected savings from the introduction of Mechanical Biological Technology in September 2006 will free up significant resource to be used for reinvestment in street cleaning improvements.

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However:

- many of the improvements in performance have come from a low base and there is still some way to go to meet national target levels;
- the waste management service does not yet have sufficiently sophisticated information on the needs of all its community groups to inform future service planning and development;
- client arrangements for monitoring contractor performance are under-developed; and
- the council has not yet considered all procurement options for delivery of its street cleaning services.

Recommendations

- 13 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the council. In addition we identify the approximate costs² and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context the inspection team recommends that the council should do the following.

Recommendation

R1 Extend the council's 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.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- that council services may be further informed by an accurate complete assessment of needs; and
- an inclusive service which is informed by all residents and users.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by March 2007.

Recommendation

R2 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 and businesses etc of all services that are available;*
- *develop a better balanced approach between enforcement and education; and*
- *integrate targets with individual workplans.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- that residents and businesses will have a greater understanding of what the council is trying to achieve; and
- to assist the council in meet its statutory targets.

² Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 per cent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by August 2006.

Recommendation

R3 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.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- that the council demonstrates environmental leadership;
- that the Council demonstrates to staff and residents that it 'practices what it preaches';
- clarity about how staff and councillors can make a positive contribution to the council's environmental agenda; and
- a reduction in waste and energy use.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented by January 2007.

Report

Context

The locality

- 14 The London borough of Barking & Dagenham is a unitary authority to the east of London on the north bank of the Thames with a population of 169,199, living in 68,851 households. Nineteen per cent of the population are from minority ethnic communities, 17.8 per cent are aged over 60 and almost a quarter under 19.
- 15 Unemployment stands at 6.4 per cent, just below the London average. Forty per cent of the working age population have no qualifications, which is higher than the London average and one fifth of the population have a limiting long-term illness.
- 16 The borough has significant areas of deprivation, with 14 wards containing at least one Super Output Area that is amongst the most deprived 20 per cent of Super Output Areas in England. A third of homes are council-owned, with 64 per cent owner occupied. The borough has the lowest average property prices in London and the lowest average income in the Greater London area. The Council own and manage over 20,000 homes.
- 17 Barking and Dagenham is located within the Thames Gateway, and there are substantial regeneration schemes at Barking Reach and Thames Gateway. The latter will provide 20,000 new homes and 25,000 thousand jobs by 2016.

The council

- 18 Since May 2006, the Council comprises of 51 councillors and is controlled by the Labour party who hold 39 seats. The Council has a leader, assembly, executive, scrutiny management board, regulatory boards and policy commissions.
- 19 The Council is currently debt free. The net revenue budget for the year 2006/07 is £247.42 million with a four-year capital programme totalling £174.3 million (£100.8 million from capital receipts and £73.5 million from external resources). The Council Tax band D level for 2006/07 is £1218.76.
- 20 The Council employs about 5,800 staff excluding teaching staff. The officer structure, like the political structure, has been streamlined in recent months, with a reduction in the number of departments from eight to five.
- 21 The Council's 2005 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) rating is fair. Within waste management services only the street scene service has been previously inspected.

- 22** A 2020 vision for Barking and Dagenham was agreed in June 2001, and the work being undertaken by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) will develop this as part of the Community Strategy. Seven community priorities are set out in the Corporate Plan and are consistent with those set out in the Community Strategy developed via the local strategic partnership. They are:
- promoting equal opportunities and celebrating diversity;
 - better education and learning for all;
 - developing rights and responsibilities with the local community;
 - improving health, housing and social care;
 - making Barking and Dagenham cleaner, greener and safer;
 - raising general pride in the borough; and
 - regenerating the local economy.
- 23** The first three priorities are overarching and collectively promote social cohesion, and are essential to local partners working towards the 2020 Vision. A key issue for the council is community cohesion. The Council is very clear about the need to bring together the well established white working class community with newer communities, mainly Asian and African families. A Community Cohesion plan and an Anti-Discrimination Charter were agreed in January 2004.
- 24** In line with priorities, the Council is explicit about the need to raise the aspirations of local people and to continue to raise the educational attainment of both children and adults. The Council has identified waste management services as one of the key drivers to achieve their community priorities.

The council's waste management service

- 25** Barking and Dagenham is a waste collection authority and is a part of a statutory waste disposal authority - East London Waste Authority (ELWA). In 2004/05, the council generated 105,900 tonnes of municipal waste, 86 per cent (91,000 tonnes) of which was collected from households, or brought into the recycling centre by residents. The remaining 14 per cent consists of waste generated from commercial and industrial premises and other activities, such as abandoned vehicles and street sweepings.
- 26** A recent council wide restructure, reduced the number of departments from eight to five. The waste management service is delivered by the Environmental and Enforcement service which is a part of the Customer Services directorate. The waste management service includes street cleaning, domestic and trade waste collection and recycling. The council's hazardous waste service is delivered through external contracts. The total budget for the waste management service in 2006/07 was £6,930,000 with 166 full time equivalent employees.
- 27** The collection of domestic and trade waste include:
- collection of household waste from all domestic properties. Waste is collected from the boundary of the property in black bags provided free of charge by the council;

- collection from domestic communal bins in which residents must place their black bags;
 - a new green garden waste collection service which began in March 2006. Doorstep collections are based on a booking system using biodegradable light green bags, collected on Sundays;
 - provision of a free bulky waste collection service from households;
 - collection of trade waste from premises that have an agreement with the council;
 - collection of household clinical and poisonous waste for incineration; and
 - provision and servicing of skips.
- 28** The 125 recycling banks are managed through the ELWA contract with Shanks East London for paper, mixed glass, mixed cans, and textiles with banks situated throughout the borough.
- 29** The council introduced a doorstep recycling orange bag collection service in 2003. Recyclables collected include all types of paper, food, drink cans and plastic bottles, and collections are made on the same day as the household waste collection. Orange bags can be obtained from a range of council offices and from waste collection crews.
- 30** The council's street cleansing service has responsibility for litter picking all the council's streets, road spillages, and abandoned vehicles. There is a separate team of litter pickers on housing estates, and additional litter pickers for Barking Market.
- 31** The Enforcement team consists of 24 street wardens organised in reactive and proactive teams seven days a week. The reactive team responds to service requests whilst the proactive teams 'blitz' areas that need attention. The proactive team targets a specific area within the Borough for a specified time, dealing with environmental issues, such as graffiti, fly tipping, and litter removal. The reactive team deals with all relevant service requests received by the council. The wardens promote positive social behaviour and citizenship through educational visits to schools.
- 32** The council has a Reuse and Recycling Centre based at Frizlands Lane in Dagenham. This is managed by Shanks East London through their contract with ELWA which is responsible for the disposal of municipal waste from the London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Newham, Redbridge and Havering.
- 33** ELWA and the four councils originally agreed a joint strategy in 1996 which formed the basis of a 25-year Integrated Waste Management (IMW) contract managed by Shanks East London since 2003. The contract includes the delivery of two Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) processing plants in the ELWA region, one in September 2006 and the other in January 2007. Once complete, each facility will comprise three Ecodeco units, each with the capability to receive and treat 60,000 tonnes of waste per year.

National context - waste management

- 34 Waste Disposal Authorities and Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs) carry out waste management functions. London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is a WCA.
- 35 The Government has set objectives for local authorities to reduce the amount of waste that is collected and to encourage more recycling. The council's statutory target for recycling and composting is 18 per cent for 2006/07.

National context - keeping the district clean

- 36 Councils have a duty to keep their land clear of litter. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA) gives a local authority power to deal with litter based problems affecting its area, including issuing fixed penalty tickets to people who commit an offence by dropping litter. A Code of Practice, issued under the act, recommends a 'clean as necessary' approach and specific levels of cleanliness for various environments. Under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act an authority has the power to issue a notice to a private landowner to clean up their land and to undertake the cleansing itself if the landowner fails to act. The Clean Neighbourhood Act (2003) strengthens a council's legislative powers for keeping the area clean.

How good is the service?

What has the service aimed to achieve?

- 37 The council has clear and explicit plans for waste management, including recycling, composting and waste minimisation. The council's vision and community priorities sets out objectives for waste management as:
- to have the cleanest streets in London;
 - to have the greatest waste reduction, and highest recycling and composting rates in London; and
 - to deliver effective, efficient and customer-focused services that demonstrate value for money.
- 38 To improve performance in the medium to longer term, the council has produced a waste management strategy 2005-2015, adopted in April 2005. This includes clear short, medium and long term targets for the service which includes milestones for the service.
- 39 The council aims to comply with the 'waste hierarchy' placing emphasis on waste minimisation, re-use and recycling. The contract with Shanks East London includes the delivery of two MBT processing plants which will automatically separate the orange recycling bags from a mixed load. The remaining waste will then be shredded, dried using hot air and the natural heat, as the waste aerobically digests. This is a fourteen week process which removes 25 per cent of the weight of the waste.
- 40 The council has statutory recycling targets set by the Government of 10 per cent in 2003/04 rising to 18 per cent in 06/07 and 20 per cent in 2007/08. The council has set its own target of 22.75 per cent for 2006/07, and rising to 30 per cent 2008/09.

Is the service meeting the needs of the local community and users?

Access, customer care and diversity

- 41 Overall, the waste service takes account of community and user needs. The council's cleaner, greener, safer priority was informed and developed through consultation with residents. The council has used a range of consultation mechanisms including face to face surveys, postal surveys, area committee's, and direct consultation with some specific groups (eg council tenants, youth groups and an umbrella group representing people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities), although the council acknowledges that it needs to undertake further and more targeted consultation with specific diverse groups to fully understand the specific needs of these communities.

- 42 The council has developed clear service standards which have been informed through consultation with residents. It is unclear, however, what role was played by non users and the business community in developing these service standards. Service standards are currently being reviewed and are advertised on the council internet.
- 43 Overall the service is accessible to residents. The council's customer contact centre, Barking and Dagenham Direct, deals with all telephone enquiries and is available Monday to Friday between 8.00am and 8.00pm. Users who have an audio impairment have access to a Minicom and users whose first language is not English can be seen by specific staff within the service who are able to communicate in a variety of languages or through the use of Language Line, an interpreting service. A wide range of information about the waste service is available on the council's web site, including information on recycling rates, and a list of bring sites and materials that can be recycled. The website was awarded 'World Wide Web Consortium Triple A' status for accessibility to people with disabilities in 2004 and many of the council's publications, including the waste management strategy, are Crystal Marked to allow greater access. Users are able to report fly tips online, have access to waste collection and street cleaning schedules, and can also book an appointment for the bulky waste collection. There is very little information available in leaflet form on any of the services other than recycling.
- 44 The council has increased the opportunities for residents to participate in recycling through the expansion of kerbside collections to include flats. Kerbside collection is available across the borough, and the council has installed orange recycling bins on housing estates which are not suitable for door to door collection. Residents are provided with free orange bags to use in the orange bins, available within the housing estates. The Re-use and Recycling Centre (RRC) is open seven days a week, including Bank Holidays, and accept a wide range of materials including cardboard, green waste, white goods (eg fridges), metal, paper, textiles, car batteries, oil, rubble and glass. Assistance for those who may need help is available at the RRC.
- 45 The RRC is accessible to most local people. The centre is based in Dagenham and is open early morning, at the weekend and also on bank holidays to ensure it is accessible to those in full time employment. The site is maintained in a clean and safe way, has disabled bays and help for unloading is available. However, the site requires waste to be carried up steps and whilst help is available, the availability of this is not promoted to residents outside the site.
- 46 Access to assistance for waste collection is limited. The council has an assisted collection scheme with only fifty residents on the list. There is no formal monitoring of this list and the service is not advertised to residents which means that potentially some residents who require assistance may be missing out.
- 47 The council provides training on a wide range of issues for its frontline operatives so that they have a good understanding of the needs of council residents. The training is provided through the Learning centre and includes workshops on cultural awareness and diversity issues.

- 48 Access to the bulky waste service is good. A free service is provided to residents who must book an appointment on line or through Barking and Dagenham Direct. The resident is then given an appointment for when the items will be collected.

Waste management - minimisation, recycling and composting

- 49 The council has failed to deliver the set target level of waste recycling. Although recycling is improving, performance remains below statutory targets. The target for 2003/04 was 10 per cent, and the council's performance was 6.67 per cent. The target for 2005/06 is 18 per cent and projections show performance to be in the region of 16 per cent, below the statutory minimum standard.
- 50 Over the past three years the council has invested substantial sums of money in developing the recycling infrastructure. As well as kerbside collection, and recycling for residents in flats, the council has over 125 recycling banks located throughout the borough. We found these to be generally clean, free of graffiti and located with a good geographical spread, although information about their location is only available on the web. In March 2006, the Council began a free green waste collection service, which is collected by appointment only in biodegradable bags available free from the council. The service, has not been widely advertised other than in the council's monthly 'Citizen' magazine which is distributed free of charge to all residents in the borough.
- 51 Business recycling is weak and the council recognises that this aspect of the service is under-developed. Business recycling is limited to the cardboard which is recycled at Barking market. The council need to ensure that it understands the needs of this group and should consider targeting the business community to understand their needs.
- 52 The RRC is not being used to its full potential. The site handles a large quantity of waste and accepts a wide variety of materials and it is achieving a thirty two per cent recycling rate, however, there is currently no reuse option. The site is one of four managed by a contractor within the ELWA region, and a reuse scheme is being piloted at one of the RRCs, which if successful, will be rolled out to the other three including the one in Barking.
- 53 The level of home composting in the borough has improved considerably. The percentage of household waste composted has increased from 0.9 per cent in 2003/04 to 4.14 per cent in 2004/05. General information on composting is available on the web, and compost bins are available online, although we saw no other literature promoting home composting. The council is involved in developing a community composting initiative on the Marks Gate estate which is due to be launched later in 2006.
- 54 The household waste collection service is efficient and reliable. The number of missed bins has halved to 40 bins per 100,000 collected. If a bin has been missed, the Council returns within 24 hours. The council has used the enforcement service to deal with the impact of black bags left on the street as this has a negative impact on the streetscape, and also adds to litter through split bags from animals etc.

18 Waste Inspection | How good is the service?

This is being addressed by persuading residents to leave bags within their property as this will put the onus of responsibility on residents to clear any spilt litter and encourages bags being put out only shortly before collection.

- 55 Commercial waste collection is efficient and reliable. The council has a 32 per cent share of the market, and business owners we spoke to were positive about the service.
- 56 The level of municipal waste arisings produced in the borough is high. The Borough produced 543kg per head of household waste in 2004/05 compared to a London average of 440kg. This has decreased in the past few years due to the introduction of controls at the RRC and the council has set targets to reduce this further.
- 57 Residents are satisfied with the services provided. The council can demonstrate good levels of resident satisfaction with the waste management service. The 2005 Association of London Government (ALG) independently produced pan London survey of user satisfaction showed that 76 per cent of residents considered the refuse collection to be good or excellent, and 63 per cent considered recycling good or excellent. Both of these figures are 10 per cent above the London average. Overall residents thought that the council was doing a better job than one year ago which was 8 per cent above the London average and 48 per cent of residents considered street cleaning to be good or excellent, which was 5 per cent higher than the London average, but 26 per cent considered it poor or extremely poor.
- 58 The council has no clear targets for recycling and minimising the amount of waste produced by its own operations. Targets and reporting methods for other environmental issues such as energy use are also unclear.

Keeping the area clean

- 59 Streets and open spaces are maintained to a reasonable standard and issues such as fly tipping, abandoned cars and graffiti are dealt with promptly. There has been year on year improvement since 2003/04 when 47 per cent of land had 'unacceptable littering' (as measured by key performance indicator - BV199a). This had improved to 36.1 per cent in 2004/05 and to 32 per cent in 2005/06, although it is still below the minimum threshold. This does not take into consideration the £898,000 invested in 2005 on street scene improvements such as the setting up of a scavenger crew to deal with hotspots, the extension of the street cleaning service to 11.00pm through the introduction of a late evening shift, and the extension of the street sweeping service to seven days a week.
- 60 The council operates an effective enforcement function. The service was recently re-launched with new uniforms and consists of 24 street wardens organised in reactive and proactive teams seven days a week. The council issued 429 fixed penalty notices in 2005/06 and have a 'name and shame' section on their website.

- 61 The Enforcement service makes effective use of partners including the police to identify, and where appropriate, prosecute offenders. We saw evidence of good partnership working at Martins Corner, where the team worked well with residents, local traders, the police, the Youth Offending team, and others to clean up the area and reduce anti-social behaviour. There is, however, an imbalance between enforcement and education which has focused primarily on young people.

Generic environment and promotion

- 62 The council's promotional activity is short term and unco-ordinated. The council has had limited success in raising awareness and educating the public on recycling, composting and waste minimisation. Promotional activity is short term and restricted to one off promotional ventures such as 'The Big Green Day' and supermarket promotion. The council do not have a strategy for encouraging people to think about the amount of waste they produce, and what they can do to reduce their overall environmental impact. The council acknowledges and are aware that promotional activity requires more attention and plan to address this through the recruitment of two officers later in 2006 who will have an outreach role.
- 63 The promotional activity undertaken by Shanks East London is limited. The contract includes a degree of awareness raising on recycling issues, however, limited work has been undertaken in some local schools and voluntary groups. The council is planning to target schools where Shanks have yet to work with using the new outreach workers, although some work is currently undertaken with schools through the London Schools Environmental Award and the Barking and Dagenham's Secondary Schools Environmental Competition.
- 64 The council does not make full use of its own assets to promote the cleaner, greener, safer, priority. Whilst council vehicles and public buses are branded with the council's 'It's our Borough, be proud of it' logo, the RRC makes no mention that it is a council facility or of the council's commitment to this priority.
- 65 There is a lack of a high profile promotion aimed for council staff. Limited information is available to staff and a green office guide the council produced in October 2005 is still in pilot phase, seven months on, because a branding issue has prevented it from being rolled out to the rest of the council. There is no clear timetable to extend this type of activity to the rest of the council.
- 66 The council's strategic approach to green procurement issues is weak. The council do not have a 'green' procurement code and are currently updating their procurement policy. There are however, some examples of good practice within services and the council were recently congratulated by London Remade on its contribution towards the development of sustainable procurement practice by monitoring and recording their spend on recycled content products and materials.

Is the service delivering value for money?

- 67 Overall the service is delivering average value for money. In 2004/05 the council has delivered a moderate waste collection service for £44.88 per household which is equivalent to the median level for councils in England with the same waste responsibilities.
- 68 The service can demonstrate that it considers value for money issues in developing service options. In 2002, the council entered into a 25-year Integrated Waste Management Service contract with its three other ELWA partners. The £47 million Private Finance Initiative (PFI) project was awarded the Best Local Government Project at the 2003 public private finance awards. Whilst the project involves an increase in costs in the short term, savings over the lifetime of the 25-year contract are projected to be at least £5.36 million.
- 69 The council actively and successfully seeks service efficiencies which improve quality. For example, procurement efficiencies have been found through the council's vehicle leasing arrangement which has resulted in a modern fleet of vehicles and reduced vehicle maintenance costs by £225,000 during 2006. In addition, a recent review of management and overhead costs identified efficiencies of £363,000 which were then invested in the waste management service.
- 70 The service is open to scrutiny and challenge and can demonstrate that it uses feedback to improve quality for service users. The best value review of contact services in 2002 identified a poor service. This resulted in the initial development of a vision for contact services and led to the opening of the council's call centre in September 2004 through which all calls for the waste management service are now handled. This was the first phase of three which will eventually lead to all council calls being handled through the call centre and the opening of one stop shops in the borough.
- 71 The recent reorganisation of the service has taken place within the context of a corporate reorganisation, but has been implemented at a faster pace as the council recognised the need to improve service quality in this area. In a relatively short space of time, senior management of the service has been replaced, investment made in developing basic skills amongst the front line workforce and significant monetary investment made in the service. This has led to a variety of improvements referred to elsewhere in this report.
- 72 The service is taking steps to establish a more stable and less costly workforce. It acknowledges that it has previously over relied on the use of agency staff in waste collection and is currently going through the process of minimising agency use. As a result 28 agency staff, those in post over one year, have recently been made permanent council employees and the service plans to now review the remainder of the agency staff.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

What is the service track record in delivering improvement?

- 73 The service has come from a low base in many areas and there is still some way to go before the council achieves their target of excellence. Both staff and members of the council refer to the waste management service as one which is 'on a journey'. The council can, however, demonstrate effective examples of implementing change which have led to service delivery improvements.
- 74 The service is able to demonstrate a positive direction of travel in all key performance indicators, with the exception of the cost of waste collected for which there are plans in place to reduce the cost (eg a reduction in the number of agency staff, which has been achieved). The council recognises that many of these performance indicators have started from a low performance level.
- 75 There is a positive direction of travel in recycling although absolute performance still remains in the lowest quartile. In 2003/04 the council achieved 5.77 per cent of all refuse collected sent for recycling. This improved to 9.86 per cent in 2004/05 and unaudited figures for 2005/06 show that the council was just short of its 18 per cent target at 16.5 per cent.
- 76 There has been a rapid improvement in the percentage of residents served by a kerbside collection and the council has moved to extend the kerbside recycling service to flatted estates. The council has moved the percentage of all residents served by a kerbside recycling service from 78.9 per cent and well below average, in 2004/05 to 97 per cent coverage currently and this is projected to be 100 per cent by September 2006.
- 77 The percentage of household waste composted increased from 0.9 per cent in 2003/04, to 4.14 per cent in 2004/05, which was comparable to above average performance. A pilot community composting scheme has been established on the Marks Gate estate in partnership with the East London Community Recycling Partnership which aims to collect all food waste from the 1,000 flats on the estate using two previously derelict garages to house composting 'rockets' which will convert the waste into compost for participating residents. This scheme will not only divert waste from landfill, but ensure that waste suitable for composting does not leave the estate in the first place.
- 78 The council has a positive direction of travel in total waste collected and although it continues to have high levels of waste there are signs of this stabilising. In 2004/05 the waste collection rate was 543.3kg per capita which placed performance well below average. There has been a slight increase from 2003/04 when the level was 542.4 per capita but it is, however, an improvement from 2002/03 when the waste collection rate was 620kg per capita.

- 79 The key performance indicator which measures overall cleanliness (BVPI 199) in the borough shows a positive improvement although absolute performance remains well below average. In 2003/04 this indicator was at 47 per cent and by 2004/05 this had improved to 36.1 per cent. This improvement in the general cleanliness of the borough was endorsed by the ALG survey results, through the focus groups held with residents and staff which generally indicated a cleaner borough, and through our own reality checks when compared to the inspection reality checks undertaken in 2002 as part of the Street Scene inspection.
- 80 The council has raised the profile of enforcement. Uniforms of street wardens have been changed to enhance authority and recruitment of street wardens has been better targeted and therefore more effective. The role of street wardens has been widened and they now work closely in partnership with waste management and street cleansing operatives, for example, a 'tasking bus' scheme has been introduced. Street wardens and waste management operatives tour the borough undertaking rubbish bag searches and doorstep interviews where bags have been placed out at the wrong time and as a result approximately 40 fixed penalty notices per week are being issued. There is a perception amongst residents and staff that the council's enforcement role has become more effective as a result, although there is still a way to go to successfully address all issues.
- 81 As part of its Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) agreed in July 2003 the council agreed stretch targets for improving the overall cleanliness of streets in the borough and reducing the number of abandoned vehicles on the streets of the borough. The targets set were achieved by March 2006.
- 82 The council is open to, listens and learns from external review. All of the recommendations of previous Best Value Inspection of the street scene have been implemented. An Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) peer review is planned for the summer of 2006 and the council plans to use this inspection report to inform council processes.
- 83 A major change implemented was the establishment of the call centre, Barking and Dagenham Direct, to deal with all calls to Customer Services (excluding housing benefits and housing repairs). Over £1.3 million has been invested in new call centre telephony, customer relations management software and premises housing 23 stations to deal with telephone, web and e-mail enquiries. Staff have been trained and information, communications and technology used efficiently and effectively to allow staff instant access to relevant information to meet the council's visionary target of 'done in one'. The call centre service is considerably enhanced from that previously available for waste services and the centre now deals with in excess of 30,000 calls a month, with a call abandonment rate consistently below the target of 3 per cent, regularly reaches the target of answering calls within 20 seconds, and 80 per cent of waste services contacts being resolved at first point of contact.

- 84 The establishment of the call centre is a good example of the council implementing learning. A Best Value review of contact services in 2002 indicated a poor service with little prospects for improvement. In response to this the council adopted a vision for contact services, commissioned a proof of concept report and established a business case for giving priority to all environmental services for inclusion in the first phase of the three phased project. The call centre was established rapidly with the first phase being established within seven months, by September 2004. Current opening hours are 8.00am to 8.00pm weekdays with plans to move to a 24/7 service in July 2006.
- 85 The waste management service does not yet have sufficiently sophisticated information on the needs of all its communities to adequately judge the effect its service has on the most disadvantaged parts of the community. Improvements on recycling and arrangements for cleaning multi occupancy estates will undoubtedly impact on some of those in priority need, but beyond this it is difficult to establish how the varying needs of community groups are being met. A communication strategy has very recently been developed which sets out how the service will contact, listen to and respond to difficult to reach groups much of which complies with good practice but the strategy is at such an early stage that a detailed action plan has not yet been developed.
- 86 The Council has put securing value for money (VFM) at the heart of its waste management strategy. The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) established with ELWA partners involves an increase in short term costs but projected savings over the lifetime of the 25-year contract of approximately £5 million. The £47 million PFI project was awarded the best local government project at the public private finance awards in 2003. However the council is still yet to demonstrate sustained improvement in vfm across all services over a long period of time. The latest Audit Commission assessment of the council's use of resources scored it at 2 out of 4 which equates to meeting requirements.

How well does the service manage performance?

- 87 The council has clearly set the waste management agenda as a key priority. The Community Strategy outlines seven community priorities, one of which is making Barking and Dagenham a cleaner, greener and safer place. In turn the council's strategic corporate priorities for action 2005-10 break this theme down into four ambitions:
- have the cleanest streets in London through improved environmental management;
 - increase the use of public spaces;
 - increase recycling; and
 - reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

- 88 The waste management strategy, adopted in April 2006, is a comprehensive document which sets out local regional and national targets and how the council will meet these. The council has consciously taken the decision to concentrate in the early years on the recycling element of the waste hierarchy as it recognised that the most rapid progress was needed and could be made in this area. The council seeks to address areas where its performance in the past has been weak, for example, the pilot scheme on extending recycling to trade waste from September 2006. The strategy contains a clear, comprehensive action plan with Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic and Time-bound (SMART) targets and the project management arrangements being introduced will ensure that progress against priorities can be rigorously scrutinised. An implementation group chaired by the Head of Environmental and Enforcement Services and led by the newly appointed Waste Strategy Project Leader is shortly to be established.
- 89 A critical issue for the council in securing improvements to the waste management service is the delivery via the contract with Shanks East London of the Mechanical Biological Technology (MBT) processor scheduled for opening at the Frog Island site in September 2006. Three Ecodeco units each with the capacity to receive and treat 60,000 tonnes of waste a year will automatically separate orange recycling bags from a mixed load. This will enable the council to move to a co-collection system from September freeing up savings of £402,000 to be reinvested in strengthening the street cleaning service. The London Borough of Havering and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham are already using this site. We are confident that the target date for this site to be fully operational will be met.
- 90 The Lead Member for the Cleaner, Greener, Safer portfolio is highly visible inside and outside the council and his personal commitment to and enthusiasm for the portfolio is clear to all. Similarly, the Leader of the Council is positive about and committed to delivering the cleaner greener safer agenda. Alongside this is a commitment to improving the customer experience, as evidenced by the establishment of Barking and Dagenham Direct and agreed plans for phases two and three of the Customer First programme.
- 91 The council uses a Balanced Scorecard approach to performance and planning which is widely regarded and is well embedded within the service. Its use has been reviewed and updated and tighter controls put in place. The most recent Investors In People (IIP) assessment and discussions with staff and management confirm that the system is well embedded within the service.
- 92 There is an established performance reporting culture in the council. At member level performance within the service is reported quarterly to the council's Executive, and low performing performance indicators and proposed corrective action are discussed regularly at the Scrutiny Management Board, whilst the cleaner greener safer Board of the LSP guides service development. At senior management level, the Chief Executive discusses performance on a monthly basis with the Corporate Director of Customer Services who in turn meets monthly with the service head and this is cascaded down to service managers and their staff. Performance objectives are set within performance appraisals at team and individual levels.

- 93 The rapid improvements in recycling can be directly linked to the service using its performance management systems. Midway through the 2005/06 year, systems indicated a slow down in improving performance in recycling with projections indicating that the target of 18 per cent would be missed by 2.5 per cent if the current approach was maintained and this was reported to members. The service used data from areas such as its knowledge base about participation rates, improvement options commissioned from London Remade and WASTEDATAFLOW to establish the cause and possible solutions to the slowdown. The council identified three high performing boroughs to learn from and concluded that a three pronged approach to the service would yield the best results. A strongly branded publicity campaign 'Barking and Dagenham - It's our borough be proud of it - Keep it cleaner - Keep it greener - Keep it safer' was implemented using publicity in local newspapers, logos attached to all waste management vehicles, branded safety clothing for staff and bus and poster campaigns. The kerbside recycling scheme was rolled out to all multi occupancy estates, a green waste kerbside collection was established and the number of free orange recycling bags available to each household was doubled. The outcomes from this were that recycling levels began to improve.
- 94 Performance management was a key consideration in developing Barking and Dagenham Direct. The Customer Relationship Management system purchased for the call centre enhances workforce planning, allows real time monitoring to manage peaks and troughs of workload, and is regularly used with staff to review performance and to make changes where needed.
- 95 The recent reorganisation of the service has enabled better working across services. For example the co-location of waste service and street cleansing staff has strengthened supervisory arrangements and resulted in a more co-ordinated service.
- 96 Shanks operate the reuse and recycling centres available for residents in a partnership arrangement on behalf of the council. Whilst there is a basic system in place for monitoring contractor performance the client role in monitoring and in particular managing contractor performance is as yet under-developed. The council recognises this and will be making plans to address the issue.

Does the service have the capacity to improve?

- 97 The council has clearly and consistently stated over the last three years that its top three priorities are Cleaner Greener Safer, Education and Social Services. The budget management approach taken clearly supports cleaner, greener, safer as one of the top three priorities. Financial management has been aligned so that Cleaner Greener Safer, Education and Social Services are all protected in the annual budget round and this situation will continue.
- 98 In the waste management service budget injections of £898,000 were made in 2005/06 and £211,000 in 2006/07. In addition the savings projected from the move to co-collection planned for this September (full year £402,000) will be ring fenced for reinvestment to create improvements in the street cleaning service. Detailed plans for reinvestment of the latter resource, however, are not yet developed.

- 99 The council has reviewed and redeveloped governance arrangements to better separate programme management from project management. Four sub-groups of the LSP, one of which is cleaner greener safer, have been established which now more clearly link with the corporate assessment process in that they mirror the areas examined in assessing achievement of the council. Within the council a corporate programme board is shortly to be established to take a strategic programme management view, this will be supported by departmental programme boards.
- 100 Management arrangements for the waste management service have been strengthened and through this reorganisation the council has achieved a positive culture change. In the past year, senior management across the division has been replaced. Staff are complimentary about managers support and commitment and identify changes in working practices such as the 'shaded areas' scheme which targets intensified street cleansing in different areas across the borough, as making a positive difference to the appearance of the borough. A project manager to oversee the implementation and delivery of the waste management strategy is about to be appointed. This will provide better focus on improved outcomes for residents.
- 101 Negotiations for the move to Single Status are well advanced and the council and unions are confident that the move will be successfully achieved by April 2007.
- 102 The council is addressing its previous over reliance on agency staff in waste collection. Twenty-eight agency staff, those in post over a year, have recently been made permanent council employees. This has saved money and is also intended to provide a more stable workforce.
- 103 The service uses partnership working effectively to tackle problem areas. An example of this is the work undertaken on tackling graffiti. A major problem had been the graffiti on NTL cable boxes across the borough. The council has put in place arrangements whereby NTL supply the paint and the council provide the labour to address this issue. The council also works effectively with the police in its enforcement role when using its pro-active enforcement team to tackle neighbourhood problem areas. Street wardens have a very close working relationship with the Met Police and fast channels have been established to allow street wardens to call for police support. The service has plans to enhance its street warden service with voluntary street wardens with recruitment taking place over the summer 2006.
- 104 The council has taken action to ensure procurement is looked at in a consistent way across all areas. A corporate procurement team has been established and all reports for the Executive Committee are cleared through the Head of Strategic Procurement before being submitted. However, the council has not yet considered all procurement options for delivery of its street cleaning service.

- 105** The council has established an innovative and successful Learning Centre to enable operatives to acquire basic skills and be up-skilled. This process started as a result of a partnership between local Trades Unions and the borough, using Union Learning Fund monies, aimed at raising basic skills, improving knowledge of health and safety issues and improving understanding of the council's core value. Learning delivered in normal working hours with the full support of managers via the College of North East London (CoNEL) and Havering College. The initiative proved so popular that courses have expanded substantially. From the initial courses, most employees have achieved the qualification in both Levels 1 and 2 in literacy the small remainder are now released on a long term basis to address shortfalls. Of nine supervisors, three have passed and six are currently pursuing ILM Level 3 qualifications. All of the council's refuse, recycling and clinical waste teams have achieved an NVQ Level 2 in waste management. Sixty-five per cent of street cleansing staff have completed their relevant NVQ Level 2 qualification whilst the remainder are due to complete by December 2006. The learning centre is shortly to become a Learn Direct centre enabling the introduction of basic ICT skills courses. The council has plans to open the learning centre one weekend a month to allow family learning and are considering after office hours use as a homework club for parents and children. Operatives are noticeably more confident and all staff very complimentary about the Learning Centre, identifying in particular that it has resulted in a more joined up and committed workforce.