

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Improve Brighton &amp; Hove's Recycling Scheme - Petition for Debate</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>19 July 2018</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance &amp; Law</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	Mark Wall	Tel: 01273 291006
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 Under the Council's Petition Scheme if a petition contains more than 1,250 signatures and is not petition requesting officer evidence, it will be debated by the Full Council.
- 1.2 The e-petition has resulted in triggering a debate at the council meeting, having exceeded the threshold with a total of 1,685 signatures confirmed at the time of printing the report.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the petition is noted and referred to the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee for consideration at its meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

**3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION / CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:****3.1 The Petition**

We demand for the Brighton and Hove council to implement weekly kerbside recycling collection and start recycling a wider variety of plastic and food waste.

We require immediate action from Brighton and Hove Council to improve public recycling services. Currently, the local council does not recycle any food packaging plastics or other plastic waste aside from plastic bottles, and even this is on a fortnightly basis. This is unacceptable: comparable local council areas recycle a far wider range of plastics with similar council budgets.

Lead Petitioner – Tea Meneghetti

Additional Information:

A better recycling system is easily attainable. Veolia, the waste management company used by the local council, can recycle a wider range of plastic and food waste, and does so for other councils in the UK. This council needs to develop a comprehensive recycling strategy so that Brighton can become a truly green city moving forward. With your signature we can force meaningful government action. Our environment and seas are in a perilous state and urgent human action is required to prevent further permanent damage.

Read on below to see our broader recommendations for how the local council can develop an improved recycling strategy.

- Plastic

Our world's addiction to plastic can be seen everywhere. It's in our waterways, in our seas and undoubtedly in our diets. While news stories of plastic islands and documentaries such as Blue Planet II show us the immeasurable damage this material does to ecological systems worldwide, it is also ever-present in our streets, parks and beaches here in Brighton. Given this city's pride in its sustainable ethos, embodied by its zero waste plastic businesses, environmental community action groups and beach clean-up events, Brighton should be leading the change among UK cities aiming to reduce, reuse and recycle ubiquitous plastics.

Unfortunately, plastic recycling operations by the local council are far from ideal. At present, the only plastics recycled by the council are PET (recycling triangle 1) and HDPE (recycling triangle 2) plastic bottles, mainly found in soft drinks and milk containers. The vast majority of household waste is not recycled; plastic pots, tubs and trays, which make up 33% of UK kerbside recycling and rigid plastic packaging, which make up 50% of UK recycling through any method, are not collected. Even food and drink cartons are only collected through centres that are inaccessible for many Brighton residents. Veolia, which has a 30-year "integrated waste management contract" with the local council, takes the residual waste to a locally controversial, waste-fuelled electricity generation plant in Newhaven. This plant incinerates our recycling to supply power for up to 25,000 homes, but at the cost of releasing 8 forms of harmful greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Although current emissions are within safe limits, there is inevitably some leakage of waste locally, and Friends of the Earth have described incineration of recyclables as a short-term strategy, which ignores the fact that new plastics require more oil and create more emissions.

Clearly, if Brighton wants to be a green leader for the UK, this is not good enough. This piecemeal recycling effort has culminated in Brighton and Hove local council consistently ranking among the worst council areas for household waste management. At only 27% last year, the city languishes far behind the national average of 42.6% for recycling rates and is less than half of the most efficient councils of South Oxfordshire (66.6%), East Riding of Yorkshire (66.1%) and Surrey (62.1%).

The city must act immediately to change this. A crucial first step in addressing recycling rates is expanding current kerbside recycling to include plastic pots, tubs and trays and plastic packaging. 76% of councils do this already, and this would ensure that the local council meets plastic pressure group WRAP's minimum requirements on council recycling. In selected London areas, Veolia recycles a wider range of plastics and it is opening a new plant in Southwark to deal with an expanded range of recyclables soon.

However, if Veolia is unwilling or unable to start taking Brighton's plastic, we must find a contractor who is, such as Biffa Polymers which opened the UK's first rigid plastic processing plant in 2012; the city cannot afford to wait until 2033 to deal with this issue. Our current arrangement with Veolia allows for contractual changes and the local council could follow the example of Sheffield, who broke ties with Veolia to cut costs and recycle more efficiently.

- Composting

As we moved to Brighton, we immediately started researching what recycling scheme was in place. We were appalled to find that information wasn't readily available and kerbside recycling options were limited. To our surprise, food waste collection isn't a service provided by the council. We expected to at least have a fully subsidised alternative in order to compost at home, but had to buy a bin ourselves to install in our garden. As a result, we became aware of community composting stations, but we found it to be an ineffective way to compost, as well as failing to widely promote food waste recycling. We're aware that Veolia does provide food composting services (for businesses, in Brighton and Hove, and for households, in other parts of England such as West Berkshire) and we believe kerbside collection would be the only successful way to involve the population into making food composting the norm, and not a virtuous act.

Should this not be possible, we admit that a somewhat acceptable compromise would be to truly implement the pre-existing community recycling stations. It's unlikely that many individuals will bring their food waste almost half a mile from their home on a weekly basis.

It is also unfair to expect over three thousand citizens (needed to properly serve most households) to volunteer to take charge of this chore to help their community, when it should be a basic service provided by any city in a wealthy country such as the UK.

Should this compromise be reached (as a lesser alternative to kerbside recycling), we insist that Compost Monitors be rewarded for their time, and the population be supported in this as much as possible - providing free kitchen caddies would be the bare minimum.

- Awareness

There is currently a serious lack of information and guidance on food waste composting schemes, recycling strategies as well as small scale community movements. We call for better direction and promotion from the council.

Buses, local news and social media would be a good basis for improving awareness. Informative and promotional communication (similarly to London's campaign for the protection of the marine life in the Thames) is essential. Many councils deliver recycling calendars to households - to report collection dates, as well as encouraging recycling in all homes and inform about correct recycling behaviour.

Citizens would then have better knowledge of the different options available for composting and recycling. For instance, not everyone knows that the majority of tea bags are only 70 to 80% biodegradable due to plastic used to seal them, and are therefore not perfectly suitable for composting.

It should be the council's responsibility to emphasise this type of information so we can take action accordingly.

Many have the will to make small changes for a more sustainable living, but few know about the specificities and concrete actions that can be carried out. Brightonians have the motivation and drive to conduct efficient and green composting and recycling. The role of the council must not be undermined and should lead citizens' actions.

- **Budget**

We're aware that one main reason at the root of this poor recycling scheme is a serious lack in council budget, which suffered a 57% cut in the past 8 years. However, we do believe recycling would ultimately be the most cost-effective solution for our city!

Cardiff (along with most of Wales, striving to become a No Waste Nation by 2050) is setting outstanding standards for recycling, and is comparable to our city in size. Their overall net expenditure for household waste (which happens on a weekly basis and includes food composting) in 2013 was £23,468,644, equating to £157 per household per annum, which is £2m lower than Brighton and Hove council's household waste budget.

Furthermore, Wrap (the Local Authority Waste Portal) shows that weekly kerbside recycling and food composting, while reducing residual waste to fortnightly collections, would reduce the expenditure by over £20 per household annually. This would represent a significant saving for the council and would surely set an example for East Sussex and hopefully the rest of the country.

In conclusion, we require for Brighton and Hove council to improve the current recycling strategy and prove itself to be a truly progressive city.

The best way for this to take place is to truly encourage the population to favour recycling over general waste. Because of this, we believe it would be appropriate to start an operation to explain how recycling works, and promote it throughout our city across all levels of the populations (from schools to community centres). We believe it's time for our city to catch up with the rest of Europe, and pave the way for England to become a high recycling nation.

We demand for the Brighton and Hove council to: 1. work with Veolia or even local cooperatives to implement weekly recycling (even by introducing fortnightly general waste collection), 2. recycle a wider variety of plastic and food waste, encouraging Brightonians to set the standard nationwide.

#### **4. PROCEDURE:**

4.1 The petition will be debated at the Council meeting in accordance with the agreed protocol:

- (i) The Lead petitioner will be invited by the Mayor to present the petition and will have up to 3 minutes in which to outline the prayer of the petition and confirm the number of signatures;
- (ii) The Mayor will then open the matter up for debate by councillors for period of 15 minutes and will first call on the relevant Committee Chair to respond

to the petition and move a proposed response. The Mayor will then call on those councillors who have indicated a desire to speak in the matter, before calling on the relevant Committee Chair to respond to the debate;

- (iii) An amendment to the recommendation in paragraph 2.1 of the report or to add additional recommendations should be submitted by 10.00am on the day of the meeting; otherwise it will be subject to the Chair's discretion as to being appropriate. Any such amendment will need to be formally moved and seconded at the meeting;
- (iv) After the 15 minutes set aside for the debate, the Mayor will then formally put:
  - (v) (a) Any amendments in the order in which they are moved, and
  - (b) The substantive recommendation(s) as amended (if amended).

