



City of Westminster

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**COUNCILLOR DAVID HARVEY**  
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Dr Thérèse Coffey, MP,  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State,  
Department for Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs,  
Nobel House,  
17 Smith Square,  
London, SW1P 3JR.

Dear Minister,

### **Westminster City Council's Household Recycling Rate**

Thank you for your letter of 27<sup>th</sup> July regarding the Council's household waste recycling rate. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Nickie Aiken, has asked me to respond on her behalf in my capacity as the Cabinet Member responsible for waste management.

Although often referred to as involving waste from households, the household recycling rate is calculated from a much broader definition. For most local authorities this distinction will be marginal but for the City Council the inclusion of the majority of the litter and waste generated by the one million commuters and tourists entering central London each day has a very substantial impact on the Council's reported household recycling rate and consequent league table position.

I have highlighted below some of the Council's key achievements and the particular challenges it faces in increasing the household recycling rate. I would, of course, also very much welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss the Council's plans for the continued expansion of convenient recycling services both for residents and commuters/tourists. Should this be of interest then please contact [REDACTED]

### **Achievements**

The Council's achievements in delivering innovative recycling services in probably the most complex operating environment in the UK are widely recognised by peers and professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute for Waste Management and Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee.



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Awards in recent years have included the National Recycling Officer of the Year, National Recycling Team of the Year and Recycling Collection Crew of the Year;

- The Council has established and supports a network of 90 'Recycling Champion' volunteers to actively promote reuse and recycling within their own communities;
- The Council proactively 'door-knocks' 40,000 households annually (one-third of all properties) to ensure residents understand how to use their waste and recycling collection services;
- The Council has a dedicated full-time officer responsible for liaising with managing agents, porters/concierges and resident/tenant groups in multi-occupancy properties.
- The Council has a strong track record of working with neighbouring local authorities and national/regional government e.g. DCLG "In it to Win it" recycling incentive scheme, London Waste and Recycling Board - flats recycling infrastructure project and collaboration with LB Camden on a joint food waste collection service.

### **Challenges Specific to Westminster**

The particular challenges of increasing recycling in high-density urban areas are widely recognised. Westminster provides a textbook case study on many of the key issues:

**Highly transient population** - Resident turnover is high at 30% per annum. 66% of properties are rented privately or socially against a London average of 49%. The Council is also experiencing a range of issues from short-term lettings with 4% of all residential properties in Westminster being listed on the 'Air BnB' platform alone (see <http://insideairbnb.com>).

**High percentage of flats** - Flats account for 89% of the housing stock in Westminster (Census 2011); the second highest proportion of flats in the country after the City of London. The very high recycling/composting rates reported by many councils is often due to extensive garden waste collection services; an option not available in central London. Research by WRAP ([www.wrap.org.uk/content/recycling-collections-flats-introduction](http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/recycling-collections-flats-introduction)) also confirms that well-used communal recycling facilities typically yield half the amount of that from low rise properties. Communal waste and recycling facilities also present issues in identifying who is or is not recycling which significantly hinders targeted communications and/or enforcement activity.

**Deprivation levels** - Areas with high deprivation levels typically have lower recycling performance. Although Westminster is often perceived as a wealthy city it also has pockets of extreme deprivation. The Index for Multiple Deprivation 2015 has shown that 35 (27%) Lower Super Output Areas in Westminster are in the most deprived (20%) in England and 18 (14%) are in the top 10% most deprived.



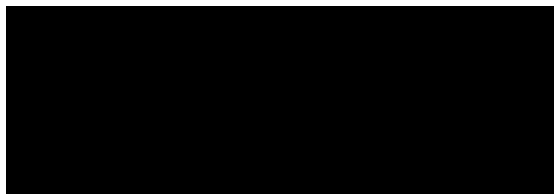
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**Street Litter and Tourism** - As noted above much of the waste and litter generated by the million visitors to Westminster every day (and the wider impact of major events and demonstrations) is included in the calculation of the Council's household recycling rate. Whilst efforts will continue to divert more street litter for recycling, the overall levels of 'household waste' in Westminster will continue to be largely determined by central London's success as an attractive location for business and pleasure.

**Future threats and opportunities** - The continued growth in visitor numbers from the opening of the Elizabeth Line, the planned pedestrianisation of Oxford Street and expansion of the night-tube network will all present specific challenges for the Council's street cleansing and recycling services. The Council does, however, have a very strong track record of rising to such challenges.

Opportunities arise from growing confidence in the value of secondary materials. The current price trends are positive and if continued will provide more value for the materials collected and further incentivise the collection of more recyclables.

Yours sincerely



Cllr David Harvey  
**Cabinet Member for Environment, Sports and Community**  
**Member for Vincent Square**