

ITEM 7**PAPER NO. WRWA 22-23****WESTERN RIVERSIDE WASTE AUTHORITY**

MEETING	21 st September 2022
REPORT FROM/AUTHOR DATE	General Manager <i>(Contact Rachel Espinosa - Tel. 020 8871 2788)</i> 12 th September 2022
SUBJECT	Report by the General Manager on a review of the potential for delivering a joint communications campaign with the constituent councils.
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STATUS	Open - circulation of this paper is not restricted.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	Paper No. WRWA 20-05, January 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report sets out the result of an initial review into the potential for delivering joint communications campaigns with the constituent councils and provides a background to the Authority's previous communications activity.
2. The report introduces:
 - i) The background to the Authority's previous joint communications activity;
 - ii) The outcomes of initial discussions with the constituent councils;
 - iii) The outcomes of initial research into the activities of other joint waste disposal authorities, highlighting any benefits cited.

RECOMMENDATION

3. It is recommended that the Authority instructs officers to continue liaison on the potential for joint communications with constituent council Technical and Communications Officers and report back to the November 2022 meeting of the Authority.

BACKGROUND

4. The Authority previously ran an extensive joint communications campaign, launched in January 2003, funded with £5.5m of Landfill Tax funds through Cory at the start of the WMSA contract, for a period of five years. The aim was to try to halt and reverse the growth in waste, which was increasing 3% year on year at that time. The campaign, 'Rethink Rubbish Western Riverside', which was later renamed 'Recycle Western Riverside', delivered a programme of outreach activity within all four constituent councils.
5. The activity included intensive advertising and communications campaigns, a dedicated website, attitude surveys and awareness roadshows, alongside an education programme for schools and the incorporation of an education centre within the Smugglers Way MRF (from 2011 onwards). The constituent councils committed to delivering kerbside dry recycling collections, bring banks and home composting campaigns. Joint communications focussed on embedding the 'reduce, reuse, recycle' message.
6. Initially the programme relied heavily on external teams from Waste Watch and London Remade, but was brought in-house in 2013 for financial reasons, with the Authority recruiting two Education Officers to deliver the on-site Education

programme and its own staff managing the joint Communications campaign. From 2013, communications activity was delivered on a 'needs must' basis, focussing on encouraging residents to reduce their waste and recycle clean, dry and specified recyclables to reduce contamination in kerbside collections, and improve the quality of materials received at the MRF.

7. During 2019, officers reported that progressing joint communications had become challenging due to the difficulties of gaining consensus between the Boroughs, particularly on agreeing the look and feel of campaigns and joint branding assets. At the January 2020 meeting of this Authority it was resolved that the Authority would no longer:
 - a) use external advertising;
 - b) commission public engagement events across the four boroughs, (except for four media/poster sites at Sainsbury's stores that are booked until 10th October 2020, the costs of which will be met from the 2019/20 budget);
 - c) promote its campaigns on the constituent councils' vehicle panels or communications;
 - d) advertise in borough publications or through Council Tax bill dispatches.
8. It was also resolved that WRWA would design and promote its own messages and logo using the core £25,000 budget that was allocated. This was halted during the Covid-19 pandemic and the majority of communications in 2020/21 and 2021/22 focussed on the closing and reopening of the HWRC due to the pandemic and the introduction of the new Booking System.

WRWA Communications Plan 2022/23

9. At the January 2022 meeting of this Authority, Members approved a budget of £45,000 for the financial year 2022/23. It was agreed to continue with the "What Happens to my Recycling" campaign in the financial year 2022/23, using social media, and to focus attention on increasing Reuse and Recycling at the HWRC. Members approved a Plastics Plan as a new campaign for 2022/23 and to keep in place a £20,000 budget for any campaigns that may be appropriate from the introduction of new waste management legislation. A breakdown of the agreed budget is shown below:

Work Stream	Annual Budget	New Waste Management Requirements Budget, if required	Total
Social Media advertising – using paid-for targeted posts (by location) on Facebook, Nextdoor and Twitter	£5,000		
A design budget for all electronic adverts, posts and communications material at the HWRC	£10,000		
Communications relating to increasing Reuse and Recycling at the HWRC.	£5,000		
Social media advertising and communication materials – Cory/WRWA joint Plastics campaign	£5,000		
A budget for any new Waste Management requirements, if required for innovation, special projects or new engagement methods.		£20,000	
Total	£25,000	£20,000	£45,000

10. At the June meeting of this Authority, Members queried the Authority's involvement in a joint plastics campaign to be delivered in conjunction with Cory. Officers have since informed Cory that the Authority will not be progressing this campaign jointly with them.
11. It was resolved for officers to explore the potential for a joint communications campaign with the constituent councils and report back to the September 2022 Committee Meeting. In addition to the Communications Plan set out above, the Authority's outreach activity is limited to the work of the education team, whose activity is detailed in the [Annual Report](#) (see Paper No. WRWA 22-12). Any new joint activity would therefore require an additional budget to be determined and agreed.

Potential Joint Communications Activity

12. Following the resolution of the June 2022 Committee Meeting, a meeting was held on 21st July with Technical Officers and Communications officers from the constituent councils to discuss the appetite and potential to deliver joint communications. Attendees commented that there are already communications being delivered within the Boroughs to residents around topics relevant to the specific collection services. The feedback from the discussion centred on demonstrating the benefits of any joint communications campaigns to justify allocating any future budget.

13. The Deputy General Manager undertook to look into this further and investigate communications delivered in other joint waste disposal areas. This is reported below. Subsequently, the topic was discussed again at a meeting of the Technical Officers on 17th August 2022. It was agreed to bring back the research findings to a further joint meeting of Technical Officers and Communications Officers from the constituent councils.

Joint Communications in Other WDAs

14. Investigations were made into the joint communications activities of the following waste disposal authorities to understand their activities, budgets and their reporting of the benefits, i.e. how they measure success:

- East London Waste Authority (ELWA)
- West London Waste Authority (WLWA)
- North London Waste Authority (NLWA)
- Surrey County Council - Joint Waste Solutions (JWS)

15. In addition to email and phone calls with relevant officers, the authorities' publicly available reports were reviewed for budgetary and monitoring data. Headline budgets and activities are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Budgetary Information

WDA	Key Activities	Ref	Budget & Year
ELWA	East London Waste Prevention Programme	https://eastlondonwaste.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/ELWA-Waste-Prevention-Programme-Year-2-Action-Plan-2022-23.pdf	£189,000 for 2022/23 (includes salaries)
WLWA	Circular economy, net zero carbon and climate emergency projects	https://moderngov.harrow.gov.uk/(S/0jk1kcvp3d1smurun1wvgu55))/documents/s174364/Circular%20Economy%20and%20Net%20Zero%20Carbon%20and%20Climate%20Emergency%20Projects	£50,000 for 2022/23 (does not include salaries)

		0Zero%20Carbon%20Update.pdf	
NLWA	Residual Waste Reduction Plan 2020-2022	https://www.nlwa.gov.uk/sites/default/files/inline-files/2565.238%20-%20Residual%20Waste%20Reduction%20Plan%20-%20INDESIGN-PDF%20rebranding%2042pp%20V4b0.pdf	£865,000 for 2020/21 (includes salaries)
JWS	Watch Your Waste campaign and other waste reduction projects	See Appendix 1	£170,050 for 2021/22 (includes salaries)*

*Excludes an unknown portion of £516,000 allocated to communications around contamination in flats

16. In some instances, Western Riverside's constituent councils are already engaged in joint communications activity with other London Boroughs. For example, WLWA has commissioned the [Restart Repair Directory](#) through the Restart Project, which is a web-based directory to assist residents with finding a reliable repair business for electrical items. The intention is that items will be maintained to extend their life and thereby reduce waste.

17. Inclusion in this project has been offered at a discounted rate to London Boroughs including two WRWA councils: Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea. The discounted rate of £2,500 has been applied, instead of £4,000 per council, under the condition that WLWA acts as a single point of contact, thereby reducing administrative effort and costs for the project. WLWA has requested WRWA to promote the Directory.

18. Two WRWA councils are also involved in the One World Living (OWL) project, initiated by LEDNet. The programme aims to reduce consumption emissions across London by two-thirds by 2030. The focus is on four key areas: food, textiles, electronics and plastics. The target is to achieve a 70% reduction in consumption emissions across London compared to the 2018 baseline. There are lead authorities for each theme: Wandsworth Council is leading on textile wastes, alongside WLWA; Hammersmith & Fulham Council is leading on electrical wastes.

19. In April 2022 all London boroughs were invited by ReLondon to participate in a pan-London behaviour change campaign on food which had been highlighted as one of the key interventions in the food action plan arising from the One World Living programme, one of London Councils' seven climate programmes.
20. The [Waste and Resources Action Programme](#) (WRAP) provides a comprehensive suite of communications guidance to assist local authorities to communicate with residents, including the provision of free assets such as toolkits, logos and digital assets to use or tailor as necessary. Many of these are aimed at recycling schemes delivered by waste collection authorities. WRAP states that it focusses on the areas where it can make the biggest difference, i.e. food and drink, clothing and textiles and plastic packaging.

Measuring Benefits and Impact

21. In conversation with the WDAs listed above, it was apparent that they all experience challenges in evidencing the success of communications activities in general, particularly those aimed at waste prevention. These activities are recognised as difficult to measure as the desired changes in behaviour often result in there being no opportunity to count or weigh items, if they are being passed on to others instead of being disposed of.
22. In terms of measurable impacts on waste tonnages through behaviour change, the WDAs accepted that this would be challenging to prove since resident behaviour is affected by a whole host of other external factors such as inflation, energy costs, etc. Measuring success commonly involves monitoring the level of engagement with a communications plan, such as the number of 'clicks through' on websites and the number of 'impressions' on social media. Analytics provides accurate data on how many unique views a digital campaign may have attracted, but it is not able to track corresponding behaviour change as a result of the interaction with the campaign.
23. The key benefit cited by the WDAs researched was the cost savings achieved for the authorities involved. By working together to deliver joint communications, savings can be made through economies of scale and efficiencies, whereby one set of communications material is designed but used by multiple authorities.

Conclusion

24. The WDAs investigated accept that it is difficult to evidence direct cause and effect links between joint communication campaigns and behaviour change, particularly for those focussed on waste prevention and reduction, as there is no way of knowing if engagement really translates into measurable impacts on waste tonnages.

25. It is possible to demonstrate that there can be economies of scale where one set of communications material is designed for use by multiple authorities, but historically this has been challenging in the WRWA area due to the difficulties of gaining consensus between the boroughs on the look and feel of campaigns and joint branding assets. Hence, the decision taken in by WRWA in January 2020 to reduce its communications as described in paragraph 7 above.
26. Given that it was agreed to bring back the research findings to a further joint meeting of Technical Officers and Communications Officers from the constituent councils, it is recommended that the Authority instructs officers to continue liaison on potential joint communications with the councils and report back to the November 2022 meeting of the Authority.

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12th September 2022