

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Waste and Recycling Committee

Date: 22 January 2025

Subject: R4GM Community Fund

Report of: Michelle Whitfield, Head of Communications & Behavioural Change, Waste and Resources Team

Purpose of Report

To seek feedback from members regarding updating the terms and conditions of the Recycle for Greater Manchester Community Fund.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to:

1. Note and provide comments and feedback on the proposals set out in the report to update the aims and objectives of the Community Fund, to change the name of the fund and to redevelop the application and scoring process to prioritise projects that are higher up the waste hierarchy. The changes will be implemented from April 2025.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

GMCA along with its partners are working together to have a genuine commitment and practical approach to reducing inequality through communication and engagement. We are working to agree a common set of standards for communications, defining minimum requirements and expectations on accessible information, enabling a consistent approach to translation, easy-read, sign-language, publication and social media. As a minimum, this means evidencing 'due regard' to the needs of all communities of Greater Manchester (as per the Public Sector Equality Duty).

The team are assessing what documents could be translated into other languages taking into account the diverse communities of Greater Manchester. An ESOL (English for Speakers of other languages) training package has also been created with Bolton College. The resources which are available on the website introduces words commonly associated with recycling at home.

The Recycle for Greater Manchester and GMCA websites have both been updated to meet accessibility requirements.

The accessibility regulations build on existing obligations to people who have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 (or the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland). These say that all UK service providers must consider 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people.

At least 1 in 5 people in the UK have a long term illness, impairment or disability. Many more have a temporary disability.

Accessibility means more than putting things online. It means making content and design clear and simple enough so that most people can use it without needing to adapt it, while supporting those who do need to adapt things.

Risk Management

Successful and effective delivery of the communications and behavioural change plan will result in increased capture of recyclable materials and assist in driving down contamination. Contamination and access to recycle markets remains a critical risk in 2024/25 given the additional processing costs associated with removing contamination.

Legal Considerations

The requirements for SUEZ to support GMCA communications and engagement activities that relate to waste and resources are set out in the Waste and Resources Management Services (WRMS) contract and the Household Waste Recycling Management Services (HWRCMS) contract.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The financial consequences of not delivering the communications and behavioural change plan is an increase in waste disposal costs as a result of high contamination rates in the recycling bin.

Financial Consequences – Capital

There are no implications on the capital budget that arise from the activities set out in this report.

Number of attachments to the report:

N/A

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

N/A

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

GM Transport Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction/Background

The Recycle for Greater Manchester (R4GM) Community Fund is in its fourth year. Every year £220,000 is available for community groups, schools, volunteer and faith groups to run projects based on reducing waste, reusing, repairing or recycling household waste. To date 90 projects have been supported.

The money is raised from sales of pre-loved items from our 3 Renew Shops, Renew eBay store and Renew online shop. Household items are donated to the household waste recycling centres, transported to the Renew Hub where they are repaired and upcycled by a team of experts and then sold in the shops. All money raised goes towards supporting communities and charities in Greater Manchester either via the R4GM Community Fund or by an annual £100,000 donation to the Greater Manchester's Mayor's Charity.

After 4 rounds of funding, it was necessary to carry out a review of the Community Fund to ensure it was meeting our goals of reducing waste, and increasing reuse, repair and recycling and that the outcomes were being measured effectively. To achieve this, the team reviewed the reports and outcomes from the completed projects from the first 3 years, gained feedback from community groups and spoke to several local authorities to understand how they approach managing similar funds.

2. Key Successes

The Community Fund has supported a range of innovative projects including:

1. Greater Manchester now has its first [Library of Things](#) which is full of the things you need but don't want to buy, like power tools, carpet cleaners, sewing machines and tents. Located in Levenshulme's old library, local residents can borrow instead of buying which saves money and reduces the need to buy new;
2. The [Little Green Sock Project](#) in Trafford takes donations of children's clothes and equipment and redistributes them to families in need. They work with professionals supporting families in financial crisis such as health visitors and foodbanks who refer families to the Little Green Sock project for help with clothing their children;
3. [Humans MCR](#) run a foodbank and also operate a delivery service for families in Bury, Rochdale, Manchester, Stockport, Trafford and Salford. Their service ensures supermarket food doesn't go to waste, and they can provide an essential food delivery service for those in need;

4. **Heatons Repair Café** in Stockport is a community café where residents can take household items to be repaired and have a coffee and chat;
5. [Recycle IT in Bolton](#) refurbishes computers and laptops to tackle digital inclusion and electronic waste. They also offer work placements and volunteer opportunities to help train up others in how to repair computers. The computers and laptops are redistributed for no or low cost to those in need; and
6. **Flixton Primary School PTA** in Trafford is redistributing school uniforms, books and toys by taking donations and making them available to those in need.

3. Learning from Other Authorities

As part of the review of the Community Fund, the team has spoken to other Authorities who deliver similar schemes to learn specific best practices that may be useful in evolving and improving our Community Fund.

Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) act as the statutory waste disposal authority for the Liverpool City Region. They run a similar fund in partnership with Veolia, that community projects can bid for on an annual basis. Up to £8,000 is available for projects run in one council area, £30,000 is available for projects that operate in 4 out of the 6 council areas. Around 14 to 17 projects are funded each year from an overall budget of £165,000.

Projects must focus on the prevention, reuse or recycling of one or more of the four priority household waste materials which have been identified by MRWA as key, namely **Food, Plastics, Textiles and Furniture**. An analysis of waste in the region highlighted that a greater amount of these materials could be re-used or recycled. Projects can also include other household waste materials, for example paper, card, metals.

They run a two-step process where groups can submit an expression of interest before completing a full application form.

MRWA have recently carried out a similar review of their community fund to encourage more reuse and repair projects.

Relondon is a partnership between the Mayor of London and the London boroughs to improve waste and resource management and transform the city into a leading low carbon circular economy. They do not run a fund for community groups but instead run a fund for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) as they have found that this provides the scalability and longevity needed to stimulate the growth in the circular economy. They also

provide expert, practical, one-to-one support and consultancy to small businesses, helping them to grow by translating circular principles into business opportunities.

North London Waste Authority (NLWA) is the statutory waste disposal authority for seven North London boroughs. They established the North London Community Fund to support waste prevention initiatives in North London. The Fund provides community-based (not-profit-making) organisations with funding to develop new approaches to reduce waste and/or extend the reach and impact of existing waste prevention activity in North London. It was set up in 2017 and has supported 59 projects. £250,000 per annum is available which is split into small awards of up to £5,000 and for medium sized projects up to £15,000 is available. The fund must be used to develop new approaches to reduce waste and/or extend the reach and impact of existing waste prevention activity.

The community funds from both MRWA and NLWA support projects similar to those in Greater Manchester and have a similar application and scoring process.

4. Review of Project Outcomes

Analysis of the first three years of funded projects shows reporting needs to be improved so that we can accurately capture the outcomes and report on the impact of the projects. During the first round of Community Fund projects, reporting focussed on measuring tonnage of waste prevented, reused, repaired or recycled. Across the 21 projects funded, 4,363 tonnes of materials were reported as being recycled, reused, repaired or redistributed. New outcome measures were introduced in round 2, so across the 26 projects funded in that year, 89.96 tonnes of materials were reported as being recycled, reused, repaired or redistributed as well as 1,000 volunteers and 7,498 people engaged in activities such as workshops and events. Following the evaluation of round 2, tonnage measurements were removed from the reporting process.

Outcomes reported from the 22 projects that were funded under round 3 (September 2023 to September 2024) are as follows:

- 732 volunteers took part in one of the funded projects;
- A total of 12,756 people were engaged through workshops and projects;
- 756 items of clothes were reused or repaired;
- 1,202 non-electrical items were repaired & reused;
- 339 bikes were repaired or reused;
- 6,566 electrical items were repaired and reused; and

- 69,516 kg of food waste was diverted from Energy from Waste.

Over the past 3 years, continuous improvements have been made to streamline the application and reporting process to enable us to evaluate the success of the projects. However, the most recent review has highlighted the need for some further improvements summarised below.

5. Recommendations

To continue to drive the increase in the number of projects involved in repair and reuse, it is recommended to refine the aims and objectives of the Community Fund to align with the overall business objectives of the Waste and Resources team.

5.1. Aims

The Community fund aims to increase the amount of household items that are donated, shared, repaired, upcycled and redistributed to reduce the amount we throw away.

5.2. Objectives

- Increase the number of community projects involved in donating, sharing, repairing, upcycling and redistributing household items like clothes, shoes, bikes, furniture, tools, books, school uniforms, IT equipment etc;
- Raise awareness of the different ways that residents can donate, share or borrow household items, places to get household items repaired or upcycled or ways to volunteer or learn new skills in repair and upcycling;
- Change people's behaviour and attitudes towards buying pre-loved or second hand, borrowing, hiring or renting items to reduce what we buy; and
- Increase community cohesion and improve mental wellbeing by bringing people together to share their knowledge, experiences and household items for the benefit of others.

5.3. Improvements

To enable us to better connect the source of the funding with its purpose, it is suggested to change the name of the fund to Renew Greater Manchester Community Fund.

To help communicate the purpose of the Fund, the new graphics developed by Keep Britain Tidy will be used to communicate the importance of reducing what we buy, using items again and again and repairing items to make them last longer.

It is also recommended to update the application process and weight the scoring to prioritise projects that are higher up the waste hierarchy to focus on waste prevention, reuse and repair rather than on recycling projects.



Fig 1. Graphic developed by Keep Britain Tidy to demonstrate that waste prevention, reuse and repair is better for the environment than recycling.

6. Next Steps

If the recommendations are agreed, the aims and objectives will be updated and the application and scoring process will be redeveloped ready for the Community Fund to open at the start of April 2025.