

RECYCLING IN THE ROYAL BOROUGH

By Ankit Rao

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In February we had a very informative talk from Ankit Rao, Waste Awareness Officer, on the Royal Borough's management of rubbish. We learnt that there are 60,000 properties in RBWM, each household being entitled to a black and purple box for recycling; paper and cardboard going into the black box and glass, plastic bottles and tin cans into the purple box.

Purple waste lorries collect refuse from the grey wheelie bin and the white lorry collects recyclable materials. The white lorry is split, so that items from the black box go into one side of the lorry, items from the purple box go into the other side. The surprising thing to some of us was that only plastic bottles can be put into the purple box, the lids having been removed; no other type of plastics should be put in, because there is no end markets for them.

We were shown some samples of recycled goods which even included fleecy hats!!

The emphasis of the presentation was that if we do not recycle we *will* be sending more waste to landfill. This is not desirable because of a lack of space, pollution and increasing landfill costs. Ankit did put out a plea for mothers to go back to the "good old days" of using washable nappies, as the problem of disposables is becoming insurmountable, though I don't think in these days of the throwaway society this could ever be a popular move. However, it does highlight the enormous changes in lifestyle over the last forty years.

One solution touched on was the use of incineration, wildly unpopular in this country as illustrated by protests recently in Essex, but used successfully in other parts of Europe. Could this be a suitable alternative?

The variety of ways that recycling is carried out in different boroughs throughout the country highlights the problems of cost and availability. Although the Royal Borough is working hard towards dealing with waste responsibly, one wonders if it should be more of a national concern and the Government should be making provision for waste disposal so that the service you get does not depend on where you live.

Should it be left to private enterprise to find solutions?