

Domestic Waste Recycling Scrutiny Review - Draft Final Report

Background

1. In June 2012 the Community Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee met to consider a number of possible topics for scrutiny review during the 2012/13 municipal year. They also received information on a number of planned service reviews by Directorates for areas within the committee's remit, which included:
 - The rationalisation of waste rounds (including consideration of a move away from the policy on same day waste collection arrangements)
 - Policies at household waste sites
 - Greenwaste collection
 - Commercial waste/recycling/incinerator
2. Discussion took place regarding a proposed topic on commercial waste. Officers provided information as to why commercial waste income targets were not being achieved and the charging structure, together with an update on the waste incinerator plan and the alternative arrangements that might be put in place depending on the outcome of an ongoing planning application.
3. In view of the planned service review of commercial waste, the Committee agreed that it would not be appropriate to carry out a scrutiny review on that topic at that time. However, they agreed there were aspects of domestic recycling that merited review e.g. the disparity between rates of recycling within different parts of the community and comparisons with other local authorities.
4. At a meeting in July 2012, the Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered an associated scrutiny topic submitted by Cllr Healey on Domestic Waste Recycling.
5. In coming to a decision to review the topic, the Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee set up a Task Group to carry out the review on their behalf and agreed the following remit:

Remit - To identify future improvements in CYC's working methods in order to increase domestic waste recycling

Key Objectives:

- i. To consider best practice from exemplar Local Authorities including incentive schemes
- ii. To consider the views of CYC waste operatives
- iii. To gather evidence on the effectiveness of the initiatives scheduled for this financial year.

Information Gathered & Analysis

6. Objective i - To consider best practice from exemplar Local Authorities including incentive schemes

The Task Group carried out an analysis of the 20 top performing Local Authorities (LAs) in terms of recycling rates recorded in 2010/11 – see table in Annex A. Of the 20 LAs looked at, 2 were Unitary Authorities and 18 were WCA's. The highest recycling rate recorded was by Rochford District Council, a Waste Collection Authority (WCA) with a recycling rate of 66%.

7. Residual Waste

- 1 WCA had a weekly collection of residual waste in a 140L wheeled bin.
- 18 LA's had an alternate week collection of residual waste and recycling
- 1 LA had a fortnightly collection of residual waste and a weekly collection of recycling.
- 2 x LA's collected residual waste in 240L wheeled bins
- 3 x LA's collected residual waste in 180L wheeled bins
- 1 x LA collected residual waste in a 140L wheeled bin.
- 1 x LA collected residual waste in black sacks.
- 13 x LA stated wheeled bins but size was unspecified
- 19 LA's specified a 'No side waste policy'
- 1 LA allowed residents to purchase additional sacks for residual waste to be placed alongside their wheeled bin. (£12 for roll of 15 sacks)

8. Dry Recycling

- 19 LA's had a fortnightly collection of recycling
- 1 LA has a weekly collection of recycling

9. <u>Materials collected</u>	<u>% of LA's that collect at the kerbside</u>
Paper	95%
Cardboard	85%
Aluminium tins and cans	95%
Foil	50%
Aerosols	55%
Plastic bottles	85%
Mixed plastic packaging	65%
Plastic film and bubble wrap	25%
Tetra packs	45%
Glass	85%
Textiles	5%
Shoes	5%
Books	10%
Batteries	10%
Mobile phones	5%
Printer cartridges	5%

10. Garden Waste

- 100% of the Local authorities have some kind of Garden waste collection service available for residents
- 2 x LA's have a weekly service
- 18 x LA's have a fortnightly service
- Of the 18 LA's with a fortnightly service, 5 have a chargeable subscription system (prices range from £30-£47 per bin per year)
- None of the LA's that charge for garden waste suspend the collection over the winter period.
- Of the 15 free collections from LA's, 4 reduced the garden waste service over the winter months.

11. Food Waste

- 16 LA's have a food waste collection.
- 8 of these LA's have a weekly collection and 8 have a fortnightly collection
- All 8 LA's that have a fortnightly collection co-mingle the food waste with a fortnightly garden waste collection
- All 8 LA's with a weekly collection collect food waste separately in a food waste caddy.

12. HWRC's & Trade Waste

A common theme throughout was the non acceptance of trade waste at nearby HWRC's. In addition, many LAs had stringent permit schemes in

place at HWRC, including not allowing any construction waste or trailers entry and only allowing vans if they are the only registered vehicle at the property.

13. Bournemouth Borough Council had a 64% recycling rate despite no food waste collection and a subscription based garden waste collection. However, they did have dedicated garden waste bring sites which may explain their high recycling rate.

14. Waste Prevention

Waste prevention campaigns and information varied widely between Local Authorities. Most WCA that had food waste and garden waste collections had limited waste prevention information available for the public.

15. Whereas, those Local Authorities that did not have food waste collections, or charged for garden waste collections or collected a limited number of dry recycling materials, provided comprehensive waste prevention information.

16. The Task Group looked in detail at the following four 20 top performing LAs from 2010-11, in an effort to better understand their recycling rates (see Annex B). They noted that:

- Rochford District Council provides a simple and instructive bin schedule and detailed lists of the widest ranges of recyclables collected nationally.
- South Oxfordshire District Council provides in depth information via their website about what can and cannot be recycled. Also information on where else / other ways things can be recycled.
- Bournemouth Borough Council runs 'big' bin / 'little' bin scheme. Bin provided for landfill rubbish is smaller than recycle / garden waste bins. Comprehensive website including waste strategy and schemes.
- Stratford upon Avon District Council
- 3 out of 4 of the above LAs:
 - Collect household waste and garden waste fortnightly – Bournemouth Borough Council collects household waste weekly and Rochford District Council collects garden waste weekly
 - Collect garden waste all year round with the exception of South Oxfordshire District Council which offers a year round 'opt in' service with a charge per bin (see paragraph 17 below)
 - Runs a food waste service and offers a kitchen caddy to those who want one, with Bournemouth Borough Council being the exception.
- All use one mingled bin

- All have very detailed lists and guidance

17. The Task Group noted the charges made by South Oxfordshire District Council for the collection of garden waste and bulky items; £34.00 a year for a 240 litre wheeled bin emptied fortnightly, and a minimum charge for bulky waste collection of £21.00 for up to 3 items and a further £6.67 for each additional item (service limited to a maximum of 6 items per collection day).
18. The Task Group also looked in detail at four of the 20 top performing LAs from 2010-11 (see Annex C). They noted that Vale of White Horse District Council runs an app named 'BINFO' that helps users find out when their next collection is due and which bin needs to be out. Residents can also register online for their garden waste scheme. It also provides homes and flats unsuitable for wheeled / shared bins with pink sacks for rubbish and green sacks for recycling, which are collected fortnightly (rubbish one week and recycling the next).
19. The Task Group also considered information on recycling by other LAs considered similar to York i.e. within the same family group. Information and waste statistics for those LAs for the periods 2010-11 & 2011-12 are shown at Annex D.
20. The Task Group also considered the pros and cons of 'Co-mingling' i.e. the collection of materials in a single compartment vehicle with the sorting of these materials occurring at a Materials Recovery Facility. They considered a Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP)¹ document called 'Choosing the Right Recycling Collection System' which addressed the issue of which recycling collection system was best and in particular whether kerbside sort systems or co-mingled collections were to be preferred. – see copy attached at Annex E.
21. Customer Insight Study on Residents' Recycling Behaviour & Communication Preferences
The Task Group considered the findings from a study of resident's behaviour carried out by Southampton City Council & its Partners. The project was undertaken in an effort to tackle waste management &

¹ WRAP UK was set up in 2000 to help recycling take off in the UK and to create a market for recycled materials. Over the last decade, they have helped and continue to help local governments devise strategies to deal with those issues through their expertise, research and practical advice.

recycling issues, and enable a more direct targeting of customers who did not recycle or who contaminated their bins, thereby reducing the need for the Council's more generic campaigns. See a summary of the work undertaken and the finding from the study at Annex F.

22. The Task Group were particularly interested in the results from the socio-demographic profiling undertaken as part of the study, and noted that Southampton City Council had used those findings to help focus their behaviour change campaigns and achieve better value for money.
23. The Task Group agreed that where those same profile groups existed in York, similar achievements could be made if the propensity of each group to change its behaviour, and each group's communication preference was taken into consideration. The level of achievement possible would be based on the population volumes of each of those profile groups.
24. **Objective iii. - To gather evidence on the effectiveness of the initiatives/campaigns scheduled for this financial year.**
The Task Group received information on the promotional initiatives planned for 2012/13, and agreed to focus their work in support of their third objective on the council's 'Recycle More' initiative, which was one of the themes in the Zero Waste York Challenge work plans for 2012/2013 and 2013/2014.
25. 'Recycle More' included promotion of kerbside recycling to boost participation, capture rates and quality of material collected, which the task group agreed would support the aim of their scrutiny review. The Scrutiny Task Group therefore sought the agreement of the appropriate Cabinet Member for a number of rounds to be used as control rounds during the implementation of the 'Recycle More' initiative in 2012/13. The Task Group planned to use the data gathered to carry out a comparison of the results from the control rounds with that of the remaining rounds of a similar type.
26. The Task Group learnt that for each basic area subject to review, the following key elements would be included:
 - Background - Identify demographics of area, current and proposed services, waste data and targets, research, funding and support.
 - Situational Analysis - analyse current position, outline where we need to be.

- Aims & Objectives - Define aims and objectives (**S**pecific / **M**easurable / **A**chievable / **R**ealistic / **T**imebound).
- Target Audience - Identify audience i.e. all householders, internal and external groups, specific groups, hard to reach and engage, lifestyle characteristics.
- Branding & Messaging - Developing communications i.e. visual identity, tone of voice, type of message.
- Strategy & Communications Methods - Develop overall approach, methods to support services, methods to reach audiences, impact of each method, and distribution methods.
- Campaign Activities - Develop individual campaign aims and objectives, communications tactics, agree measuring and evaluation mechanisms - such as participation, tonnages, recycling rate, website hits etc.
- Planning Activities - Scheduling and costs linking with service provision and national events. Schedule campaign activities, outline indicative costs, and include contingencies.
- Monitoring & Evaluation - Evaluate whether overall aims and objectives achieved, and individual campaign aims and objectives achieved. Review impact of campaign activities and determine future activities.

27. An example of how the approach would be utilised was provided i.e.:

Comparing block of flats A and B that are of similar size, have same recycling service and similar recycling performance.

Block of flats A

- Identify recycling performance and customer satisfaction.
- Make no changes to services.
- Do not promote services.
- Review recycling performance.

Block of flats B

- Identify recycling performance and customer satisfaction.
- Review service that is provided to ensure that there are sufficient communal recycling containers on site. If not, arrange for additional containers to be provided.
- Consult with residents to identify any issues and barriers to using recycling service. Try to resolve any reasonable and affordable service issue(s).
- Promote recycling service to ensure that residents know what is available and how to use it (leaflets, posters, door to door canvassing)

etc.). Also take the opportunity to inform residents about what other services are available from the council or other organisations.

- Try to recruit a local person to help monitor the recycling service so that problems can be identified and resolved as soon as possible.
- Assess opportunity to introduce additional recycling facilities in the area (for example at a local meeting hall or school).
- At the end of the trial period quantify the outcome of the work, e.g. expenditure, impact on recycling performance, customer satisfaction etc.

Compare block of flats A with block of flats B

- Compare recycling performance and customer satisfaction at both locations to establish if the work undertaken provides value for money and could be rolled out to other similar locations.

28. It was agreed that the comparison work would focus on the actions and participation levels of residents living within areas predominantly consisting of semi detached housing and a high density of council owned housing. The comparison project ran from October 2013 to March 2014 and focussed on the Kingsway North and Monkton Road areas.

- Test area - Kingsway North and streets surrounding (629 properties)
- Control area - Monkton Road and streets surrounding (604 properties)

29. The streets included in the test and control areas are listed in Table 1 at Annex G.

30. For the purposes of comparison, both areas were monitored and evaluated at the beginning and end of the project, but only one area (test area) was targeted with a bespoke campaign, whilst the other experienced no changes (control area). At the Task Group's request, data was collected again in June 2014 in an effort to track any sustained benefits from the campaign work. To ensure consistency of approach the same methodology for monitoring and evaluation was carried out in both areas. The work was carried out in a number of phases:

Phase 1 – Monitoring & Evaluation - October to December 2013

Phase 2 – Planning, project work and area based communications –
January to March 2014

Phase 3 - Monitoring, evaluation and recommendations

A detailed breakdown of the work carried out in each phase is shown at Annex G.

Conclusions from Comparison Work

31. The campaign work identified the following:

- Communications in the test area were effective with positive results and benefits including:
 - Establishing a new, more customer friendly approach with communications.
 - Use of consistent branding for leaflets, letters and other campaign materials.
- Targeting a campaign at a small local community is potentially much more cost effective than a city wide blanket coverage campaign.
- Specific needs and solutions are much easier to identify in the smaller area, e.g. barriers to using kerbside recycling service, access to bulky waste items collection service.
- Various financial and non financial incentive schemes used all encouraged good levels of participation.
- Overall levels of recycling and the number of residents participating in the kerbside collection service increased in test area. There was an average increase of 0.42kg of recyclables collected per household (equivalent to increase of 6.9%). Replicated city wide this could help capture 1,000 tonnes of additional recyclables and thereby save £100,000 per annum in landfill disposal costs at current rates.
- The project generated a wider interest and understanding about waste services with residents. Benefits of this are potentially much more wide reaching than just the kerbside recycling service. In particular many residents are now more aware of opportunities for preventing waste and reusing items and materials and this should provide financial benefits in the future with more waste being diverted from landfill.
- Residents more readily identify with project delivery on a small local community scale, with campaigns and communications designed to fit their specific needs, thereby making it easier to influence behavioural change. This avoids problem of messages getting lost in a city wide blanket coverage campaign.
- This type of approach also helps to establish local contacts who CYC can work with on future campaigns and projects.
- Lack of staffing resources meant that there were limited opportunities to liaise with established local voluntary groups and community organisations to establish actions with shared goals. For example, In

the Clifton area work is ongoing with local community projects such as St Joseph's church which has developed a green agenda with the first 'Eco congregation' with waste reduction highlighted as a priority.

- In terms of longer term behavioural change and action in the area the campaign would have greatly benefitted from these additional resources.
- Offering financial incentives to residents was effective but not the sole contributing factor to improved participation in the kerbside recycling service and waste prevention activities. The role of financial incentives in encouraging greater levels of participation was tested during the 'Return to Sender' incentive where only half the residents involved in the incentive were informed about a prize draw. The results demonstrated that participation was consistent amongst residents entered in to the prize draw and those that were not. However a financial incentive was offered to residents for return of the postal survey. A high response rate from residents with over 75% requesting to be entered in to the prize draw suggests that a financial incentive was in this instance effective.
- Sustained levels of encouragement and consistent communications were important factors that encouraged involvement in the campaign.

Proposed Review Recommendations

32. In terms of future campaign work and development the following recommendations are proposed:
 - i. Adopt the approach used in support of this review for future campaign work to target specific locations and communities to boost participation, capture rates and quality of material collected in kerbside recycling in poor performing areas. Also important to look at opportunities for implementing waste prevention and waste minimisation activities.
 - ii. Ensure future campaign and communications work allow for flexibility to adapt and add features to meet the particular needs of householders in specific locations and communities.
 - iii. Ensure sufficient resources and capacity are available to continue to work at a community level and allow officers time to establish measures that may foster longer term behavioural change and sustain improved levels of participation.
 - iv. Continue to investigate the use and impact of financial and non financial incentive schemes to encourage participation in waste management schemes and activities.

- v. Develop the branding, and produce bespoke and consistent campaign communications.

Options

- 33. At this stage, the Task Group have a number of options:
 - a) Endorse the proposed review conclusions and draft recommendations as shown at paragraphs 31 & 32 above
 - b) Identify alternative conclusions and recommendations.
- 34. To conclude the work on this review, the Task Group are recommended to:
 - i. Identify any amendments required to this report
 - ii. Agree the review conclusions and draft recommendations

Implications & Risk Management

- 35. Once the draft recommendations have been agreed by the Task Group, information on any associated implications and risks will be sought, and included in the report prior to its presentation to the Full Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee in September 2014.

Reason: To conclude the review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols

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Report Approved



Date

12 August
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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Annexes:

- Annex A** – Analysis of the 20 top performing Local Authorities (LAs) in terms of recycling rates recorded in 2010/11
- Annex B** – Breakdown on 4 of the top performing LAs in 2010/11
- Annex C** – Breakdown on 4 of the top performing LAs in 2011/12
- Annex D** – Information on LAs in York Family Group
- Annex E** – Supporting information on Choosing the Right Recycling Collection System
- Annex F** – Customer Insight Study on Residents' Recycling Behaviour & Communication Preferences
- Annex G** – Detailed Feedback on Campaign Work Carried Out in Support of Objective (iii)

Report Abbreviations:

CYC – City of York Council

LA – Local Authority

HWRA – Household Waste Recycling Centre

WCA – Waste Collection Authority