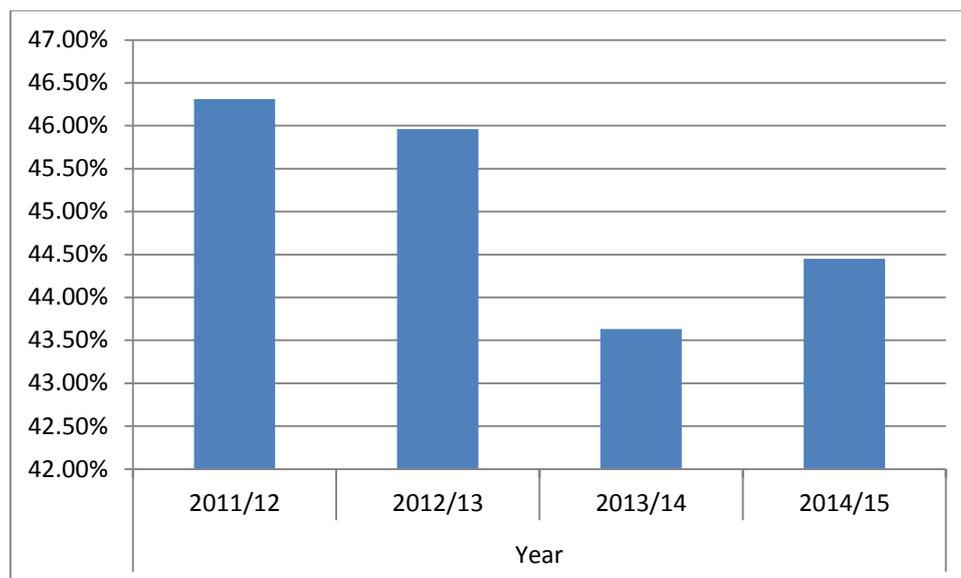


## Report from Executive Member for Environment

Since returning to the post of Executive Member for the Environment I have been actively reviewing the current situation so that the council can be in a position to improve the appearance of the street environment, and to make more significant contributions to sustainability in its wider sense across the city.

### 1. Increasing recycling and reducing waste

Recycling has not had the impetus that it previously had, and had fallen significantly from the strongly performing position prior to 2011. Due to the loss of revenue by the council in Landfill Tax this is a position which the authority needs to turn around. I have asked that plans are brought forward to assist residents with utilising the existing recycling services to their maximum to divert waste from landfill.



*Recycling rates from 2011 (2014/5 projected)*

Communication with residents needs to be improved so that they feel that their efforts to reduce waste are being matched by the council. Due to vehicles being out of service needing repair there has been an increasing mixing (co-mingling) of recycling into the back of the same wagon. It was to allay concerns over what then happened to the waste, that recently I went to see the separation of this type of mixed material at the Yorwaste plant at Seamer Carr (near Scarborough). Whilst it is reassuring that this means that the

authority is not incurring Landfill Tax there are still other costs which are being caused by this method of disposal – amounting to around 50 tonnes per week on average. Therefore, I have asked for the business case to be brought to a public decision session which will enable the purchase of new vehicles. The report will reassess the advantages of separation of recyclables as currently happens in York and has been successfully operated for almost 10 years and delivers a high quality material which gains a premium value in the recycling market – for which residents gain benefit through City of York Council’s shareholding within Yorwaste.



*Seamer Carr Facility*

**Compost** – following the time in January this year when a large amount of compost caught alight and created a smoke cloud over the west of the city <http://www.yorwaste.co.uk/news/update-on-compost-fire/> the advice of the Environment Agency has been followed. Batches are processed after a shorter wait and temperatures at the core of the pile are taken frequently. Managers had been very co-operative with me as a ward councillor at the time, and I was glad to see these changes first hand.

Compost is available for free to residents each Sunday until 20th September (except bank holiday weekends). Opening times: the site will be open from 8.00am to 1.00pm for residents to collect free compost

Changes are being implemented with the aim that compost from Harewood Whin can achieve Pas 100 certification so that it is a more valuable compost product. As Yorwaste is part owned by City of York Council then this will be of benefit to council tax payers. <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/bsi-pas-100-producing-quality-compost>

There will be a report on active encouragement for communities to maximise recycling through the existing systems later this year. This will accompany the extension of the Green Waste collections and improved working with landlords. I would encourage ward councillors and residents to participate in this process.



Composting at Harewood Whin

## **2. Pride in York, and local environmental decision making**

Residents want to take pride in the area where they live, but there have been increasing concerns about the tidiness of the streets in the city. This is coupled with assumed reductions in the Street environment budgets built into the February 2015 budget. It has taken a large amount of time since May to review the current position. I have asked for a review of the reduction of litter bin provision established in March 2015 which will be coming to an Executive Member Decision Session so that there is greater transparency of the decision

making, and there will be detailing of policies to enable Ward Committees to address litter bin provision within their wards.

Decisions will be devolved to Ward Committees on the provision of many street level services to ensure localised solutions to maintaining a cleaner city. A detailed list will be provided to each Ward Committee on grounds maintenance and street cleansing by the round of Ward Team meetings in the autumn. This will give clarity on the base level of provision from the council given the resources available, and will enable Ward Committees working with Parish Councils and Residents Associations to review any additional targeted works using devolved funding. A list of service options will be provided to enable Wards to make these decisions.

The first application of weed spraying has taken place this year with the next phase to start on 1<sup>st</sup> August. In a number of instances there had to be a re-visit and I hope that all members will let me know locations where the service needs a review. I have asked for better communication from the council with residents.

One additional feature on which I received a number of emails and communications shortly after being appointed was for areas (often verges) to be designated for wildflower habitat. This would increase the surface of the city being of benefit for habitat, and enable grass cutting budgets to be utilised elsewhere in the provision of service. I am meeting with officers to develop a policy review on this for adoption later in the year.

The city centre is a particular concern due to the high levels of footfall across the year. I have spoken with residents and businesses and asked officers to review the need for new equipment to ensure that the streets are as clean as they can be. The Business Improvement District (BID) will be important to enable enhanced provision over the baseline of service that the council can provide recognising that the economic realities have moved on since 2008 with public sector spending.



Staining on pavements



Benches showing wear

I have asked officers to review the delivery of street ‘furniture’ and facilities to ensure that these are robust, easy to keep clear of graffiti, and assist with quick maintenance (such as around trees)

### 3. Flooding and Surface Water Drainage

With the impact of Climate Change there have been increasing concerns about higher peak level river flooding, and more surface water drainage “flash floods” due to intense rain patterns.



There has not been the focus on gully cleaning that there was in previous years. This is beginning to show around the city (see photo of gully which has now been cleared). I have asked for a comprehensive review of gully cleaning where they are blocked, and repairs where they are squashed into the road surface and unable to provide much help to drain water. There are many complex drainage systems around the city and these will need joint work with other partner agencies to ensure that they are all functioning and providing the protection to properties and businesses that are needed. The flooding of last August, and more recently earlier this month has identified a range of locations

where a purely reactive gulley cleansing regime has led to potential maintenance issues which may have contributed towards highway and property flooding. A thorough review of the service has begun and surface water flood risk mapping data has been used to identify areas likely to be most affected and the costs and benefits of re-prioritising or expanding the basic maintenance programme of gulley cleansing. There will be a report in October for a new approach to this service, and utilisation of additional capital funding.

i. Renewal of Main River Defences

The Environment Agency are delivering an updated river model throughout the city, this will be used to fully understand the standard of protection afforded by all of our river defences. The city's defences were built in the 1980's and very early '90's and very little comprehension of climatic change was known at this time. It is therefore extremely likely that a wholesale renewal and replacement of our defences will be required.

Appraisal work is scheduled for 15/16, we will deliver this in partnership with the Environment Agency funding and a rolling programme of defence improvement has been programmed in to follow. However, it would be likely that the defence costs could not be fully supported by Defra funding and contributions would be required. A wide ranging funding model will need to be developed to investigate wider benefits and opportunities for funding. The Water End Flood Alleviation Scheme (Leeman Road) was an example of this where a commitment in February 2011 of £1 million by the council ensured that the scheme was progressed for planning and subsequent delivery.

ii. Catchment Studies

A study has been procured to better understand the South Beck catchment in the light of increasing pressure from development in the Monks Cross area and the limited knowledge of the catchment, this has been delivered in partnership with the Inland Drainage Boards and the Environment Agency.

#### **4. One Planet York, and Carbon Management**

York has strong reasons to appreciate the impact of Climate Change through impacts on flooding and the Council has a responsibility to lead in the

progression towards sustainable use of resources based on the principle of 'one planet living'.

There are savings which can be made in terms of energy and water use which ensure the utilisation of resources for frontline services, which also in this case make a significant impact in reducing carbon emissions, and the use of limited resources.

I have asked officers to bring forward plans to develop a Carbon Management Programme which includes water usage but which will have measurable outcomes broken down by year. This will build on the success of the council's first Carbon Management Programme set in 2008. This met its goal of reducing carbon emissions by 25% by having a sound business plan with stretch targets built in.

There are opportunities for the council to encourage the local generation of renewable energy appropriate to the location. This can be either on council land/property or through new developments. I have asked that a report comes to the Executive this autumn to progress this work and have feasibility studies. Partnership working in this field needs to be enhanced to share best practice, and to assist promoting the city as an innovative location to encourage technology, businesses and for the benefits to be taken up by the public.

Cllr Andrew Waller

Executive Member for Environment