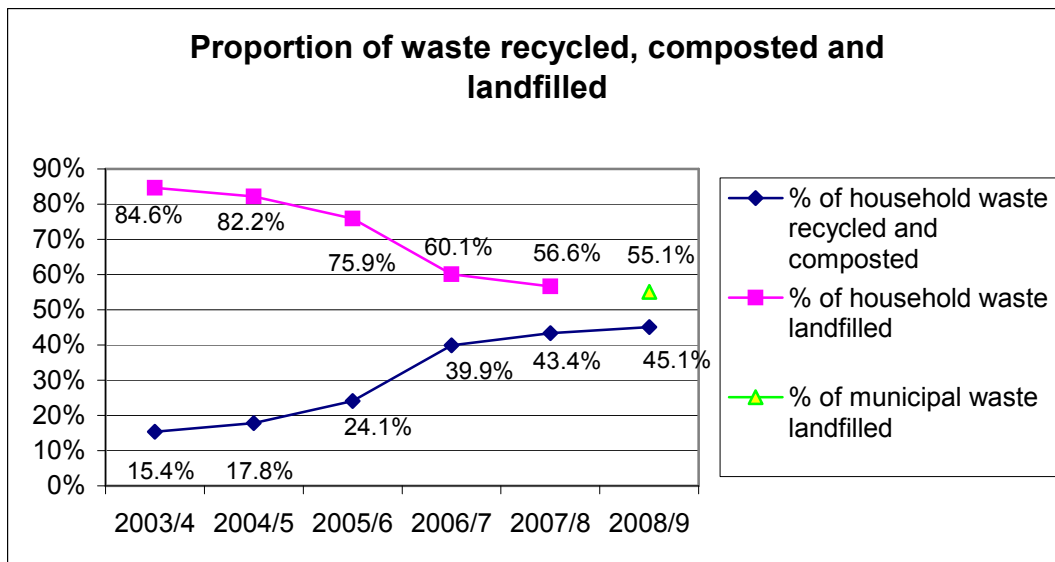


## NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES REPORT TO COUNCIL. OCTOBER 2009.

I ended my last report to Council noting the forthcoming departure of the Director. I start this one welcoming our new Director, Sally Burns, to her first Full Council meeting.

**Waste Management.** Our recycling rates continue to rise whilst the total tonnage of waste collected reduces. Recycling rates hit 46% in the first quarter of 2009/10. Last year there was a 4.1% reduction in waste generated in the City, a 4820 ton reduction on 2007/8 with each home producing 34kg less residual waste in 2008/09. Research shows that this overall drop is as a result of changes in buying habits due to the recession and a reduction in manufacturers packaging. Waste minimisation schemes have also played their part, for example York Rotters, the Nappochino events, Choose2Reuse and LoveFoodHate Waste.



Kerbside recycling has been rolled out to 645 properties in The Groves with a team and programme in place to roll out a kerbside service to the rest of the city by the end of 2010. Lessons learnt in the Groves will be used to inform the rollout.

The HWRC permit scheme was launched in February in order to crack down on rogue traders who disguise trade waste as household waste and to ensure that York sites are mainly used by York residents. Permits are free and just over 3000 have been issued.

Customer satisfaction with domestic waste collection now stands at 79%—among the best figures for those councils with alternate weekly collections.

**Local Environment.** The results of the Place Survey for the Department was very encouraging and echoed our June cleanliness survey which showed just 4.5% of areas surveyed suffered from unacceptable levels of litter. We are on target to exceed our 2009/10 target of 7.5%. Detritus remains a problem with 13% of areas having unacceptable levels in June. Measured levels of graffiti peaked in June 2008 at 8%, prompting a multi-agency

response to tackling this problem. An example of this is the recent reward scheme for people with information about York's six most common taggers. For now we are on top of the problem, with the last 3 surveys finding unacceptable levels of graffiti in about 3% of York's streets.

### **Yorkshire in Bloom and other awards**

- York achieved Silver Gilt again in the 2009 Yorkshire in Bloom awards, with the city's floral displays looking stunning.
- The Registrars Service's first Delivery Inspection in March 2009 was awarded a rating of "good" - just 3 marks short of Excellent.
- The Customer Service Excellence standard, which replaced the government's Charter Mark award, was awarded to Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing and Bereavement Services in June 2009. One of the first Authorities to be assessed, out of 53 criteria we only dropped points on 2.
- 176 Staff in the Civil Engineering, Highways, Neighbourhood Pride and Building Maintenance departments gained either NVQ's or Institute of Leadership and Management Qualifications.

**Highways Maintenance.** A proportion of highways maintenance staff transferred from City Strategy to Neighbourhood Services in January and the service has focused on integrating the former client and contractor staff together, with staff physically moving to the Eco Depot in the spring. Inspection and repairs performance has been maintained – e.g. 98% of emergency work carried out within 24 hours during quarter 1 of 2009/10. This year's R & R programme is on track to be completed on time. The service is working on how to use better technology to reduce energy use from York's street lights, including a target to reduce carbon emissions by 25% over the next 5 years to March 2014.

**Environmental Health and Trading Standards services.** Our regulatory services department remains one of the most go ahead in the country. Highlights since my last report include:

- *Scores on the doors.* The website highlighting the outcome of food hygiene inspections in local premises has been published. We have now received over 47000 'hits' on the website.
- *Cold Calling Control Zones.* We now have a total of 88 cold calling control zones around the city incorporating 4088 properties.
- *Air Quality.* We opened an eleventh air pollution monitoring station in Fulford in January 2009.
- We have achieved the best NI183 PI score in the Yorkshire and Humber region for our 'impact on the fair trading environment'
- *Underage sales.* We received a government grant of £8000 to work on underage tobacco sales and ran a publicity campaign and carried out 64 test purchase visits (which resulted in 11 sales and warning letters to the offenders).
- The *Consumer Advice Service* saved York consumers £36,206 from the detrimental effects of unfair trading.
- The *Dog Warden service* have issued 30 x £50 fixed penalty tickets for dog fouling.

**Neighbourhood Management.** The NMU took the lead in consulting on the Sustainable Communities Act and the process which identified issues important to the community felt has been held up as a model of good practice. Residents entered into the process with gusto with over 300 suggestions processed and whittled down to the 7 that were forwarded to the LGA. We now wait to see which, if any, of the 300 proposals submitted nationally result in a change to legislation.

**Organisational Development.** Staffing issues remain key and a major challenge is to maintain the much lower sickness rate achieved in 2008/9 – when NS lost 11.25 days per fte down from 19.2 in 2005/6. I am pleased to support the more proactive approach with staff being offered help and support through one-to-one health checks and a drop-in Health Fair. About 50 member of staff from across NS are working on an organisational development programme with 6 work teams looking at Communications, Learning and Development, Health & Safety, Business Processes, Fairness, and Staff Welfare. I attended a workshop in July where they reported their initial findings and I look forward to seeing the staff's ideas being put into practice.

**Eco Depot** The security changes highlighted last year have now all been implemented. The reception point has been relocated to the entrance and barriers restrict entry to those with passes. We will be bidding for a permanent reception building through the Capital Programme.

**Taxi Licensing** Nearly 300 drivers have successfully gained the BTec/NVQ qualification. Unfortunately the September course will be the last as the national funding has ended. The sheer numbers involved reflects the professionalism and commitment to raising standards of the taxi trade. For new applicants the council has adopted the Driver Standard Agency driving test. The test is designed especially for hackney carriage and private hire drivers and will enhance driving skills and raise driving standards. The council are determined to demonstrate a strong stance in protecting the public and to reinforce the public confidence. This year the department has worked very closely with the police and other agencies and used the 3 yearly CRB checks and taken action to revoke or suspend 8 licences for serious drugs, fraud, sexual, theft and drink driving offences.

**Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing** In September a new Alcohol Exclusion Zone was granted for Clarence Gardens making a total of 19 such areas in the city.

This summer the department take part in the multi-agency summer drinks campaign to reduce binge drinking - Operation Alten8. Each weekend a themed project took place on the streets of York to highlight the health risks of alcohol abuse.

**Bereavement Services** Continual improvements are being made to the crematorium with a major refurbishment of the toilet facilities. We have implemented a computerised database and booking system which allows

funeral directors to make bookings at any time, thus providing a better service to bereaved families.

Neighbourhood Services staff in all sections continue to provide an excellent service to all their customers and I would like to thank them all for their unstinting commitment to the City and the Council.