
**Meeting of the Executive Member for
Neighbourhood Services and Advisory Panel**

25th July 2007

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

**Response to petition from students at the University of York,
presented at Council on 12th April 2007.**

Summary

1. This report has been prepared in response to a petition presented to Council by Cllr Potter on behalf of 60 students at the University of York. The report gives details of waste and recycling development already undertaken at the University and explores options for future development.

Background

2. City of York Council has collected domestic and commercial waste from the University for many years. Until 2004, little emphasis was placed on recycling, with the majority of waste being taken to landfill. In 2004, following examples set by Leeds Metropolitan and Derby Universities, the University of York tendered for the provision of a managed waste service, with diversion from landfill as a key driver.
3. City of York Council, in partnership with Yorwaste, was successful in winning this service and the new contract started in September 2005. Key to success was the provision of 'pay by weight' for the waste taken to landfill and options to provide incentives for recycling.
4. Since the start of the contract, the University recycling rate has increased from 25% to 38%. This is in line with the growth in recycling rates across the rest of York, with the City of York achieving a current rate of 39.6%.
5. Whilst it has been relatively straightforward in dealing with the commercial waste produced by the University, and segregating elements of this for recycling, making provision for the recycling from student accommodation has proved more challenging. The University has storage capacity throughout the campus that has enabled us to provide large bins for the containment of recyclable materials as well as waste destined for landfill. Unfortunately, many of the student accommodation blocks do not have the same storage space and has restricted recycling activity in this area.
6. There are over 8,000 students studying at the University, with 4,500 living within the campus area. The Student Union has its own environmental

representatives who co-ordinate recycling activity across campus with the facilities management team. Recycling is widely promoted throughout the campus and City of York Council is involved in providing officer time and marketing materials to assist in this. The vast majority of students are engaged in recycling and this is usually centred on shared communal areas, such as kitchens. Due to the lack of storage space, and the distance accommodation blocks are from central bin stores, many students, whilst actively recycling, are not engaged in the movement of the material to a central collection point. This has been an issue between the Student Union and the campus management for some years, as the University's own staff do not have the available resource to assist. This has resulted in the Student Union 40 environmental reps undertaking this task on behalf of the other students.

7. At full council on 12th April 2007, Cllr Potter presented a petition on behalf of the students at the University. The petition read: *'We, the undersigned, call on the council to extend kerbside recycling facilities to the University of York and on the University administration to pass their land fill tax credits directly to student recycling reps to help carry out recycling schemes'*. The petition consisted of 60 signatures.
8. In many areas of the University, it is impossible to provide the same kerbside service as the council does to other residents. This is largely due to the restrictions on vehicle access.
9. The problems experienced by the University are not dissimilar to those we have with flats and terraced properties throughout York. During the tender process, we identified that the University was almost a microcosm of York, a city within a city, and that it would be useful to pilot ideas here and to share the learning throughout the remainder of the city. Therefore, the barriers to recycling at the University cannot be overlooked, as success here can make the implementation of the Household Waste Recycling Act¹ much easier.

Consultation

10. As part of the ongoing waste management contract, officers from City of York Council and Yorwaste meet monthly with facilities managers and student reps from the University to discuss 'on the ground' management of operations. In addition to these monthly meetings, more formal quarterly meetings are held which focus on KPIs and data supplied on waste and recycling. There is a formal annual review of the contract in March each year. At this meeting variations to the contract are agreed as well as price increases and variances.
11. Several site meetings have also taken place to address the issue of domestic recycling from student accommodation. The latest site visit was undertaken on 6th June 2007 and representatives from City of York Council, Yorwaste, the University facilities managers and student reps were in attendance.

¹ This Act places a duty on Local Authorities to collect at least two recyclable materials from every household, where possible, by 2010.

Options

12. Part of the petition presented to Council, calls for the University administration to pass their recycling discounts to Student Union reps that assist in recycling. This is a matter between the University and the students and is not explored further in this report.
13. There are two other options to improve the domestic recycling options at the University:
 - Option 1 The current kerbside scheme operated by the council to its residents could be expanded to encompass areas of the University campus containing domestic accommodation.
 - Option 2 A system of bespoke arrangements for each domestic area is assessed and implemented.

Analysis

14. Option 1

This would be difficult to implement given the current geographic layout of the campus. Many of the student accommodation areas are situated in areas away from the main vehicle routes and are served by footpath access only. There are several communal bin stores within easy access of the road, and which our vehicles currently service, though moving the recyclates from the flats and kitchens to these stores is an issue for many students. Some areas of the campus are serviced by The Friends of St Nicholas Fields who operate some domestic recycling on our behalf. However, they are not able to cover any more of the campus than they currently do as they share the same access issues.

Option 2

The University management and students favour this option and some initial site survey work has already been undertaken. The key factor is how the recyclates are moved from point of production to point of collection. Given the difficulties with vehicle access, our service can only collect from the communal bin areas. The students are only prepared to move the recyclate to a container within easy reach of their accommodation. To bridge the gap, smaller wheeled bins would be introduced outside each accommodation block and would be moved to the central collection point by University staff on collection days. Not all bins would be moved together as different materials are collected each day and so the burden on University staff is minimised.

Options for the storage of materials within the accommodation block have also to be considered. For flats and kitchens on the ground floor, the current boxes would be sufficient. However, flats and kitchens on first and second floor areas find these difficult to move as they can be heavy and many of the blocks are not served by lifts. The University have been provided with a recycling bag for each flat that is similar in design to the ones used by York residents for the

collection of plastic bottles. We have suggested that students use these bags to store and move materials to the containers outside each block. This was met with approval by the student reps though they would need to discuss it with the wider student population.

Corporate Priorities

15. Diverting waste away from landfill is a corporate priority and is being championed through the Neighbourhood Services Directorate. This Directorate is also responsible for managing the contract with the University. Ensuring that we maximise opportunities at the University will increase their recycling rate and that of York as an authority. It will also be a useful learning exercise when looking at similar issues away from the campus.

Implications

16.
 - **Financial** There are no financial implications at present. If any costs to the council are identified following s with the University on the above options, a separate report will be prepared for the Executive to consider.
 - **Human Resources (HR)** There are no HR implications.
 - **Equalities** There are no Equalities issues
 - **Legal** There are no legal implications.
 - **Crime and Disorder** There are no implications for Crime and Disorder.
 - **Information Technology (IT)** There are no implications for IT
 - **Property** There are no property implications.
 - **Other** None

Risk Management

17. There are no known risks.

Recommendations

18. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to approve option 2 and that officers continue to work with University staff and students to maximise recycling opportunities.

Reason:

Continuing to work closely with the University will reap rewards for the University and other York residents.

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Report Approved

Date 28/6/07

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None.

Wards Affected: Heslington, Heworth

All tick

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None