Executive meeting on Wednesday, 9 September 2026

Written representation in relation to agenda item 9, Recycling Review

Dear Executive Members,

The central concern is how far the Recycling Review report falls short across almost every part of the case it purports to present.

Executive is being asked to approve a major redesign of York's recycling service and recommend up to £2.8 million of additional borrowing, yet Members have not been given the baselines, calculations or analysis needed to take that decision.

The recommendation expressly asks Executive to approve 180L recycling bins "based on the financial business case supporting the project". That business case is absent from the published papers, nor even in pink.

There is no breakdown of the £2.8 million, assumed asset life, borrowing period, interest-rate assumption, calculation of the £280,000 annual financing charge or total financing cost. The £280,000 is said to be funded through fewer loaders, lower sickness and reduced agency cover, but the report provides no calculation showing how those savings produce a cost-neutral scheme.

There are almost no usable baselines. Members are given no before-and-after figures for crews, loaders, rounds or FTEs, no current agency cost, no sickness cost attributable to recycling-box handling and no estimate of the reduction expected from wheeled bins.

It is also unclear whether the proposed savings overlap with the existing £260,000 Waste optimisation target, now forecast to be delayed until 2027/28. The report is silent on the associated changes to crew working arrangements, including the ending of Task and Finish and the move to four extended working days. These changes affect the same staffing, productivity, sickness and agency costs.

The report's options analysis is confined to continuing with boxes or introducing wheeled bins. It does not assess the material choices Members are being asked to determine, including 180L against 240L containers, alternative collection frequencies, different household capacities or the financial and recycling consequences of each option.

The report gives no rationale for making 180L the standard. This would make York an extraordinary outlier: we identified no other English authority using two 180L recycling bins with each stream collected only every four weeks. North Yorkshire, CYC's chosen comparator, uses two 240L bins and published the capacity analysis supporting its decision.

York proposes this uniquely low-capacity model after a severe deterioration in its recycling performance. Since 2019/20, York has fallen 71 places among English local authorities, from 102nd to 173rd out of 321. Its recycling rate is now only 40.8%, below the 42.0% England average. CYC says the scheme must increase recycling, and further recyclable materials will enter the collection stream. Yet it provides no target recycling rate, forecast additional tonnage or household-volume analysis showing that 180L will be enough.

WRAP's current good-practice guidance, developed with Defra support and local-authority input for Simpler Recycling, specifies a minimum weekly-equivalent capacity of 60L for paper and card and 60L for metal, plastic and cartons. It also says each recycling stream should be collected at least fortnightly. York proposes 180L for each stream every four weeks, equivalent to only 45L a week, without explaining how this was tested against the guidance.

Larger households remain unresolved. CYC's own consultation found 240L particularly attractive to larger households and high recyclers, yet the equality assessment neither estimates how many will require the larger bin nor assesses the potential disproportionate impact on ethnic-minority households.

These are significant gaps across every major part of the proposal. Members should have the financial business case, the 180L capacity analysis and the missing financial and operational figures before being asked to approve it.

Gwen Swinburn