

Domestic Waste Recycling Scrutiny Review – Interim 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.
6. Work on the first two objective of the review was carried out in early 2013 and the Task Group provided an interim report to the Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee detailing that work, in March 2013. Officers are now required to assist Members in addressing objective iii by providing a clear and definitive response to when the required control rounds will be introduced, in order to conclude the work on this review.

Information Gathered & Analysis

7. 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 WCA with a recycling rate of 66%.

8. 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)

9. Dry Recycling

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

10. <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%

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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. 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:

- Rocheford 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 16 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

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.

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 & 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. 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.

23. **Objective iii. - To gather evidence on the effectiveness of the initiatives scheduled for this financial year.**

The Task Group received information on the promotional initiatives planned for 2012/13. They recognised that as resources for the promotional work were limited the Council needed to target them where it thought they would be most effective and obtain the best results. Initial research carried out generally indicated that the best target areas would be communal properties, terraced properties and areas with a high density of student population. The Task Group 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.

24. '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.

25. The Task Group learnt that some review and promotional work had been carried out during the 2012/2013 financial year, and was ongoing, but progress had been restricted by reduced availability of staffing resources for various reasons.
26. In addition, the work programme for 2013/2014 was being developed which would enable resources to be targeted where they would be most effective and obtain the best results. The Task Group recognised that the work would involve comparing service provision and performance at various property types and locations. And, that the basic areas subject to comparison and review would vary in size, e.g. blocks of flats, a street, several streets or a housing estate.
27. 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.
28. An example of how that approach would be utilised is detailed below:

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.

29. The Task Group noted that initially the work would be targeted at property types and locations where data for comparison and monitoring purposes was currently readily available, and would continue to be so. That first phase of work would include the following property types and locations:

- Communal properties, e.g. flats in areas such as the Groves and Navigation Road.
- City centre area within the city walls where service is provided by Friends of St Nicholas Fields.

- Areas with a high density of student population, e.g. Hull Road, Lawrence Street.
30. It will also include the introduction of some control areas/ buildings /rounds in order to support the work on the third objective of this review. The Task Group noted that this approach would avoid potential complications with the ongoing development of the waste collection rounds infrastructure and availability of robust data.
31. The rescheduling work on the waste collection rounds is due to be completed in the next few months and following this it should be relatively straightforward to move onto other low participation areas and build on the initial work detailed above. It is envisaged that this phase of work would include the following property types and locations:
- Terraced properties, e.g. Leeman Road, Poppleton Road, Burton Stone Lane area (such as Cromer Street and Garth Terrace).
 - Areas predominantly with semi detached properties, e.g. ETTY Avenue, Monkton Road, Dodsworth Avenue, Pottery Lane, Kingsway North and nearby streets.
32. Again, some controls areas will be introduced in order to gather data in support of the third objective of this review. The final stage in regards to supporting the final objective of this review, will be to calculate the waste tonnage to identify whether the campaigns carried out have led to a sufficient improvement to want the cost incurred to the council.
33. There are various methods that can be used for calculating waste tonnages:
- Visual assessment of the fill levels of recycling containers. The collection crew note down the fullness of each communal waste container bin before it is emptied. This can then be converted into a weight using the known fullness of a bin and appropriate conversion factors.
 - Use of vehicle on-board weighing equipment to record weights.
 - Dedicated collections of waste and recycling can be made from specific sites / areas using one vehicle. After collecting material from the site the vehicle goes to the weighbridge and the tonnage for that specific site / area is recorded.
 - Use of scales to weigh waste and recyclables.
 - Arranging waste audits to provide a snapshot of the waste and recycling stream.

34. The choice of method used for each area reviewed will be determined by a variety of factors - including property type, location, number of households, size of area, availability of vehicles and equipment, budget resources.
35. For each area that is reviewed an evaluation report will be produced. Each report will include a summary of the key elements of work undertaken and findings (using a template based on the key elements identified above).

Concluding the Work on the Review

36. Due to the planned timing of the promotional initiatives for 2012/13 and the hold up in introducing the control rounds to support the work on this review, it has not been possible to date to complete the comparison work in support of objective iii of the review.
37. The Task Group therefore presented their findings to date to the March 2013 meeting of the Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee, who agreed to reform the Task Group to conclude the work on the review, at the appropriate time in the new municipal year once the comparison data was made available.
38. Clear advice from officers on when the required work will be carried out in order to help bring this review to completion, is now being sought.

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Report Approved



Date 2 May 2013

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