

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY
DATE OF MEETING: 3 MARCH 2015
REPORT OF: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT
TITLE: 2015 REVIEW OF RECYCLING PLAN (2011- 2016)

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

No

1. WHAT IS THE REPORT ABOUT?

This report updates Scrutiny Committee Community on progress with the Recycling Plan since its approval in 2011 and seeks ongoing support from Scrutiny for recycling initiatives.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) That Scrutiny Committee Community note the progress that the Council has made to date in implementing the Recycling Plan 2011-16;
- 2) That Scrutiny Committee Community support the ongoing actions planned for 2015 that are described in this report.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION:

The actions described in this report are necessary in order to progress towards our recycling targets and meet the targets for income in the 2015/16 budget.

4. WHAT ARE THE RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING NON FINANCIAL RESOURCES

In the 2014/15 budget, the net cost of recycling is £169,680. This includes the cost of recycling strategy, MRF premises and operations and bring bank operations, less income from recycling credits and sale of materials to reprocessors. The actions described in the report are being implemented within existing staff resources.

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS:

There are no additional financial implications contained within this report.

6. WHAT ARE THE LEGAL ASPECTS?

There are no statutory recycling targets that currently apply. The Household Recycling Act 2003 requires the Council to offer a kerbside recycling collection of at least two materials. The 2011 Waste Regulations require us to report the quality of our output materials to the Environment Agency (paragraph 8.7 of this report).

7. MONITORING OFFICER COMMENTS:

This report raises no issues with the Monitoring Officer.

8. REPORT DETAILS:

Recycling performance

- 8.1 Exeter's recycling rate is projected to remain similar to the previous year, at 35%. A comparison with Exeter's 16 'nearest neighbour' local authorities in terms of geography and demographics was made in 2014. This showed that Exeter ranked 13th out of 16 in the percentage of waste that was recycled or composted. However, to put Exeter's position into context, 9 out of the 12 authorities ranked above Exeter offer a separate food waste

collection and/or a free garden waste collection, so only 3 comparator local authorities with similar recycling services, generated higher recycling rates. It is very apparent that a separate food waste collection would be the single biggest factor in improving Exeter's recycling performance, as 35% of residents' residual waste is composed of such.

- 8.2 A more useful performance indicator is the amount of waste sent for disposal, because this measures the effectiveness of waste reduction as well as recycling. This is normally measured in kg per head of population per year. On this indicator, Exeter ranks 82nd out of 229 English authorities, and 6th out of the 16 'nearest neighbours' in having the lowest amount of waste sent for disposal. This vindicates our waste reduction policies such as not collecting side waste and rigorously applying our allocation of rubbish bin capacity based on numbers of people living in each household.
- 8.3 There are currently no mandatory local recycling targets, but the UK as a whole is committed to a 50% recycling rate by 2020 as set out in the EU revised Waste Framework Directive 2010. In addition the Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Devon sets targets of 60% by 2020 and 65% by 2025. This includes waste from Recycling Centres, which are outside the City Council's control; when combined with waste recycled from Exeter's two recycling centres, the aggregated total is 48.5% waste recycled.
- 8.4 Our local target is to recycle 40% of household waste by the end of 2015/16. Implementation of effective social marketing methods to encourage recycling and bring about behavioural change have the potential to increase our current rate by two percentage points to 37%, but to achieve an extension beyond this percentage would be very challenging.

Reprocessing of materials collected for recycling

- 8.5 International market conditions have resulted in a fall in the value of most scrap materials and this affects the Council's income. The global fall in the price of oil has reduced the value of scrap plastic in particular, although we continue to sell the materials collected for a positive value, and normally at above the market average. This reflects our ability to sort materials into clean, separate streams and the benefit of joint contracts with neighbouring Councils for the sale of paper, glass and textiles.
- 8.6 Paper, glass, cans and organic waste account for 74% of the material collected for recycling and this is all recycled in to new products in the UK. 14% of our materials are exported to non-EU countries (cardboard to China and textiles to Dubai) and the other 12% (principally plastic) is sold to UK companies and a proportion of this is recycled overseas. Environmentally it is preferable to recycle locally, but the use of international reproprocessors enables us to achieve higher income. The environmental benefits of recycling outweigh the impact of transport, even to destinations outside Europe.
- 8.7 The 2011 Waste Regulations require all operators of Materials Reclamation Facilities (MRFs) to demonstrate that their output materials meet the quality specification required by reproprocessors. Since October 2014 Exeter City Council has carried out quality monitoring in accordance with Environment Agency guidelines. In the financial year to date, no loads sent to reproprocessors have been rejected, which reflects well on the operations at our MRF.

Potential to improve recycling rates

- 8.8 Exeter City Council has participated in a study by Eunomia Research and Consulting to establish whether a business case exists for a shared waste management service with standard rubbish and recycling collection arrangements across local authority boundaries. The potential partnership would be with Devon CC, East Devon DC and Teignbridge DC (DEET). The aligned collection service would feature weekly collection of recycling (adding

glass and textiles to the existing materials) and food waste, leading to an estimated improvement in recycling rate to 48%. Financial savings have also been estimated by Eunomia, however at the time of writing this report the final version of the business case had only just been published for consideration by the Council.

- 8.9 The analysis of Exeter's residual waste, which took place in April 2012, gives some guidance on where improvements in waste reduction and recycling could be achieved. Food waste accounts for 35% (by weight) of household waste sent to landfill. In other Devon districts where food waste is collected as a separate material every week, the food waste proportion is between 15% (East Devon) and 23% (West Devon). A well-used food waste collection can add several percentage points to a council's recycling rate.
- 8.10 More than a third of the household waste currently sent to landfill could, if properly separated, be dealt with using the Council's existing 'Recycle from Home' scheme, recycling banks or the garden waste service. Therefore, increasing participation in existing schemes should be effective, by implementing carefully crafted 'changing behaviour' programmes.
- 8.11 Appendices 1 and 2 show how the waste collected for recycling is split by collection method and material. The key points are:
- Kerbside recycling accounts for the biggest share of recycling (nearly 7,000 tonnes) so efforts to improve our recycling rate will concentrate on improving participation in this service;
 - Bring banks and garden waste collections also account for over 2,000 tonnes each, so increasing awareness of and access to these schemes is also important;
 - Despite the continuing decline in newspaper readership, paper remains the biggest material stream in our recycling, followed by glass and cardboard, so maximising yields of these recyclates is important;
 - Plastic is increasing as a proportion of the waste stream and the fact that Exeter can collect and sort mixed plastic (bottles, pots, tubs, trays and bags) enables us to maximise the capture of this material, but public awareness of this needs to be heightened.

2015 progress on recycling plan

Kerbside recycling

- 8.12 Kerbside recycling continues to be available to all households in Exeter. Wheeled bins, boxes and bags for recycling are available on request; households that are high recyclers may request additional receptacles. However, a nominal charge is made for rigid containers, which includes delivery. More emphasis will be placed on persuading residents to place more of their recyclates in the green bin.

Organic waste

- 8.13 An additional 300 customers joined the garden waste collection scheme in 2014, with a further 200 required to meet the target of 500 new customers by 2016. Work is underway to increase the customer base
- 8.14 Drop-off recycling points for Christmas trees were provided at four sites in Exeter on the weekend 9-11 January, with 2.18 tonnes of trees collected. This complemented the facilities at the two Recycling Centres, at Exton Rd and Pinbrook Rd, and avoided the cost (in both financial and environmental terms) of providing an additional kerbside collection of Christmas trees.

- 8.15 Home composters continue to be sold by the Council, with promotions such as one-day sales, however, more work is planned in encouraging composting in the community.

Trade recycling service

- 8.16 The trade waste recycling service has around 460 customers, an increase of 4% from April 2014 to date. In addition to the well-established card, paper, cans and plastics scheme, customers can now opt for co-mingled collections (all in one bin) as well as glass and food waste collections. Broadening the options for trade waste customers is seen as a positive step forward along with promoting the business benefits of recycling.

Bring banks

- 8.17 A review of bring bank sites was completed by the Recycling Officer in November 2014. Improvements to signage and maintenance are being carried out; in addition several opportunities were identified to add new textile recycling banks this year at some sites. This is part of a drive to make bring sites more attractive and accessible.

Schools and students

- 8.18 A free recycling service continues to be offered to all schools within Exeter. In addition to the actual collection of materials, the Council also provides an educational support service to all participating schools and colleges, including education visits and targeted communications and use of the MRF training room.
- 8.19 The Green Team initiative set up in partnership with the Express and Echo and Gregory Distribution Company has proven to be a successful way of engaging school-children and their families in the need to reduce waste and recycle from home. However, support from the Express and Echo will cease at the end of the current academic year as the reporter responsible will be working part time. This will bring to an end the 7 year successful partnership. It is important to note that over the years many children have benefited from being part of the Green Team and have taken part in a wide range of environmental based activities, some of which have been quite high profile. This has in turn benefited ECC as the coverage in the local paper has kept the work that we do in people's minds with regular reports and promotion of events. Teachers are reporting increased pressure on their timetables, despite this the Green Team activities continue to take place with little input from the Recycling Officer. The Green Teams are largely self sustaining, something that we set out to achieve. There are no plans to continue regular Green Team activities beyond July 2015 however the Express and Echo have agreed to continue to report on key green events that schools carry out if they contact them will information and photographs. The academic year will be concluded with The Green Team celebration awards held at the Corn Exchange, a fitting ending to the formal partnership.
- 8.20 Promotion of recycling and composting in Exeter schools continues with the Devon County Council-funded Resource Futures school visits, which are featured in the schools' curriculum. Seven Exeter schools have been provided with equipment enabling them to compost their own organic waste on-site, and one school now takes part in food waste collections through Exeter City Council. Exeter's Recycling Officer continues to keep in touch with schools through a weekly email newsletter.
- 8.21 Greater emphasis is now being placed on working with the University's Community Liaison Officer in developing more tailored information for students about refuse and recycling collection. Activities taking place in 2015 are:
- A survey by the University researching students' awareness of, and attitudes to, glass recycling. The results of the survey will help us plan how to increase use of bottle banks by students.

- Student Wardens are tackling issues of bins being left on pavements, rubbish presented on the wrong day and contamination of recycling through door-knocking and effective peer-to-peer approaches
- Information about waste collection, recycling and end of term clear-outs is included in the information packs for students departing at the end of the year and new arrivals at the start of the year. This includes promoting the new Student App, which includes reminders of rubbish and recycling collection days sent to students' mobile phones.
- Drama students have volunteered to produce a 'Love Food, Hate Waste' campaign.

9. Key actions planned for 2015

9.1 The key actions to maintain and extend Exeter's recycling rate planned for 2015 are summarised below:

1. Development of a social marketing campaign to bring about behavioural change to overcome barriers to recycling (e.g. awareness about what can be recycled, environmental benefit of recycling compared to landfill/incineration, societal benefits of recycling, etc.);
2. Improvements in our recycling bank provision – in the range of materials captured, the provision of additional mini-sites, and making sites more attractive and visually pleasing;
3. A stronger focus on working with the student population and linked stakeholders to encouraging more recycling and waste minimisation in this sizeable cohort;
4. Concerted effort to grow the garden waste customer base, but also to encourage more home composting and community composting schemes;
5. A strong drive on persuading businesses to recycle more of their waste through our Trade Waste Service;
6. Active participation by the Council in developing the DEET cluster waste partnership, which will give the potential to significantly increase Exeter's recycling rate in the medium to longer term.

Assistant Director Environment

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

Devon Authorities Waste Reduction & Recycling Committee: Annual Recycling Statistics July 2014

Contact for enquiries: Simon Hill, Cleansing and Fleet Manager
 Democratic Services (Committees)
 Room 2.3
 (01392) 265275