

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee – Community and Executive
Date of meeting: 1 March 2016
Title: Recycling Action Plan for 2016/17

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

This report presents the 2016/17 Recycling Plan for support and approval.

2. Recommendations:

- 1) That Scrutiny Committee Community supports and Executive and Council approves the Recycling Plan for 2016 (Appendix 1)

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

The actions described in this report are deemed necessary in order to progress towards our recycling targets and meeting the targets for income in the 2016/17 budget.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources?

The 2016/17 Recycling Action Plan is achievable within the proposed budget envelope for that year.

5. Section 151 officer comments:

There are no additional financial implications contained within this report.

6. What are the legal aspects?

Under the EU Waste Framework Directive the UK has a target to recycle 50% of household waste by 2020. The UK government has not set statutory targets on local authorities, but has the power to do so. The Household Recycling Act 2003 requires the Council to offer a kerbside collection of at least two materials.

7. Monitoring officer comments:

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

8.1 The Recycling Action Plan 206/17 (Appendix 1) provides the detail of the delivery programme for the year ahead.

8.2 An update to the Council's full Recycling Plan 2011-16 will be presented to Scrutiny Committee – Community on 7 June 2016. This will include a review of performance to date including the complete figures from 2015/16.

Report of: Assistant Director Environment

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

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Appendix 1: Recycling Team Action Plan 2016/17

Introduction

Exeter's recycling rate has plateaued at around 34% over recent years, which is well below the current UK average of 44%. The reasons for Exeter's low recycling rate relative to the rest of the UK include:

- Lack of a separate food waste collection suppresses our recycling rate by 8 percentage points
- The nature of Exeter's urban housing stock means there is less garden waste available for separate collection
- For single-tier district councils such as Exeter, the tonnage of waste managed at Civic Amenity Recycling Centres does not count towards the recycling rate.
- Recycling education and awareness efforts have not increased in recent years. The Council's recycling team has reduced from six to three FTEs and in 2014 and 2015 these resources were partially diverted to the reorganisation of waste collection rounds. This had little impact on recycling rates but has 'future proofed' the Waste Operations service by enabling us to accommodate the projected growth in household numbers for the next three years with existing resources

It is encouraging that in 2014/15, Exeter ranked 20th lowest out of 229 English local authorities for the total amount of waste produced per head, at 304kg per year (former BVPI184a). This indicates that we have been successful in minimising the amount of waste produced in the first place, which ranks above recycling in the waste hierarchy ("reduce-reuse-recycle"). It vindicates policies such as alternate weekly recycling /rubbish collections, charging for the collection of garden waste and applying a 'no side waste' policy alongside provision of appropriately-sized rubbish containers.

Measures to taken to implement the waste hierarchy since 2014:

- Extended fortnightly rubbish collections to 92% of the city. We have retained weekly rubbish collections only where lack of physical space makes this essential
- Extended the 'no side waste' policy to include excess waste placed on top of rubbish bins
- Revised the allocation of rubbish bin size so that the majority of Exeter residents are now provided with 140 or 180 litres' capacity instead of 240
- Exeter's residual waste is now treated at the Energy from Waste plant in Marsh Barton, meaning that none of the city's waste goes to landfill
- Established the regular use of web-based communications to promote recycling (gov delivery newsletter, Twitter)
- Installed mini-bottle banks at six new sites in areas of high population density
- Liaison with social housing, property managers and the University to improve communication, correct provision of accessible containers and recycling yield, however there is scope for increased and more targeted work in these areas.

Grey Bin Analysis 2013

The 2012 bin audit conducted by Jacobs on behalf of Devon County Council examined the contents of the average Exeter grey bin and found that over a quarter of this material could have been recycled using existing schemes, and a further 35% is food waste.

The report showed that on average 35% of the weight of rubbish bins comprises kitchen organics. It is not currently financially viable to introduce a food waste collection service, but even where there is one, it does not always result in high householder engagement and can increase waste arisings rather than focusing on the individual, regional and global benefits of food waste reduction. ECC promotes food waste reduction by endorsing WRAP's Love Food Hate Waste campaign and Exeter Food Hub; and by selling reduced price composters for uncooked kitchen waste. The methods for reducing food waste include better storage to make food last longer, better menu planning to reduce unused items going to waste and using up leftovers. The environmental benefit of food waste reduction is a direct reduction in the emissions released by decaying stored or composted food. The financial implications are a saving on Devon County Council's disposal costs, which can benefit other services in Devon – and there can also be financial benefits to the individual householder in terms shopping and using food more efficiently. A decrease in food put in the rubbish bin should also increase the recycling rate for Exeter.

Exeter is among the few Waste Collection Authorities to collect all household plastics – including pots, tubs, trays and film, and items labelled “cannot be recycled”. In spite of this, the bin analysis showed an average of 11% of the rubbish weight being plastic. The results on the percentage of different types of plastics in both the rubbish and recycling bins showed that of all the plastic thrown away we captured 68% HDPE bottles and 73% other plastic bottles for recycling, but only 13% film and 38% non-bottle plastic packaging. This would suggest that people are recycling plastic bottles but disposing of other plastics. This is also reflected in anecdotal evidence from people we spoke to at community events and student door knocking during Fresher's Week. Even the more environmentally aware residents seem to be missing the “all plastics” message. A series of campaigns to raise awareness, particularly in low performance areas, should help to resolve this and have a positive effect on the recycling rate. We have already set up a display at the Customer Services centre of the Civic Centre, attached to a GovDelivery promotional hessian bags giveaway for the introduction of the bag tax.

One of the more confusing outcomes from the analysis was the low capture rate for steel (46%) and aluminium (30%) cans. Aluminium is one of the highest priced commodities that Exeter extracts and sells at the Material Reclamation Facility. In spite of cans and tins being traditionally recyclable, compared to the relatively recent plastics market, 70% of the aluminium cans thrown away by Exeter residents end up being sent to the Energy Recovery Facility for incineration. Given the high capture rates for pulpables and plastic bottles, this seems illogical. One reason is that cans are more likely to be disposed of “on the go” and so end up as litter or in street bins, which are weak areas in terms of extracting recyclables in Exeter. Attempts to introduce on-street recycling have not proved successful in the past, but the recycling bins put in place were not particularly easy to identify. Most major cities and tourist towns have on-street recycling.

The capture rate for pulpables is above the UK average at 86% for paper and 80% for card, and constituting only 9% of the rubbish bin contents. This demonstrates good recycling behaviour, thus successful communications of the pulpables message. Exeter has a reputation for delivering high grade paper for reprocessing. The exception is around Christmas when there is a high volume of metallic and glittery paper. This should be considered with Christmas specific communications.

Another indicator for good recycling behaviour is that only 4% of the rubbish weight is glass. This indicated that, even though we do not provide a kerbside collection

service for glass, Exeter citizens are using the glass banks well. This is particularly important given the current crash in the market value for glass. Most other authorities who outsource the management of their recycling collections are now paying to send their mixed glass for reprocessing; because we are able to colour-separate using the bring banks, we can still generate revenue from selling some of the glass. As Exeter's population is growing we are looking into providing new glass recycling sites. We have already secured a site on Prince of Wales Road to target students. Placing new sites is a slow process as there are several sources of permission that need to be agreed.

Kerbside Recycling Analysis

Earlier in the year the Senior Recycling Officer analysed typical weight comparisons of refuse and recycling collected by crews. We also looked at areas with low presentation of recycling bins and high presentation of contaminated recycling. This information gives us an idea of the Low Performing Areas (LPAs) for recycling in the city. It also gives us some idea about what are the behaviours in each area that lead to not capturing recycling. All this information can help to inform our targeted campaigns to increase recycling.

The following chart summarises the findings:

Ward	Problems Identified	Strategic Focus
St Loyes	Low recycling	Highest priorities
Pinhoe	Low-medium recycling, low presentation, high contamination	Awareness roadshows, community news letters Detail process and consequences of recycling
Alphington St James Pennsylvania	Low-medium recycling, low presentation	Second priority areas Awareness roadshows, community news letters
Newton Heavitree	Low-medium recycling, high contamination	Detail process and consequences of recycling
Exwick St Thomas St Davids	Low-medium recycling	Medium term
Mincinglake Cowick	Low presentation of recycling bins	Medium term
Duryard Polsloe Whipton Barton St Leonards Priory Topsham	No extremes in any of the criteria although still below national average for recycling	Long term

We have a high number of shared bin stores in Exeter. These are statistically difficult to manage in terms of ensuring everyone that uses them recycles. We get a high number of reports of contamination as it only takes one person in the shared scheme to undo the good work of others. Particular thought needs to be given in terms of the

hows and whys of recycling as well as deterrents or rewards to affect behavioural change.

'Low recycling' is defined as less than 20%, and 'Low-medium' as less than 30%. These figures are significantly lower than Exeter's published recycling rate, which also includes material collected on bring bank, garden waste and community group schemes.

Barriers to recycling

The Recycling Action Plan 2016/17 aims to address the known barriers to recycling:

- Infrastructure: having access to a recycling service, and having the correct containers
- Knowledge: being aware of what and how to recycle, so that residents do not take the default option of putting waste into the grey bin
- Household behaviour and organisation issues
- Attitude and motivation: people are more likely to engage with recycling if their efforts are recognised and the benefits of recycling are made clear. In particular, people wish to know what happens to the material they sent for recycling

Communication Opportunities

GovDelivery

Recycling has over 1,500 subscribers. We have started sending regular targeted messages to reinforce our scheme. Mails to date include: a general introduction, plastics recycling promotion, food reduction message and Christmas messages.

Twitter/Facebook

The recycling department now has an ipad. The intention is to open social media accounts and to respond to recycling and waste related messages on the ECC accounts. This will also offer an opportunity to initiate targeted messages aimed at different target groups, without the restrictions of the ECC sites. We can still send messages out from ECC sites via the Communications department. This is pending approval of ECC Comms dept.

Livery

Three RCVs and the bin delivery truck are awaiting livery. The initial idea was to target the habit of putting recyclables in the rubbish bins. After some delays in producing designs (due to accessing technology and mixed messages in terms of feedback for the design), the current concept is very similar to what is already in place, with clearer messages. The focus will be on the three target materials plastics, metals and food reduction for the RCVs. The bin delivery van accesses more of the city so a general "what's in the green bin" message will go on this.

Community Signage

Some of the signs at community recycling points have out of date information and would benefit from matching the concepts developed in the livery messages. There is also a banner at the Pinhoe Sainsbury's site that is available for us to use. These will be reaching people visiting the bring banks and thus people who are already pro-recycling. A more detailed message about the stats, process and consequences of

recycling will be designed for these, including the environmental and economic aspects.

Calendars, Leaflets and Recycling Guide

These need to portray clear, simple and targeted messages about waste policies, services and what can be recycled in Exeter.

Exeter Citizen

A double-page spread has been reserved for the next four issues of the Citizen. The Spring 2016 edition will focus on clearing up the common misunderstandings about what can and cannot go in the green bin, addressing the knowledge barriers that many residents face.

Insight magazine, Landlord Forum and local ward-based newsletter

These can be used to target local issues or promotions as well as city wide messages.

Civic Centre

We have created a general priorities comms display which is stored at the Civic Centre reception to present when no other campaigns are occupying the space they have there.

Schools

Promote a 'Three Rs Communications Campaign' competition for schools. A community outreach exercise, judged by the Council, with prizes for the winning school funded by the remaining funds from the Green Team programme 2015.

Summary of action plan

(i) Material-specific actions

Target Area	Outcome	Responsible parties and key partners	Progress	Deadline	Comments
Plastic	Increase capture of plastic: raise awareness through comms, roadshows in LPAs, targeted litter picks and frontline staff training that Exeter recycles all household plastics,	Recycling Department, Collection Crews, Street Scene	City councillor MRF tour and talks given to five councillors Training being developed for frontline staff Details of communication exercises need to be discussed further	Training and comms to be underway before June 2016	Roadshows in LPAs could help to identify "Recycling Champions" to continue longer-term community pride ventures
Aluminium cans	Increase the capture rate of this high value commodity	Recycling Department, Street Scene		Action plan to be devised before June 2016	Ideas include two stream litter picks, increase on-street recycling availability, and 'household metals' message in comms
Glass and textiles	Increase glass & textile recycling and ensure compliance with Waste Regulations 2011 (aka TEEP) by increasing range of bring sites	Recycling dept, planning	On site confirmed to serve students on Prince of Wales Road. Other sites identified subject to various permissions	Ongoing	Increase in number of textile banks is pending appointment of new contractor.

(ii) Community-specific actions

Target Area	Outcome	Responsible Parties and key partners	Progress	Deadline	Comments
Identification of Low Performance Areas (LPAs)	Target LPAs with comms package designed to connect with different target groups messages	Recycling Department	<p>Kerbside analysis and bin audit has highlighted some LPA and target message focus areas</p> <p>Analysis needs to be done of recycling bins not being presented needs, then details of comms packages in target areas can begin</p>	<p>“Not out” analysis completed</p> <p>Comms delivery to be underway before June2016</p>	Roadshows in LPAs could help to identify “Recycling Champions” to continue longer term community pride ventures
LPA 1: University students in rented accommodation	<p>Clarifying the recycling message to those moving in from other regions.</p> <p>Motivating people who are not permanent Exeter residents and those who have limited life skill experience.</p>	Recycling dept, Student Guild, Student Wardens, Rory Cunningham, University Sustainability Team.	<p>Meetings with student wardens and Rory.</p> <p>Students on the Move.</p> <p>Freshers door knocking.</p> <p>Roadshows/ Warden stalls.</p> <p>Partnership with Exeter University, student guild, Devon County Council</p>	Students on the Move commencing May 2016; communications to be delivered at start of 2016/17 academic year	
LPA 2: HMOs using bin stores	Increased capture of recycling, reduction in overfilled grey bins	<p>Recycling dept.</p> <p>Waste Ops. Systems</p>	<p>Identify & meet landlords and managing agents to discuss solutions;</p> <p>Implement WRAP-recommended measures – better signage,</p>	Ongoing	

			communication with residents, etc Install glass and clothing bring banks		
LPA 3: as per areas identified in kerbside analysis	Achieve a measurable improvement in recycling in a small area with intensive 'War on Waste' comms	Recycling dept	Priority areas and materials identified for targeted comms S:\CLEANSING SERVICES\Recycling Services\Kerbside analysis 2014	Ongoing	
Community reward scheme	Recognition of residents' recycling efforts & increased engagement with recycling leading to improved participation		Identify collection round(s) (about 1,200 properties each) and develop options for a reward and recognition scheme to encourage recycling participation Engage with neighbouring authorities to share best practice and communications resources	Dec 2017	Case studies from other local authorities indicate that a mixture of community-wide and individual incentives can lead to increased recycling rates. At the moment there is mixed evidence as to whether the increased income from recycling can offset the costs of implementing a reward scheme.
Non-wheeled bin properties	Ensure that residents who cannot use a wheeled bin or communal bin store are using the best alternative provision. Consult/test residents on whether clear recycling sacks or caddies encourage the best material capture rates. Incorporate best practice from other urban authorities.	Senior Recycling Officer	Increased liaison with private landlords carried out as part of collection round reorganisation in 2015.	March 2017	Affects 1,500 recycling sack and 3,500 recycling box customers.
Schools	Promote a 'Three Rs Communications Campaign' competition for schools. A community outreach exercise, judged by the Council, with prizes for	Senior Recycling Officer	This complements the ongoing schools work funded by Devon County Council and the Devon Authorities Strategic	March 2017	

	the winning school funded by the remaining funds from the Green Team programme 2015.		Waste Committee		
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(iii) Infrastructure actions

Target Area	Outcome	Responsible parties and key partners	Progress	Deadline	Comments
Separate Food Waste Collection	Investigate costs and collection method options	Cleansing and Fleet Manager	Costs and impact on recycling figures have been modelled by Eunomia.	Completed	Further progress is likely to depend on outcome of work with DCC on sharing of avoided disposal savings
Recycle on the Go	Prepare a business case for self-funding recycling of litter bin waste'	Senior Recycling Officer	In progress	Sept 2016	On-street 'on the go' recycling bins are common in other urban retail and tourist areas. Although the tonnage captured is small, this is a good way to remind people to recycle.

(iv) Strategic actions

Target Area	Outcome	Responsible Parties	Progress	Deadline	Comments
Devon partnership working	Work with DCC to establish a workable mechanism for investing in higher-performing recycling scheme, funded by an equitable share of the avoided disposal savings	Cleansing and Fleet Manager; Assitant Director Environment	50:50 split of savings currently under discussion at officer level among Devon authorities	Draft proposal issued in Jan 2016 and currently under discussion	-