

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PLACE AND EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 9 June 2016 and 14 June 2016

Report of: Assistant Director Environment

Title: Recycling Plan 2016-2021

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

To present the Council's Recycling Plan for 2016-2021 and to review progress made since adoption of the 2011-2016 plan

2. Recommendations:

Scrutiny Committee Place supports, and Executive approves, the 2016-2021 Recycling Plan (Appendix 1)

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

The measures outlined in the plan will reduce the environmental impact of Exeter's waste and put us in a stronger position to contribute towards the UK's 2020 recycling target.

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

The Key Delivery Programmes 206/17 listed in Appendix 1 will take place within agreed revenue budgets. The business case for kerbside food waste collection will identify any additional resource requirements and sources of additional income.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

The costs associated with the introduction of a food waste collection service will be added to the Medium Term Financial Plan along with any income streams identified once the Business Case has been completed. The implications will be reported to Members when approval is sought for the implementation.

6. What are the legal aspects?

The EU Waste Framework Directive states that the United Kingdom must recycle at least 50% of its household waste by 2020. To date, however, no statutory targets have been set for local authorities have been set.

The 2011 Waste (England and Wales) Regulations require local authorities to provide separate collection of paper, glass, metal and plastic to facilitate recycling.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details: Review of Recycling Plan 2011-2016

The Recycling Plan is reviewed annually, with an update on progress and an action plan for the year ahead. The Recycling Action Plan 2016/17 was presented to Scrutiny Committee Community and to Executive in March 2016. This report presents the longer term plan for the next five years.

8.1 Principles of the Recycling Plan

Our Recycling Plan 2016-21 continues to endorse the Waste Hierarchy, which lists the preferred options for dealing with waste in descending order of desirability:

- PREVENTION - most preferred
- REUSE
- RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING
- OTHER RECOVERY (e.g. incineration with electricity generation)
- DISPOSAL TO LANDFILL – least preferred

Therefore, reducing the amount of waste arising in the first place is at the top of the hierarchy. This is discussed in further detail in paragraph 8.2 below.

Provision of a high-quality, easy-to-use recycling service continues to be a key principle. Since 2011, the popularity of the web sites and social media as communication tools has increased and this is now an important part of our recycling communication efforts. We have also increased digital access to waste and recycling services, so that customers can now look up their collection day, download a collection calendar, report a missed collection, check which materials to recycle and order new containers online.

We continue to operate our own Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF) to sort the materials we collect for recycling. Our collection method and ability to sort materials to the high quality required by reprocessors has helped to protect our income during a period of volatile commodity prices.

8.2 Waste reduction

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 BVP1184a). 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.

Since the 2011-2016 plan was published, the following measures have been taken:

- 92% of the city now receives a biweekly household waste collection
- Allocation of grey bins is based on the size of each household, with 180 litres rather than 240 litres as the standard size
- The 'no side waste' policy for grey bins was extended in November 2015 to include overfilled bins which had rubbish sacks placed on top

Several local authorities, including East Devon DC, have introduced or trialed three-weekly collections of grey bin waste. Early indications are that these schemes have been successful in nudging households to recycle more and to reduce waste sent for disposal. The ongoing progress of these schemes will be monitored.

Exeter continues to support, through the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee, waste reduction projects such as the 'real nappy' campaign, the Turntable furniture reuse project and a Devon Reuse Project to engage with communities, including workshops in Exeter.

8.3 Progress towards recycling targets

Exeter's recycling rate has plateaued at around 34% over recent years, which is well below the current UK average of 44% and our local target of 40%. 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 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
- Since 2013, waste from premises such as schools and charity shops has been recorded as domestic rather than commercial waste and this has inflated our reported domestic refuse tonnage by over 800 tonnes per year.

Appendix 2 shows the annual recycling statistics for 2014/15. The 2015/16 figures will be published at the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee on 29 June.

Increasing participation in the current recycling service will enable progress towards a 40% recycling rate to be made. Improving the recycling rate of our current service by one percentage point per year is one of the strategic priorities of the 2016-21 Recycling Plan. Specific measures to achieve an improvement in our recycling rate were described in the Recycling Action Plan in March 2016, and these are shown in the Key Delivery Programmes 2016-17 on the Recycling Plan 2016-21.

Food waste accounts for 36% of household waste currently being sent for disposal. Some food waste can be avoided through better advice and education, but food will remain a large percentage of the household waste stream. Targeting this material with a separate collection will enable a significant improvement in our recycling rate to be made. This will require a significant change to our collection vehicle fleet and delivery of new waste containers to all households. Preparing a business case for food waste collections and introducing a service as soon as possible will be one of the strategic priorities for 2016-2021. Devon County Council has agreed to share a proportion of the saving in waste disposal costs that will arise from increased recycling. This sharing of savings will help to fund investment in vehicles, containers, communications etc that a new food waste collection scheme will require.

9.0 Other key developments since 2011

9.1 Environmental Impact

The Exeter Energy Recovery Facility opened in June 2014. This facility processes Exeter City Council's non-recycled waste and exports electricity to the national grid.

Reducing the environmental impact of our waste operations has been achieved by exceeding our target to reduce fleet emissions by 3% in 2015/16, and by the installation of solar panels on the roof of the MRF. In 2015/16 the amount of diesel used by our refuse and recycling fleet reduced by 14,000 litres over the previous year. Significant reorganisations of our collection rounds in 2014 and 2015 have enabled us to accommodate the planned increase in homes in Exeter for the next two years without increasing the size of our fleet.

9.2 Local authority partnerships

In 2013-2015 the Devon local authorities worked on a business case for a joint waste authority, initially Devon-wide then for a 'cluster' comprising Teignbridge DC, Exeter City Council, East Devon DC and Devon County Council. The key principles of a joint waste authority would be the pooling of budgets and resources, so that improved recycling collection systems are funded by savings from economies of scale, reduced waste disposal costs, and a common service provision across a larger geographical area. Although the waste cluster did not proceed, the Devon authorities are continuing to work on implementing these principles, particularly with regard to separate food waste collection and the sharing of waste disposal cost savings between the County and District Councils.

Exeter City Council has sought other opportunities to work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities. These include Exeter's MRF processing over 900 tonnes of domestic recycling for South Hams DC in 2014, and 165 tonnes per year of commercial recycling for Mid Devon DC. We have also begun a trial officer-sharing arrangement, with our MRF Manager sharing his expertise in marketing of recyclable materials with Mid Devon DC.

Working with neighbouring authorities to achieve higher performance and be more cost-effective is a strategic priority of the 2016-21 Recycling Plan.

11. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

Improving this service helps to reduce the Council's operating costs by achieving income from recycling, and increases the environmental sustainability of Exeter.

12. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

There is a risk of failing to meet the income targets agreed in the service revenue budget. This can be mitigated by taking the above actions to reduce costs and improve householders' participation in the service.

13. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

Promoting take-up of recycling services reduces the environmental impact of household waste.

14. Are there any other options?

Failure to adopt a realistic five-year Recycling Plan could delay progress towards our strategic targets.

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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