

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACE

Date of Meeting: 14 September 2017

Report of: Cleansing and Fleet Manager

Title: RECYCLING PLAN REVIEW

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

This report updates Scrutiny Committee Place on our current performance in waste reduction and recycling, and the reasons for current trends. It also provides an update on progress on the annual Recycling Plan, and seeks ongoing support and suggestions from Scrutiny for recycling initiatives.

2. Recommendations:

- 1) That Scrutiny Committee Place notes the current trends on waste reduction and recycling, and supports the ongoing actions planned for 2017/18 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 target set out in the Corporate work programme.

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

- 4.1 The actions described in the report are being implemented within the budget allocated to the recycling strategy.
- 4.2 Operating recycling collections and our own Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF) in-house enables the Council to sort materials to a high standard and sell directly to reprocessors, achieving good prices. The Council also receives Recycling Credits from Devon County Council, in recognition of the avoided waste disposal costs due to recycling. Overall income from material sales and Devon County Council recycling credits in 2016/2017 was £ 1,052,575. The table below shows the breakdown by material, the total value figure includes the recycle credit paid by the waste disposal authority (DCC) to the waste collection authority (ECC) for waste diverted from disposal.

MRF & Bring Sites 2016-17	Weight tonnes	Total value £ (inc Recycling credit)
PAPER	2,731	429,036
CARDBOARD	1,500	251,247
PLASTIC	632	136,529
ALUMINIUM CANS	49	39,736
STEEL CANS	274	29,977
SCRAP METAL	49	4,603
GLASS	2,458	159,977
TEXTILES	7	1,467
TOTAL	7,700	1,052,575

- 4.3 Recycling income is largely influenced by the international market for paper, card, metals, plastics and glass. Price fluctuations can be mitigated by continuing to provide reprocessors with clean, well-sorted materials from our MRF. Increasing our recycling rate will also increase our income. The MRF Supervisor works with over 40 processors, selling materials at the best price on the spot market, his knowledge and aptitude helps Exeter achieve high prices for these materials, this skill should help the material income stay healthy despite a fluctuating market.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications for the Council to consider at this time. The Section 151 Officer notes the forthcoming report on the potential introduction of a food waste scheme and will include any financial implications in the medium term financial plan if the project is approved. The income in respect of recycling is monitored regularly, with the service accountant working closely with the service to ensure variances are identified early.

6. What are the legal aspects?

- 6.1 There are no statutory recycling targets that currently apply to waste collection authorities. The Household Recycling Act 2003 requires the Council to offer a kerbside recycling collection of at least two materials.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

- 7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

8.1 Household waste reduction and recycling performance

- 8.2 The amount of household waste sent for recovery by waste to energy in Exeter has increased for the first time in the last three years. The table below shows the tonnage by year.

Year	Household waste (tonnes)
2014/15	25,083
2015/16	23,673
2016/17	24,894

- 8.3 The increase in household arising's is disappointing, given that waste reduction sits above recycling in the waste management hierarchy. The last audited figures from DEFRA reported that in 2015/16, non-recycled waste collected by UK local authorities increased by 0.6% on average, compared to Exeter's reduction of 5.6%. We await figures for 2016/17 to compare the local figures to the national trend. Waste reduction continues to be promoted through Council messages and is supported by the limiting of grey waste capacity to residents.

- 8.4 The 2017 annual recycling statistics for Devon indicate that Exeter's recycling rate continues to drop. The table shows the rate for the last three years.

Year	Recycling Rate (%)
2014/15	34
2015/16	33
2016/17	32

- 8.5 The Council's Corporate Plan includes a target to increase our recycling rate by one percentage point each year. Unfortunately despite best efforts the recycling rate is reducing. The national trend suggests that a plateau has been reached after significant progress in the last two decades, and further improvement will depend on improving the way we engage with communities, and increasing the range of materials collected for recycling. The introduction of a separate food waste collection would address this decline. The Authority is considering this as an option for increasing recycling rates
- 8.6 Exeter is one of five Devon district councils to experience a drop in tonnes recycled last year. Those councils that have increased their recycling tonnage have done so mainly through a significant change of service: introduction of weekly food waste collection and/or addition of new materials to their recycling scheme. East Devon is now collecting waste once every three weeks, it is too early for a full year's analysis, however
- 8.7 The waste that is taken by householders to Devon County Council's two bulky waste Recycling Centres in Exeter is excluded from our recycling statistics. Including these recycling centre tonnages (Unitary authorities are able to include these) would have

increased our 2016/17 recycling rate to 47.3%, unfortunately this is a decrease from the previous year of 48.4%.

9 Reasons for the trend in recycling performance

9.1 The quantity of waste sent for recycling dropped by 365 tonnes. The continued decline in paper consumption due to more online reading of newspapers and magazines is a long term trend that is likely to continue. The light weighting of packaging materials such as plastic is also having a significant effect on the tonnage of material collected.

9.2 The remaining drop in recycling rate is due to:

- (i) An increase in the number of purpose-built student housing developments. With limited bin storage and little control over their tenants' waste management habits, the management companies of these developments are choosing to pay for extra refuse collections each week, which is diverting material away from recycling.
- (ii) A drop in material collected by voluntary groups and charities, largely because Devon County Council no longer pays recycling credits for textiles collected by these groups. A drop in production of newsprint also means there is less paper for them to collect.
- (iii) An increase in non-recycled street cleansing waste of 205 tonnes, whilst helps the city look good, equates to a drop in recycling of over half a percentage point. 238 tonnes of organic street sweeping material was sent for composting, but this is highly weather-dependent and there is little scope to increase the figure significantly. Provision of 'Recycle on the Go' on-street litter recycling bins has the potential to divert 80 tonnes to recycling (see paragraph 15.1 below).
- (iv) A degree of stagnation by residents, no new services introduced to reinvigorate residents' enthusiasm to recycle. Experience from other local authorities indicates that a significant change to one part of the service, for example adding a food waste collection, tends to increase participation in recycling of all materials.

9.3 Education measures aimed at improving our capture of recyclable materials are described in paragraph 14 below. While our waste minimisation policies have been successful, our challenge continues to be encouraging residents to divert more of the waste from 'grey bin' to 'green bin'.

10. Food waste collection

10.1 Following a procurement exercise, Eunomia was appointed as the consultant to model a range of options for the separate collection of food waste. A recommendation based on Eunomia's final report is due to be presented to Place Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee in November 2017, and this will consider the financial and operational considerations of these options. The introduction of a separate food waste collection supported by changes to residual refuse collection would address this decline. The Authority is considering all options for increasing recycling rates.

Collecting food waste separately is expected to divert more than 3,000 tonnes of food waste from disposal to recycling, lifting our recycling rate to nearer 50%.

- 10.2 Introduction of a food waste collection also tends to prompt an increase in recycling of materials already included in our kerbside recycling scheme (paper, card, plastic & cans), due to the publicity and extra profile resulting from a service change.

11. Charged for garden waste collections

- 11.1 Exeter City Council does not accept garden waste if presented for collection with the refuse bins. A charged-for opt-in collection of garden waste is offered to all residents in the city. Collections are made once a fortnight and material is collected in either a brown wheeled bin or biodegradable sack, annual charges are levied. At the time of this report the service has 9,532 customers. The annual growth in customer base during the previous 12 months is 6.48%. The material collected contributes towards our recycle figures and helps to increase this by 7 percentage points.

12. Home composting

- 12.1 Residents are encouraged to compost at home and the Council sells a simple compost bin at cost price to encourage this activity. Working with the DASWC a number of compost clinics will be advertised later in the year to help improve skills and myth busting for home composting.

13. Commercial waste recycling

- 13.1 Exeter City Council's commercial recycling scheme has 917 customers, this equates to 16.12% of the market share. The amount of material recycled increased by 48% to 328 tonnes thanks to increased take-up of commingled and glass recycling. Our pricing structure makes recycling cheaper than rubbish collection, and have revised the structure to make the saving larger and more transparent.
- 13.2 Exeter City Council and Devon Contract Waste have been appointed joint preferred suppliers to the Exeter Business Improvement District members too, offering a preferential rate with a 1.5% discount for recycling collections.

14. Recycling behavioural change

- 14.1 Although kerbside recycling collections are now well-established in the UK, with Exeter's scheme being rolled out from 1996, lack of understanding of which materials to recycle remains a barrier to improving recycling rates. The WRAP 2016 Recycling Tracker survey reports that 66% of householders feel uncertain about whether or not to recycle at least one item of waste, and 49% put at least one item in the rubbish bin that could have been recycled.
- 14.2 The recycling education messages continue to concentrate on overcoming this confusion so that our residents can be confident, well-informed recyclers. This is complemented by targeted messages aimed at specific communities.
- 14.3 Over the next two years the DASWC have appointed three Recycling Advisors to assist with behavioural change work. The advisors are employed by Resource Futures who have the contact to carry out this work. Time is allocated by number of households in the district, the allocation for Exeter is 15 weeks per year.

14.4 There are two main areas of work:

- (i) Participation monitoring followed by door stepping (knocking on doors talking to residents about recycling)
- (ii) Flats review and door stepping to understand the barriers to recycling when living in a flat.

This work will target some of our low performing areas in the hope to help residents better understand materials that can be recycle in Exeter. The results will also give officers a better understanding of residents' attitudes to recycling and barriers to participation.

14.5 The 'Recycling Times' two page spread of information, facts and figures and call to action is now into the second year of publication in Exeter Citizen. The articles have highlighted in particular plastics and cans – materials which tend to have lower capture rates due to confusion about what can be recycled and how clean the items need to be.

14.6 The Twitter page launched in July 2016 @dustcartdenis contains updates, news recycling information and fun facts all designed to promote recycling in a light-hearted way.

14.7 The Facebook page, Denis the Dustcart launched in September 2016, this promotes more in-depth discussion about recycling and reaches out to a broader demographic than Twitter. It is easier for groups and societies to get on board with the messages on Facebook, enabling us to link to other campaigns

14.8 The figures below are from Facebook and Twitter analytics, a tool that helps the user track interaction and better understand the page performance, they make for interesting and encouraging reading. Appendix 1 shows examples of actual social media posts.

Period: June 2017		Twitter: explanation of terms
New followers	62	New followers gained during a period
Impressions	44,103	Number of people who saw a post
Engagements	1012	Number of people who actually clicked on the post
Engagement rate	2.29%	percentage of people who saw the post
<i>Total followers</i>	<i>553</i>	<i>Number of people following the account</i>

Period: 21June - 18July 2017		Facebook: explanation of terms
Page likes	61	Number of people who liked the page
Page followers	66	Number of people who follow the page, including those who like it
Page views	130	Number of news feeds it has appeared on
People reached	26,540	Number of people who saw the post
Engagements	7,338	Number of people who have clicked on the post
<i>Total likes</i>	<i>492</i>	<i>Total number of people who subscribe to the page</i>

14.9 The number of people following the two accounts is increasing, our engagement rate is already very high for both Twitter and Facebook (given that anything above 0.5% is usually considered good for a brand on Twitter. To give some context Barack Obama's engagement rate is only 0.7%. Justin Bieber's is 0.17%. The table below shows that Denis the Dustcart performs well compared to similar local sites.

Comparisons with similar pages (7 days to 20 July)	
Denis the Dustcart (483 page likes)	154 engagements from 11 posts with 3.6% in page likes
Recycle Devon (10,500 page likes)	50 engagements from 14 posts with 0% rise in page likes
Exeter housing Services (200 page likes)	7 engagements from 7 posts with 0% rise in page likes

14.10 We use the Council's Gov Delivery facility to send out a recycling newsletter, which has 2,527 subscribers and is still growing. As well as repeated the messages about what to recycle, the newsletter highlights what happens to the materials we collect for recycling. According to WRAP's research this is something residents are keen to know and helps encourage recycling participation.

14.11 Each year the Waste Operations Team works with the University to run a project called Students on the Move (SOTM). The project runs in two parts, one at the end of term when the students leave for the summer and then again when they return in late September. In partnership with the Student Guild, we run additional collections of refuse for 6 weeks through June and July, with 2 SOTM bulky collections arranged for 2 Saturdays during the time. Students must collect special stickers to put on their waste if presented on days other than the scheduled collection days, this way we know it is student waste and needs collecting. In September we will repeat the house to house visits with our Recycling Officer, reaching 247 households to ensure these properties have the correct information about recycling, waste presentation and access to waste and recycling containers. We provide appropriate information for the student handbook and enabled the Guild's iExeter phone app to link directly with the Council's online waste & recycling collection day look-up facility.

14.11 We provide articles for the quarterly Insight council tenants' magazine, which reaches approximately 4,500 households. These articles give straightforward information about what and how to recycle, and our policies for the correct presentation of waste which is helpful in areas where high density and communal bin stores cause particular challenges.

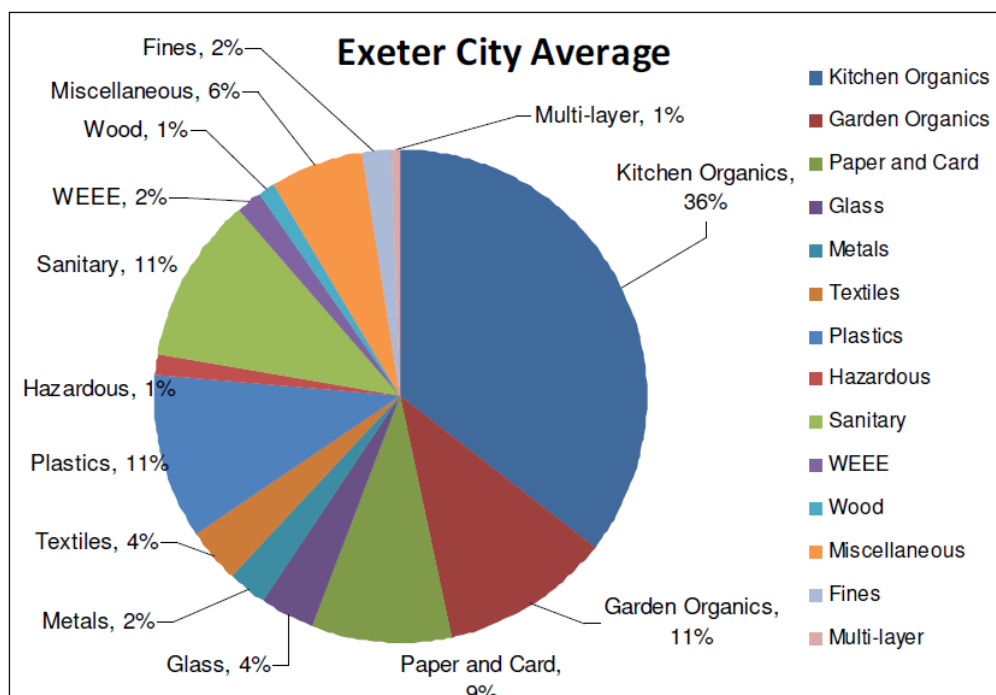
14.12 Waste reduction is promoted using the range of media listed above and in partnership with the Recycle Devon campaign. Appendix 2 shows the marketing activities that will take place by Recycle Devon until the end of this financial year.

14.13 We will work to grow the social media presence by targeting local groups and postcode areas as well as promoting the core message of 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle' including minimising the waste produced at home. This will be complemented by campaigns at local community level, targeting those areas identified with low recycling yields.

15. Further activities to be completed in 2017/18

- 15.1 An application for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding is being submitted to improve waste collection infrastructure in the central area of Exeter. This is aimed at mitigating the impact of increased waste in the city by improving the storage and presentation of waste. This will also improve capacity and availability of recycling receptacles, including 'Recycle on the Go' separate on-street bins for recycling of litter. These measures will help to address the infrastructure-related reasons for low recycling rates in residential parts of the city centre.
- 15.2 The Salvation Army has the county wide contract to collect textiles. Officers are working with Salvation Army staff to identify new sites to increase the opportunity for residents to recycle textiles. To date two new sites have been installed, at Sowton Park and Ride and Whipton shops. Discussion are also taking place about textile recycle collections to be held in Exeter schools, with some of the income from the sale of the textiles going back to the schools that participate.
- 15.3 Through the DASWC partnership funding has been identified from the joint organic waste contract for all districts to benefit from a 'No Food Waste' Residual bin stickers campaign in September/October. It has been agreed that even though Exeter still does not have a separate food waste collection we can benefit from this funding by reminding residents not put garden waste in the grey bins.
- 15.4 Devon-wide waste compositional analysis is set to take place later this year and will be funded by the DASWC budget. The selected specialist contractor will analyse 200 households in each district and will choose 3 or 4 of the most appropriate ACORN groups (a classification of residential neighbourhoods by categories such as age, house size, income, occupation)
- 15.5 The procurement schedule identifies November as the month when this will be carried out.
- The purpose of the analysis is to:
- Understand the waste materials being disposed of in the residual bins and their respective amounts and proportions.
 - Identify materials within the residual waste which could be consigned to the recyclable waste stream.
 - Identify any specific waste materials where more concentrated efforts may need to be made to remove a greater amount of them from the residual waste.
 - Identify if there are particular areas within any of the districts where more focused efforts may be required to reduce the amount of recyclables within the residual waste.

The pie chart below shows the results of the analysis that was conducted in 2012, from which it is clear that organic waste makes up a big part of the waste that is contained in the refuse bin. However, it is important that our waste management strategy is based on up-to-date information, hence the decision to carry out the same analysis in 2017.



15.6 The Recycling Team will work with the Director of Communications and Marketing to promote the core messages and engage with the residents of the City to help improve recycling rates. Appendix 3 shows the Recycling Plan 2016-2021

15.7 The Senior Recycling Officer will carry out a review of the impact of charging for recycling containers, a policy introduced in 2015 to achieve required financial savings. This review will assess the possible impact on recycling participation, and therefore income, and recommend amendments to the policy if appropriate.

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

16.1 Achieving a one percentage point increase in recycling rate per year is part of the corporate management work programme. Completing the business case for food waste collection and introducing a food waste collection as soon as possible was a manifesto pledge in last year's Council elections.

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

17.1 Recycling generates a significant income to the Council. The risk of failing to meet income targets arises from stagnating or reduced recycling tonnages, and from the volatile markets for recyclable materials. Exeter's Materials Reclamation Facility already achieves best possible income by sorting materials to a high standard and selling materials directly to reprocessors. Officers are currently working with surrounding local authorities to see what opportunities there are help improve the income generation of the MRF.

18. 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?

18.1 Recycling ranks above disposal in the 'waste management hierarchy', which considers the environmental impacts of all methods of dealing with waste. No other impacts have been identified.

19. Are there any other options?

19.1 There are no other options that will achieve the objectives identified in this report.

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Simon Hill
Cleansing and Fleet Manager

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 2.3
01392 265275

Fiona Tame, Senior Recycling Officer
Tel 01392 665024
fiona.tame@exeter.gov.uk