

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACE

Date of Meeting: 13 September 2018

Report of: Environmental Health and Licensing 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 2018/19 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 The operating budget for our Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF) in 2018/19 is £921,540 and the budget for from material sales and Devon County Council recycling credits is £958,930.

5. Section 151 Comments:

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications for Council to consider, although Members should note that the Council is reliant on income from recycling to fund its services and therefore drops in recycling pose a risk to the financial stability of the Council.

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:

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer to consider.

8. Report details:

8.1 Household waste increase and recycling performance

- 8.4 The 2018 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 (%)
2015/16	33
2016/17	32
2017/18	31

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 recycling rate to over 40 %.

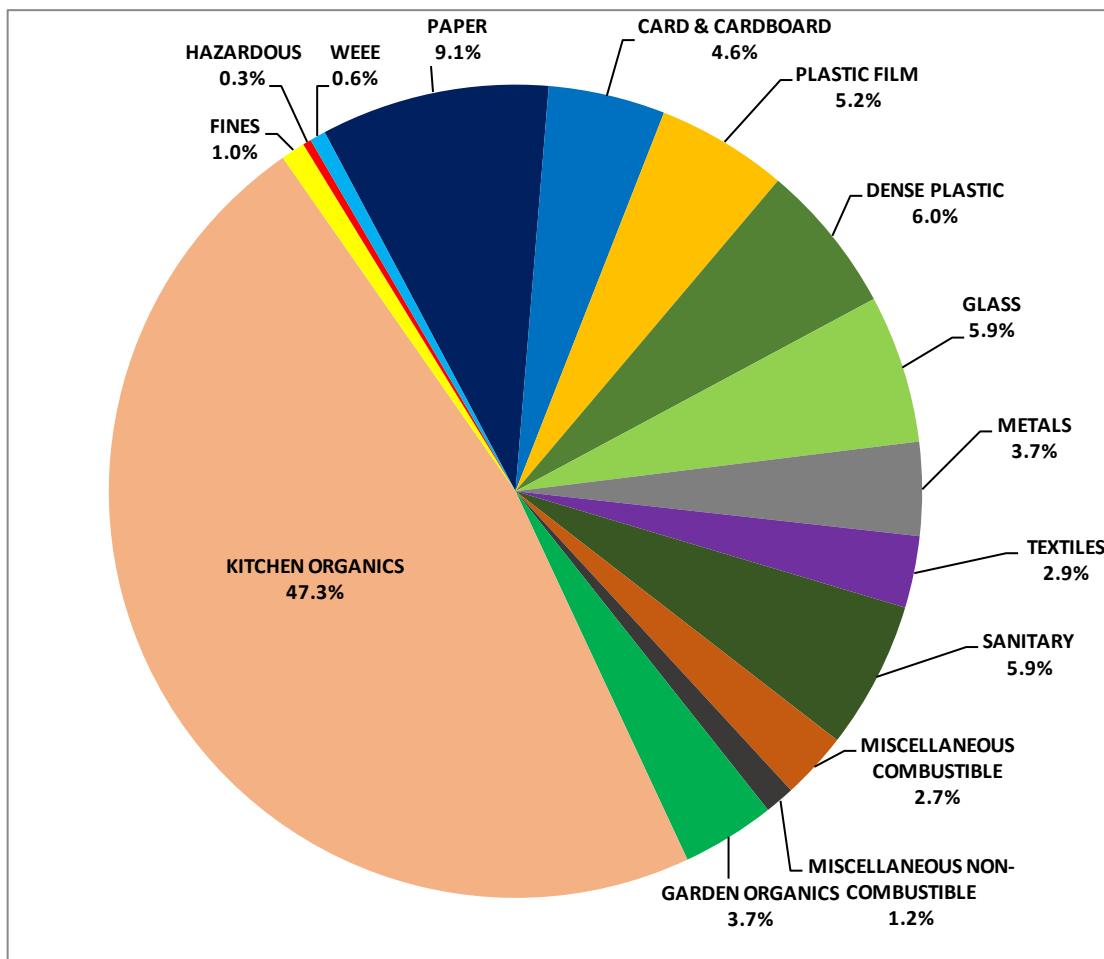
9 Reasons for the trend in recycling performance

- 9.1 The quantity of waste sent for recycling dropped by 2.2 tonnes. Paper consumption continues to decline as people take to reading newspaper and magazines online. The light weighting of packaging materials such as plastic is also having a significant effect on the tonnage of material collected.
- 9.2 Local contributing factor to this decline in recycling rate is due to:

- (i) The Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) was built in 2001 and the deterioration in the aging separation and sorting equipment is having a significant impact on our ability to extract value from mixed recycling collected in Exeter. The option of sending a proportion of 'fines' (materials too small to be sorted in the Exeter MRF) to alternative MRFs for further sorting is becoming increasingly unsustainable. Commercial MRFs are increasing their gate fees or choosing not to accept the material. A plan to invest in new equipment for the MRF will be presented to Executive Committee. This will outline the options for increasing income and reducing costs through investment in new machinery.

- (ii) 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.
- (iii) 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.
- (iv) A degree of inertia by residents, with no new services introduced to reinvigorate residents' enthusiasm to recycling. Experience from other local authorities indicates that a significant change to one part of the service, for example adding food waste collections, tends to increase participation in recycling of all materials.

The pie chart below shows the results of the analysis that was conducted in November 2017, from which it is clear that organic waste makes up a big part of the waste that is contained in the refuse bin. The other three areas that need to be highlighted to the public to recycle more of are, paper, card and cardboard and glass.



10. Recycling behavioural change

- 10.1 Kerbside recycling collections are now well-established in the UK. Exeter's scheme has been in operation since 1996, lack of understanding of which materials to recycle remains a barrier to improving recycling rates. This uncertainty is not just an Exeter phenomenon 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.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 The Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Partnership appointed recycling advisors to assist with behavioural change work which has just come to the end of the second year. It is hoped that this contract will be extend for a third year. 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.
- 10.4 There are two main areas of work;
 - (i) Participation monitoring followed by door stepping (knocking on doors talking to residents about recycling) A 5% increase in participation has been recorded from year one to year two.
 - (ii) Flats review and door stepping to understand the barriers to recycling when living in a flat. It is estimated that we now collect an additional 41 tonnes of recycling from these properties which will equate to about £4,500 in income.
- 10.5 Other key communications activities are the 'Recycling Times' two page spread of information, facts and figures and call to action. This now into the third year of publication in Exeter Citizen. We also use the Twitter and Facebook accounts designed to promote recycling in a light-hearted way.

11. Further activities to be completed in 2018/19

- 11.1 A plan to invest in new equipment for the MRF will be presented to Executive Committee. This will outline the options for increasing our recycling rate, achieving more income and reducing costs through investment in new machinery. As well as improving capture rates for recyclable materials collected in Exeter, this will increase our scope gain income from sorting materials sent from neighbouring local authorities.
- 11.2 The business case for food waste collection, and the service options for collection of 'dry' recycling materials, will be reviewed to take account of major changes in the market for scrap materials since the original Eunomia consultant's study was completed in early 2017.
- 11.3 Funding has been identified within the Waste Services budget to introduce 'Recycling on the Go bins' in two areas of the city, The Quay and Exeter High Street. Both these

areas a high foot fall areas and currently residents and visitors do not have the opportunity to recycling when out and about. Although these are not expected to generate significant tonnage of material for recycling, street litter contains a high proportion of valuable plastic and metal and the income from this is expected to make the project self-funding. In addition, 'recycle on the go' is a visible demonstration of the Council taking recycling seriously.

- 11.4 Increased number of textile bank sites in order to collection up to an additional 32 tonnes of textiles in a 12 month period. This will equate to about £6,000 in additional income.

- 11.5 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.

- 11.6 From the 1 August 2018 the charge for the domestic recycling bins has been reduced to zero until the end of the financial year. It is anticipated that this measure will encourage greater take-up of recycling and be self-funding through the collection of more material for recycling.

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

- 12.1 Achieving a one percentage point increase in recycling rate per year is part of the corporate management work programme.

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

- 13.1 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. Investment in the MRF, and pursuing opportunities to sort materials from outside Exeter, will mitigate this risk.

14. 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?

- 14.1 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.

15. Are there any other options?

- 15.1 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

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