

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY 4 SEPTEMBER 2007

2007 REVIEW OF RECYCLING PLAN (2006-2011)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report updates Scrutiny Committee Community on progress with the Recycling Plan since its approval in 2006 and seeks ongoing support from Scrutiny for recycling initiatives.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Exeter City Council is the Waste Collection Authority (WCA) for Exeter and has responsibility to arrange and manage recycling and composting programmes for household waste collected in Exeter. The avoided disposal cost of material diverted from landfill by or through the activities of the City Council is claimed from Devon County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA).
- 2.2 During 2006/7 just over £503,000 was claimed from the WDA for recycling of materials carried out directly by the City Council. This income was used to support the costs of recycling and waste activities.
- 2.3 As an authority rated 'excellent' for waste services by the Audit Commission, Exeter City Council is exempted from the requirement to provide a Recycling Plan. However in the interests of good quality service planning, a Recycling Plan is produced, reviewed and updated as appropriate.

3. WASTE ARISING AND RECYCLING RATE

Recycling/Composting Rates

- 3.1 Exeter City Council has a nationally set recycling/composting target of 30% and progress towards and past this target is as follows:

	2002/03	2003/04	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7
Exeter City Council recycling/composting rate	14.38%	17.30%	20.74%	30.04%	34% provisional *

* this figure is yet to be confirmed.

- 3.2 Additionally the City Council supports the aspirations of the Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Devon that originally set a locally agreed recycling/composting target of 40% by 2010 which is the figure from the Governments Waste Strategy for England 2007. The Exeter Recycling Plan sets out

how the City Council intends to reach this target, and excludes materials recycled from the civic amenity and recycling centre at Exton Road.

- 3.3 In March 2007 the Devon wide target within the Municipal Waste Management Strategy was revised by Devon County Council to 50% which meant that the contribution by local authorities would also need to increase to 41.5%. This change does not automatically require an amendment to the Exeter Recycling Plan as this target refers to Exeter as a whole and so includes materials passing through the Civic Amenities and Recycling Centre at Exton Road, which would give a combined recycling rate of 44.6% for 2006/7.
- 3.4 The present targets within the Exeter Recycling Plan are as follows:

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Target	31%	33%	35%	37%	40%

- 3.5 The costs and benefits of increasing the targets within the Exeter Recycling Plan will be reviewed during 2007 and should changes be proposed they will be brought back to this committee for discussion.

Waste Arisings

- 3.6 A critical issue for general waste management is to control the total amount of waste generated, irrespective of whether it is recycled or landfilled. Avoiding the initial production of waste is normally the most advantageous outcome for the environment.
- 3.7 The City Council has been particularly successful in keeping the total amount of waste collected fairly stable against a national background of increasing waste arisings as detailed in the following table.

Exeter City Council	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7
Total household waste collected (tonnes)	41010	39888	38870	39066	39193
Change on previous year	+0.98%	-2.74%	-2.55%	+0.05%	+0.33%

- 3.8 As the population has increased throughout this period this effectively means the waste produced per head of population has actually fallen. The figure for residual waste per head of population was 244 kg (2006/7), comfortably below the proposed statutory target of 310 kg by 2010. While it is difficult to identify the factors behind this success, the side waste ban (instigated 2004), alternate week collections, ease of recycling and awareness generated by local publicity campaigns are all likely to be key factors. An example of such campaigns is the recently launched Exeter Green Bag Scheme, in association with the Express and Echo, EDF Energy and Tidy Exeter Group. The scheme is designed to reduce the number of plastic bags ending up in landfill by raising awareness and encouraging people to use re-usable bags.

Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS)

- 3.9 The key driver for municipal waste management in Devon for the next few years will be the LATS scheme. LATS places limits on how much biodegradable municipal waste can be landfilled in Devon, setting diminishing amounts for each year until 2020. By 2020 only 35% of the amount of biodegradable waste landfilled in 1995 will be allowed, and for each tonne landfilled over this amount a fine of up to £150 per tonne will be levied. The LATS allowances and penalties are the responsibility of Devon County Council as they apply to Devon as a whole, though the responsibility will transfer to Exeter with unitary status.
- 3.10 The implementation of the LATS scheme is one of the reasons that the County Council is proposing a new energy from waste plant for Exeter, as material that has passed through such a plant will have its entire biodegradable component removed.

4. SCHEME UPDATES

Kerbside 'Recycle from Home' Scheme

- 4.1 All properties in the City continue to be able to participate in the kerbside recycling scheme. A pilot study is underway to provide updated information stickers for all recycling collection containers throughout the city. The project is needed as some of the older containers have no information at all some have illegible information and some have incorrect information caused by changed to the list of materials accepted for recycling. The proposal is one of the methods suggested by residents to help reduce the amount of contamination contained within recycling containers.

Garden Waste Collection Scheme

- 4.2 The garden waste collection scheme continues to be operated by two collection vehicles covering every participating household in the city once a fortnight. Materials continue to be stockpiled at Water Lane, before being shredded and taken to local farms for composting and eventual use. Fees for the 2007/8 collection season have been frozen at 2006/7 level. Almost 4,500 households are now renting brown bins and the remainder have access to biodegradable sacks that can be purchased from local retailers.
- 4.3 Around 600 tonnes of leaf fall (predominantly from street sweepings) and green waste from parks and open spaces continue to be composted at the Water Lane facility. Home composting is further encouraged by the sale of the subsidised composting bins, with 1,385 additional bins being sold by cleansing services and partners WRAP in 2006/7. Although putrescible waste removed via this route does not count towards our recycling figures this is the most sustainable way of dealing with this fraction of the waste. DEFRA is currently considering ways of measuring waste composted at home so that it can be brought into future recycling figures.

Bring Banks

- 4.4 The Council continues to operate an extensive network of 70 bring banks around the City which are very well used by the community. With the exception of book, textile and shoe banks (and small glass banks in difficult-to-access locations), all are serviced by the Council.

- 4.6 The two main materials collected via bring banks are paper and glass. The paper tonnage collected declined from 541.86 tonnes (2005/6) to 472.06 tonnes (2006/7) - paper being accepted in kerbside collections. The glass tonnage collected increased from 1851.72 tonnes (2005/6) to 2034.42 tonnes (2006/7); glass not being accepted in kerbside collections.

Schools Recycling Scheme

- 4.7 A free of charge 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, supported by education visits and targeted communications.

University of Exeter

- 4.8 The Council lost the tender to provide the waste management service for the University in April 2007, when the University accepted a waste management proposal submitted by a private contractor. As a consequence, the focus of work on campus for Council recycling staff has now changed to providing recycling information to students when they move off campus and live in the city community, rather than having such a focus on campus and in residential halls.

Third Party Recycling

- 4.9 Charities, community and voluntary groups continue to collect a significant amount of recyclable materials in the City every year (1013 tonnes 2006/7). The Council continues to purchase such material directly from groups and also pays recycling credits to the groups to reflect the saving in disposal costs.
- 4.10 Other recyclable materials (glass, cardboard and paper) also continue to be purchased from other Councils and a small number of commercial waste management companies. These materials are stockpiled alongside other recyclate and sold for recycling.

Enforcement/Education Officers

- 4.12 The Council currently employ three Enforcement/Education Officers who promote waste minimisation and recycling. Their main duties are to assist the public in their use of recycling schemes and to ensure that the green bin is being used in the correct manner and it is not being contaminated by non-recyclable material. This important role helps ensure that the quantity and quality of recycled waste is continually improved.
- 4.13 During 2006 the Council was the first to initiate legal proceedings against a resident for continual contamination of their green recycling bin with food waste. Although the case was lost, it did confirm the practical difficulty in enforcing the legislation on those who continue to misuse the recycling service, as well as generating considerable publicity highlighting the importance of recycling properly.
- 4.14 Following the case, working procedures have been reviewed and much closer working with the collection crews achieved, with all front line staff being retrained. However there continues to be a problem with food-contaminated recyclable waste, much originating in the bottom of wheelie bins or from communal recycling systems. Ways

to address this issue continue to be explored, but clearly education, enforcement and engineering (to make it easier for people to recycle) all have a vital part to play.

MRF (Materials Reclamation Facility)

- 4.15 The MRF started operations in September 2001 and since then all remaining residential properties have been added to the kerbside recycling scheme. The facility was constructed at a cost of £1.7 million and has a current operating capacity of around 8,000 tonnes per year. Since the plant opened, recycling material tonnages are constantly rising and further investments in the plant is planned to meet these demands. A number of challenges face the MRF and these will be these will be the subject of a more detailed report in the future.

Waste Storage Provision in New Developments

- 4.16 The recycling team continue to comment on the provision for waste management in all new developments in the city. Such is the high density of new developments that the ideal of sufficient accessible storage facilities for individual properties can seldom be achieved. This means many new developments have communal facilities not ideally placed, limiting the scope to link waste to individual households and hence address any issues over quality or quantity of recycling or waste.

Waste Analysis

- 4.17 Funding was secured from DEFRA to cover the costs of a waste analysis from Exeter properties, reported in 2005/06. The key findings were:
- 20% extra residual waste is collected from properties served by a weekly refuse collection.
 - 80% of available paper is being captured for recycling, compared to 33% of plastic and 60% of cans.
 - 19kg of glass is thrown away on average by each household each year.
- 4.19 This information is being used to help inform the Council's communications in response to the many media requests received.

5. MAIN CHALLENGES FOR 2007/8

- 5.1 The main challenges for 2007/8 are to:
- further improve household participation and increase the quantity of material that is recycled through collection schemes;
 - increase the quality of recyclate collected;
 - further encourage waste minimisation to reduce the amount of waste being produced;
 - enhance participation in the garden waste collection scheme and the promotion of home composting to divert organic waste from landfill;
 - further increase the capacity and efficiency of the Materials Reclamation Facility; and
 - review the bring bank service.

5.2 Priorities for recycling in the short-term are contained in Appendix I: Proposed Improvement Plan for Recycling Rates 2007/08.

6. RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that Scrutiny Committee Community acknowledge the positive progress that the Council had made in implementing the Recycling Plan.
- 2) that Scrutiny Committee Community support the Recycling Plan and the accompanying action plan.

HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

S:LP/Committee/907SCC7
23.8.07

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:

2006-11 Recycling Plan