

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Streetscene & Engineering Cabinet Board

20 July 2018

Report of the Head of Streetcare

M. Roberts

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Waste Strategy Update

Purpose of Report

1. To agree actions further to two all-member seminars to enhance the Council's waste strategy with a view to meeting the next statutory 'recycling' target of 64% in 2019/20 and continuing to make progress towards the 70% target in 2024/25.

Executive Summary

2. All-Member seminars have been held in November 2017 and May 2018 to consider issues with a view to agreeing actions to ensure continued progress with successfully meeting the statutory recycling targets.
3. This report contains a series of proposals as a result of those seminars, including further endorsement of some decisions taken by the former administration which have been pending the ongoing review. The proposals are primarily aimed at increasing the Council's recycling performance to help ensure the Council continues to meet the increasing statutory targets.

Background

4. The Council's 'recycling' performance at the end of 2017/18 was 60.65% (subject to NRW's validation). There is therefore clearly a need to make changes to the Council's strategy to ensure the forthcoming statutory targets are met. To this end an all-Member

seminar was held on 23rd November where the current context and issues were discussed, and a further seminar on 24th May where proposed measures to improve performance were discussed. From the debate at those meetings, Officers have drafted this report containing proposed actions for endorsement.

5. Failure to achieve the statutory recycling targets can be subject to a fine by Welsh Government of £200 for every tonne the target is missed in every year the target is missed. For Neath Port Talbot this is currently estimated to amount to a potential fine of around £143,000 per 1% the target is missed.

Proposed Actions

Household and Trade Recycling Service Improvements

6. Measure 1: Further to decisions previously taken by Cabinet Board, the first proposed action is to complete roll-out of 'Recycle+' kerb-sort recycling collections to the last two 'farm/lane rounds'. To facilitate this three tailored vehicles and associated recycling equipment are on order. Delivery is expected in the summer with rollout to follow.

Financial Implications: None - WG grant funding has been secured for this measure. The new tailored vehicles will replace three standard tippers in the fleet on lease hire, and the money currently paid on lease hire will be paid into the Council's Vehicle Renewal Fund so money is available for replacements at the end of their working life. Existing staff will crew the vehicles.

7. Measure 2: It is proposed to change the current two vehicles (1 small and 1 large) dedicated to trade waste recycling collections to two new split-back freighter vehicles with bin lifts to expand the range of separate recycling material collections on offer to larger trade customers and also to provide facility for new communal single material recycling collection points where appropriate for blocks of flats.

Financial Implications: None - WG grant funding has been secured for the purchase of the vehicles and existing payments into the renewals fund will continue, so replacements can be purchased on life expiry. Existing staff will crew the vehicles.

8. Measure 3: As part of the digital service improvement programme it is proposed to introduce an electronic 'link' between the Council Tax and Recycling Services so that when the occupiers of a property change the new residents can be visited and provided with recycling info and equipment. Similarly, it is proposed to have a link between the Business Rates Section and the Trade Waste Service.

Financial Implications: Officer time would be required and would need to be accommodated and programmed within existing resources.

9. Measure 4: Offer a 'waste audit' to the Council's larger residual waste producing trade customers to help them recycle more where possible.

Financial Implications: Officer time would be required and would need to be accommodated and programmed within existing resources.

Make changes to green waste collections

10. Measure 5: Implement a change to the way green waste is collected at the kerb side by changing from single use bags to re-usable sacks similar to those used in several other council areas. Just prior to the Local Government elections in 2017 the then Environment and Highways Cabinet Board resolved to make such a change and to provide two bags free of charge to each household with the need, and that a charge of £2.50 should be made for replacements. This matter has been held in abeyance until now pending the review of the waste strategy. Whilst the Welsh Government's 'collection blueprint' directs councils toward charging for green waste collections, the proposal just to charge for additional and replacement sacks was felt to be the best compromise given the Council needs the contribution that green waste tonnage makes towards recycling performance and residents wish to be able to dispose of green waste at the kerbside free of charge. However following Member discussion at the seminar it is now proposed to amend the previous decision and to reduce the cost of replacement/additional sacks to £1.00. The proposal will still reduce the cost to the Council of providing receptacles, reduce plastic use, and make it cheaper and easier to

dispose of green waste which otherwise has to be 'de-bagged' prior to composting, with a potential for shredded plastic contaminating the compost and getting into the environment. As set out in the 2017 report, green waste would continue to be collected all year round, but the small amount of green waste collected during the period December to February inclusive would not be kept separate or composted. This minimises the risk of significant uneven loading issues in the split back collection vehicles during this period and allows the vehicle capacity to be maximised for residual collections over the 'heavy' Christmas and New Year period. It proposed that bags will start to be issued after Christmas with the new service coming into force from 1st April 2019.

Financial Implications: WG grant funding has been secured for the initial provision of re-usable sacks and the charge will cover the purchase cost of future sacks.

Increase side waste restriction

11. Measure 6: It is proposed to cease accepting the presentation of 'side waste' alongside wheeled bins, or more than three black sacks in bag areas. The current limit is up to one additional bag with a wheeled bin or four black sacks in bag area. This decision has already been taken by the previous administration but has been held in abeyance as with the green waste change given the tightening of the side waste restriction was agreed to be implemented on completion of the kerb sort recycling service and, as above, there are two 'farm rounds' still to be converted. As noted above, the last two rounds are expected to be converted later this year and it is proposed the new 'no side waste' requirement (or 3 bag limit in black sack areas) will be introduced from Monday 1st April 2019.

Financial Implications: Reduced side waste will help 'speed up' the rounds and, along with reduced residual waste for disposal with higher recycling, will lead to reduced costs.

12. Measure 7: Maintain the current 'exemption' scheme for additional waste where the amount of non-recyclable waste produced by a household exceeds the permitted wheeled bin capacity or bag limit.

Financial Implications: Whilst there will no doubt be a small flurry of new applications alongside a tightening of the restrictions, as the exemption scheme is already in place any financial implications from the associated administration are expected to be small.

13. Measure 8: Use feedback from collection crews to identify and investigate locations where householders may be operating a business from their home and putting trade waste out for household collection.

Financial Implications: None – this work will be accommodated within existing resources. Any new trade waste agreements resulting from the work will increase income to the council and pay for associated management of the trade waste.

Enforcement of side waste policy

14. Measure 9: It is proposed to ramp up enforcement activity against those residents presenting excess waste where not covered by the Council's exemption scheme when the 'no side waste' restriction/ three bag limit in black sack areas). As part of the increased enforcement, householders will first be advised of the policy and the weekly recycling service that is available and, in the case of excessive non-recycling and compostable waste, information on the exemption scheme. Any 'unauthorised' residual waste after a period of transition will then be left uncollected by the crews and ultimately fixed penalty notices will be issued to the residents that persistently present excess waste, with an initial focus on those not participating in recycling in some form.

[It is noted the side waste restriction, as previously agreed, does not apply to Christmas week collections. Under the current 'side waste' limits there has been 1,663 applications for exemption of which 1,007 have been approved, 464 partially agreed, 118 declined, and 74 were duplicate applications]

Financial Implications: See measure 10.

15. Measure 10: It is proposed that two additional enforcement officers dedicated to enforcing the 'no side waste' policy be appointed.

Financial Implications: Including vehicles the cost would be £38,500 per annum per officer. In the absence of any additional funding there would need to be a re-prioritising of resources however a corresponding budget pressure has currently been flagged corporately for consideration as part of the ongoing budget round. In due course, further waste diversion from general disposal should lead to savings.

Household Waste and Recycling Centres

16. Measure 11: Introduce 'bag splitting' for residual waste at our HWRCs through the introduction of residual waste presentation/challenge areas to maximise the level of diversion from landfill at these sites. Given the level of waste that passes through the Council's sites, they make an important contribution to achieving the required diversion of waste from landfill. In 2017/18 just over 15,000 tonnes of waste passed through our HWRC's with over 11,700 tonnes of this already being recycled. 'Challenge' areas have already been introduced in neighbouring authorities and these have increased recycling rates at those centres. Waste has however increased at our Briton Ferry and Cymmer centres last year alongside the introduction of the challenge areas in Swansea and Bridgend Council sites. By this Council likewise introducing the challenge areas our recycling rate is expected to increase and disposal costs should decrease, whilst cross border movement of waste would be deterred. The waste presentation areas also provide a useful point for raising awareness about what can and cannot be recycled.

Financial Implications: WG grant funding is available to fund the site changes at Council owned sites which are necessary to introduce the waste presentation areas. Operationally, any extra costs are expected to be self-funding though savings in disposal costs.

17. Measure 12: it is proposed to maintain current opening hours at our HWRCs. It is recognised that some Board Members have asked for longer opening hours to be reinstated, particularly at the Briton Ferry site. However it is noted that previous feedback from the Council's site operator FCC, and a previous on-site survey, identified that opening hours beyond that of neighbouring facilities promotes the cross border inflow of waste, adversely impacting on the Council's budget and recycling performance.

The current opening hours are:

Briton Ferry: 8.30 – 17.00hrs seven days a week except Christmas day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day;

Pwllfawatin: 09.00 – 17.00hrs seven days a week except Christmas day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day;

Cymmer: 11.00 – 17.00hrs seven days a week except Christmas day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day;

In the second all-member seminar, the Deputy Leader whilst chairing the discussions offered Members a window of opportunity to express their views in writing on any specific opening proposals which would be reviewed by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for waste, who would then give direction to officers as to any specific proposals to be costed with the service provider. Two submissions have been received, both in support of the status quo.

Financial Implications: None associated with the status quo.

18. Measure 13: Close the Council's lowest performing HWRC which is at Pwllfawatin in the Swansea Valley and move to a replacement higher performing purpose built joint facility with Powys on the border at Lower Cwmtwrch delivering both service savings to the council and higher recycling. This proposal has previously been agreed by this Board on 2nd March 2018 as part of delivering current FFP savings requirements for implementation on 1st April 2019.

Financial Implications: A saving of up to £100,000 is anticipated from this change and is already incorporated into the Council's Forward Financial Plan.

Additional Collection Services

19. No new collection services are proposed at present. It is believed a new expanded collection service for all absorbent hygiene products (AHP), beyond the 'hygiene' collections already provided, would not currently provide value for money given the cost.
20. To help encourage households to take part in food waste collections it was suggested, subject to any legal obstacles, to pilot

a 'food waste loyalty lottery' for households participating in food waste recycling. It was envisaged households wishing to participate would register on-line and, having declared they are a food waste recycler and wish to take part in the lottery, the householder would have been issued a unique ID number sticker to put on their kerbside caddy. An ID number would then have been drawn each week from the database at random and the household checked for bin presentation during the week, if food waste was presented for collection then a cash prize would have been awarded. However, there would be a financial cost, and given severe financial pressures and that the priority is to increase enforcement, no proposal is included in this report.

Education Awareness Raising

21. Measure 14: It is proposed to expand and increase the focus of education and awareness raising towards reducing food waste and diverting food waste from landfill, subject to budget availability. As set out in the presentations at the all-member seminars, analysis has shown that food waste now makes up the largest proportion of residual waste by weight and if all households separated all their food waste for composting then the Council could almost reach the long term 70% without taking any other measures. As such tackling food waste presents one of the biggest opportunities to delivering the statutory targets.

Financial Implications: None The two additional enforcement officers will raise awareness as part of their enforcement work whilst other existing staff will continue with activity to promote recycling and composting.

22. Measure 15: To help address any concerns residents may have with external storage of food waste it is proposed to introduce a more secure external food waste collection bin for all new and replacement food bins, as demonstrated in the most recent seminar.

Financial Implications: There will be a very modest increase (34 pence) in the cost of future external food waste caddies but given diverting additional food waste is the biggest opportunity open to the Council then all measures need to be taken to increase participation in the service.

23. It is noted that another measure considered in the most recent seminar in relation to awareness raising was the potential promotion of reusable nappies through a voucher/cash back scheme to help cover the cost of purchasing 'real' nappies and associated paraphernalia such as nappy buckets. Whilst it was acknowledged that the use of 'real' nappies only suits some people it was recognised that waste reduction is at the top of the waste hierarchy and reusable nappies help to reduce waste overall. Furthermore, many nappies take a very long time to break down if they end up in landfill. Members queried whether, taking account of the cost, priority should be given to such a measure and as such no proposal is included in this report given the priority to increase enforcement. For information, since the seminar further research has been undertaken with respect to the Swansea Council scheme which received 88 applications last year against a birth rate of around 2,500. Based on the same percentage it is envisaged if this Council had a similar scheme it would receive around 52 applications in a year and, assuming a £100 voucher, the cost would be about £5,200 per year.

Other measures

24. Measure 16: It is proposed to introduce more recycling litter bins in town centre and other places of high foot fall.

Financial Impact – There is £20k of grant funding available for this.

25. Measure 17: For most of the County Borough, trade customers are offered residual collections fortnightly and recycling collections weekly in line with domestic collections. The exception is the town centres of Pontardawe and Port Talbot which have a weekly collection, and Neath Town Centre where two collections a week are offered. Of the 149 businesses in Neath that have a Council trade waste agreement only 8 have collections twice a week and one of these is Neath Civic Centre. As such it is proposed, subject to issuing 3 months notice, to offer 'once a week' collections in Neath as with Pontardawe and Port Talbot. It is also proposed to change the collection day in Neath to improve the integration of trade services with general recycling collections.

Financial Impact: The change is expected to reduce costs to the Council and address some abuse that is taking place by some traders that are taking advantage of the fact that the Council's

waste vehicle is passing through the town on two occasions during the week. Some or all of the 7 businesses currently purchasing twice weekly collections may move to private sector providers.

28. Measure 18: Expansion of the re-use shop at Briton Ferry HWRC to allow Enfys, the current charity based there, to expand the service.

Financial Impact – There is grant funding available for this.

29. Measure 19: Introduce checks to van permit requests for HWRC's, plus limit the number of permits to 12 per year. Whilst the online van permit system has proved to be easy to use, there are currently no checks to ensure that the person applying for a van permit is the resident of that address, or any address within NPT.

Recent onsite checks carried out by Waste Enforcement Officers at Briton Ferry has shown that the current system is being abused, with many vans arriving at the site with online permits but are actually from neighbouring authorities.

As part of the process aligned to Measure 13, the system currently used by Powys at their Lower Cwmtwrch site involves residents providing evidence such as utility bills etc. that they are Powys residents prior to van permits being issued.

Financial Impact – None, checks will either be automated or existing staff will carry out manual checks.

Financial Impact

- 30 See individual measures above.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 31 For new measures involving a public facing service change a Screening Assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. After completing the assessments it has been determined that the associated measures do not require an Equalities Impact Assessment.

Sustainable Development

32. In line with Well Being of Future Generations legislation as part of identifying the proposed measures consideration has been given to the national well-being goals as set out below:

It is noted that, in general, the Council's waste services are provided in line with Welsh Government's 'Collection Blueprint' as far as meets local need.

A prosperous Wales

- Collecting increased quantities of high quality recyclables in line with latest WG guidelines helps create opportunities for investment in local green growth industry.
- Investing in our waste and recycling collection infrastructure helps the creation of industry and jobs
- Working with the volunteers of Enfys Foundation helps boost the 'third' sector economy.

A resilient Wales

- Investing and strengthening our waste and recycling infrastructure and enforcing our policies leads to a consistency of service across the county borough and stronger more cohesive communities.

A healthier Wales

- Poor management of waste is a risk to public health. The proper management of waste and enforcement of our policies reduces the risk to public health of disease, and vermin. Services include - weekly collections of food waste and other recyclables in robust and closable containers, access to regular waste collections at the kerbside for both household and trade waste in robust closable containers (where practicable), together with services for larger items and the wide range of wastes received at our HWRCs.

A more equal Wales

- In order to maximise access to our waste services across all our communities, services are mostly delivered "at the kerbside" and is not dependent on residents having access to private transport.

We also offer additional support to those not able to present at the kerbside.

A Wales of cohesive communities

- The roll out of a consistent collection service across the county borough helps create a Wales of cohesive communities.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

- We will produce literature and correspondence in accordance the Council's Welsh Language Standards and there will be opportunities for people to engage and contribute bilingually.

A globally responsible Wales

- Increasing reuse and high quality recycling reduces demand on finite natural resources.
- Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill reduces the potential for local and global pollution in terms of leachate and greenhouse gases, and
- We will continue to encourage behavioural changes through our education initiatives with schools and community groups.

Workforce Impact

33 There are no workforce impacts associated with this report.

Legal Impact

34 There are no legal impacts associated with this report.

Risk Management

35. Failure to achieve the statutory recycling targets may mean the Council is subjected to a fine by Welsh Government of £200 per tonne for every tonne the target is missed in every year the target is missed. For Neath Port Talbot this is currently estimated to amount to a potential fine of around £143,000 per 1% the target is missed. The waste and recycling collection service is also one of the most prominent visible services areas, and failure to achieve statutory recycling performance targets may have implications for the Council's reputation.

Consultation

- 36 There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item. Two all Member Seminars have been held to develop these proposals.

Recommendation(s)

- 37 It is recommended that the proposed measures within the report which are summarised below are approved for implementation;
- Measure 1: Complete roll-out of 'Recycle+' kerb-sort recycling collections;
 - Measure 2: Change the current two vehicles dedicated to trade waste recycling to two new split-back freighter vehicles with bin lifts for trade waste and flats;
 - Measure 3: Introduce an electronic 'link' between the Council Tax and Recycling Services. Similarly, it is proposed to have a link between the Business Rates Section and the Trade Waste Service;
 - Measure 4: Offer a 'waste audit' to the Council's larger residual waste producing trade customers to help them recycle more where possible;
 - Measure 5: Change the collection of green waste from single use bags to re-usable sacks, supplying 2 bags per household with the need, with a charge of £1.00 for replacement/additional sacks. Green waste will be collected all year round, but the small amount of green waste collected during the period December to February would not be kept separate or composted.
 - Measure 6: Cease accepting the presentation of side waste alongside wheeled bins, or more than three black sacks in bag areas.
 - Measure 7: Maintain the current 'exemption' scheme for additional waste where the amount of non-recyclable waste produced by a household exceeds the permitted wheeled bin capacity or bag limit;
 - Measure 8: Identify and investigate locations where householders may be operating business from their homes and putting trade waste out for household collection;
 - Measure 9: Increase enforcement activity against residents presenting excess waste where not covered by the Council's

exemption scheme when the 'no side waste' restriction in measure 6 is implemented;

- Measure 10: Appoint two additional enforcement officers dedicated to enforcing the 'no side waste' policy
- Measure 11: Introduce 'bag splitting' for residual waste at our HWRCs through the introduction of residual waste presentation/challenge areas to maximise the level of diversion of landfill;
- Measure 12: Maintain current opening hours at our HWRC's;
- Measure 13: Close the HWRC at Pwllfawatkin and move to a replacement higher performing purpose built joint facility with Powys on the border at Lower Cwmtwrch;
- Measure 14: Expand and increase the focus of education and awareness raising towards reducing food waste;
- Measure 15: Introduce more secure external food waste collection bin for all new and replacement food bins;
- Measure 16: Introduce additional recycling litter bins in town centres and other areas of high foot fall;
- Measure 17: Change trade collections in Neath Town Centre to once a week in line with Pontardawe and Port Talbot collections. It is also proposed to change the collection day to improve integration of the trade service with general recycling collections;
- Measure 18: Expansion of the re-use shop at Briton Ferry to allow Enfys to expand service;
- Measure 19: Introduce checks to van permit requests for HWRC's and limit number of permits to 12 per year.

Reason for Proposed Decision(s)

- 38 To take action to ensure the Council remains on course to achieve the increasing statutory recycling targets.

Implementation of Decision

- 39 The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

List of Background Papers

- 40 Environment & Highways Scrutiny Committee report of 28th January 2016 – Side Waste Restriction

- 41 Environment & Highways Cabinet Board Report of 16th February 2017 – Review of Kerbside Collection of Garden Waste
- 42 Streetscene & Engineering Cabinet Board Report of 1st December 2017 – Procurement of recycling
- 43 Streetscene & Engineering Cabinet Board Report of 2nd March 2018 – Pwllfawatkin HWRC Contract

Officer Contact

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