

**City Services Scrutiny Panel
Spotlight Policy Review 2012 – 2013**

**Waste and Recycling in Sunderland - Approach to Resident
Engagement**

Draft Report

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1 Foreword from the Scrutiny Lead Member for City Services

It gives me great pleasure to be able to introduce the City Services Scrutiny Panel's second spotlight policy review.

At the start of the year, when the Scrutiny Committee was considering the range of issues it wished to examine, the Panel was asked to undertake a brief spotlight review into the implications of the Council's recent successful bid for funding to retain its weekly collection service. It also examined the range of proposals and options available to increase participation in recycling collections.

As well as discussions with relevant Council officers, the Panel took the opportunity to view the operation of the Beach Street Household Waste and Recycling Centre and visit the new Energy from Waste Facility being constructed at Teesside.

The Panel's report does include a number of conclusions and recommendations which we hope will help promote recycling in the city.

For the Panel, sustainable waste management requires a partnership between Government, local authorities, residents, businesses and other stakeholders. Promoting awareness is central to the future development of waste services by providing the general public with a better understanding of the issues involved in waste minimisation and the recycling of waste. Clearly, recycling initiatives can only work if there is public involvement and commitment.

However, we feel that it is important that future promotional campaigns should be based on a detailed understanding of why people do participate or do not recycle correctly.

We therefore consider that there should be regular monitoring on the findings of the Customer Insight Survey which will be used as the basis to inform a communications campaign for waste and recycling.

We also recommend that the delivery of the new communications campaign should be monitored including activities on promoting awareness and involvement in recycling and on tackling inappropriate waste presentation and fly tipping.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my colleagues on the City Services Scrutiny Panel and all of the officers and staff involved for their hard work during the course of the review and thank them for their valuable contribution.

Councillor Stephen Bonallie, Lead Member for City Services

2 Introduction

- 2.1 On 7 June 2012, the Scrutiny Committee requested that the City Services Scrutiny Panel undertake a policy review into issues relating to waste and recycling in Sunderland. This issue had been highlighted as a policy review topic during the Council's Annual Scrutiny Conference 2012.

3 Terms of Reference

- 3.1 At the start of the review, the Panel agreed to focus its attention on the options and proposals to enhance community engagement and increase participation in recycling collections.
- 3.2 The Panel adopted the following terms of reference for the review:-
- (a) to consider the background shaping the Council's approach to refuse collection and recycling;
 - (b) to consider the implications of the Council's recent bid for funding to retain its weekly collection service;
 - (c) to consider the range of proposals and options available to increase participation in recycling collections.

4 Membership of the Panel

- 4.1 The membership of the City Services Scrutiny Panel consisted of Councillors Stephen Bonallie (Lead Member), Michael Essl, Stephen Foster, Neville Padgett, Stuart Porthouse, Lynda Scanlan, Peter Wood.

5 Methods of Investigation

- 5.1 The following methods of investigation were used for the review:
- (i) Evidence from relevant Council officers and our partner organisations;
 - (ii) Visit to view the operation of the Beach Street Household Waste and Recycling Centre.
 - (iii) Visit to the new Energy from Waste Facility at Teesside.

6 Waste and Recycling - Background

- 6.1 Toward the end of 2012, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) announced that the Council had been successful in its bid to retain a weekly refuse collection service. In return for the Council committing to maintain weekly collection service for a five year period, the Council was to receive funding in the region of £4.722m
- 6.2 The key components of the bid involved the:
- Procurement of 10 low emission refuse collection vehicles in addition to 10 already ordered to replace all of the current aged refuse collection fleet;
 - Staff costs and other related revenue spend equivalent to what would be saved if alternate weekly collections were introduced;
 - Enhancement of community engagement and incentives to increase participation in recycling collections and the development of website improvements for residents to 'self serve' information and advice.
- 6.3 Whilst, it is pleasing that the Council has been successful in its bid to retain the weekly collection service, the decision does present the Council with a number of challenges in the future; not least in making sure that it continues to see improvements in recycling rates and that the service continues to contribute to operational efficiencies.
- 6.4 The Panel therefore looked at the approach that should be taken to promote recycling and ensuring that the Council makes the most of the funding being made available to enhance community engagement and participation rates.

Current Position - Local Context

- 6.5 As a starting point for the review, the Panel looked at the background to the management of waste and refuse collection in the city and considered the South of Tyne and Wear Joint Waste Strategy update which was presented to Cabinet in November 2012.
- 6.6 In 2006, Sunderland, Gateshead and South Tyneside Council's formed the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership. A key task for the Partnership was the development of this Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) which covered a 20 year period from 2007 – 2027.
- 6.7 The Strategy covers municipal waste including waste collected from households, recycling collections, waste taken to recycling banks, collections of bulky waste, street sweepings, collection of household clinical waste, commercial/trade waste collected by the local

authorities, fly tipped waste and waste accepted at household waste recycling centres.

- 6.8 A central aim of the Strategy was to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill sites every year and to increase recycling. In line with national waste management principles, the Strategy set the following high level objectives:-
- Reduce the amount of waste that is generated;
 - Re-use waste;
 - Recycle and/or compost waste as far as this is practicable within economic and environmental constraints;
 - Recover energy from the remaining waste and finally dispose of this residual waste safely.
- 6.9 The Strategy sought to respond to increasing pressures to change the way in which municipal waste was managed. This included the EU Directive 99/31/EC (the Landfill Directive) which set targets for the reduction of biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill and the Government's Waste Strategy 2000 which included national targets for recycling, composting and value recovery from waste.
- 6.10 The Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) and the introduction of an annually escalating Landfill Tax have also been key drivers in reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill. Since its introduction the Landfill Tax Regulations make it increasingly expensive for authorities to dispose of waste in landfills.
- 6.11 The Strategy also responded to the Household Waste Recycling Act 2003 which required that all waste collection authorities (WCA's) provide for the separate collection of at least two recyclable materials, at the kerbside, from all households by 2010.
- 6.12 The Partnership established some ambitious targets for increasing recycling across the three councils – a target of 45% by 2015 and 50% by 2020.
- 6.13 In recent years, significant progress has been made in improving recycling levels and avoiding landfill. Overall levels of municipal waste have fallen across the partnership area over the last five years, standing at 312,741 tonnes in 2011/12 from a total of 362,092 tonnes in 2006/07.
- 6.14 Waste collection services have also continued to improve, in particular the development of kerbside blue bin recycling services and bring sites. This service development has contributed to a rise in recycling levels, which stand at 36.6% of municipal waste in 2011/12.
- 6.15 As a consequence of recycling levels rising, more material has been diverted from landfill with 61.6% of municipal waste going to landfill in

2011/12. The remaining 1.8% of all municipal waste was used for energy recovery. Appendix 1 sets out the trends in waste and recycling improvements.

- 6.16 Clearly, the Council does face some challenges for the future. For example it has a significantly higher waste arising figure per head of population than its partner/ neighbouring authorities and has a slightly lower average recycling performance than the other two councils in the South of Tyne Waste Management Partnership who have both adopted a fortnightly refuse collection service designed to make efficiencies. This may be a factor to increase recycling by encouraging change in behaviour at the expense of resident satisfaction.
- 6.17 “Fly Capture” data also appears to show that the Council experiences proportionately more low level/ back lane fly tipping incidents than its neighbours. The comparative data between councils can be misleading due to differences in how incidents reported by each. The City Council reports all incidents to provide a picture of the scope of the problem of inappropriate refuse presentation to serious fly tipping incidents. This issue may be one of needing to raise awareness about behaviour which may currently be viewed as acceptable.

The Structure of Refuse Collection and Recycling within the Authority

- 6.18 The Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990, part II section 45, places a duty on local authorities to collect household waste household waste in its area. There are a range of related regulations, requiring the Council to provide households with access to recycling services but the requirement to collect household waste to maintain public health standards still remains the primary responsibility for the Council.
- 6.19 Section 46 of the EPA gives the Council powers to specify to householders the type of waste container(s) that should be used, the frequency and day of collection, and how this should be presented on collection day.
- 6.20 Sunderland Council currently provides the following waste and recycling collection services:-
- A weekly residual refuse collection;
 - A fortnightly kerbside collection for paper, glass, plastic bottles and food packaging, card, metal foils, drinks cartons and cans
 - A fortnightly kerbside green waste collection to about 85,000 households with gardens.
 - Bulky Household waste collection service.
- 6.21 The authority provides wheeled bins for collection of refuse, and larger bins for multi- occupancy properties and a small minority of premises with no suitable waste storage who are offered plastic sacks. Unlike

other authorities in the Partnership, Sunderland does have a policy of accepting side waste.

- 6.22 There is also provision for the collection of recyclables through Bring Sites/Banks at supermarkets, cars parks and open spaces across the city. This includes the collection of paper, glass, textiles, shoes, cans and plastic bottles.
- 6.23 In terms of trade waste, Sunderland Council provides a chargeable, commercial refuse collection service to businesses on request using a range of refuse storage containers and with differing collection frequencies. A special collection for large amounts of waste or bulky materials from commercial premises is also offered. Members supported the trade waste service provided by the Council and suggested that where possible it be expanded to offer recycling.
- 6.24 There are four Household Waste and Recycling Centres (WRCs) in operation in the Partnership area which are open to the public to deposit recyclables and waste. Appendix 1 identifies the centres and the materials accepted. The Campground, Wrekenton HWRC is used by both Gateshead and Sunderland. Although the Centre is located in Sunderland, it is owned and operated by Gateshead. Approximately 30% of users reside in the Washington area and the operational costs of the centre are shared by the two councils in accordance with this split of users. This facility will be completely refurbished 2013/14 to improve resident convenience and increase opportunities for recycling.
- 6.25 The Council also operates a Household Waste and Recycling Centre at Beach Street. The facility is currently operated by the Council's workforce. A range of improvements were made to improve the overall environment on the site in 2011.
- 6.26 As part of its review, members of the Panel visited the Beach Street Depot in order to view at first hand the operation and condition of the site. Members were impressed by the range of goods accepted for recycling and the help provided by staff at the site to offer guidance.

Energy from Waste Facility

- 6.27 In 2008, the South of Tyne Waste Management Partnership was awarded £73.5m of Private Finance Initiative funding for the development of a waste treatment facility. Following an EU procurement and evaluation of a range of bids, the Partnership agreed to develop an Energy from Waste Facility as the preferred solution. This facility is seen as central in reducing the amount of waste required to be sent to landfill and providing a long term sustainable solution for the City.
- 6.28 In December 2012, members of the Panel took the opportunity to visit the facility being constructed at Haverton Hill on Teesside by SITA UK

on behalf of the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership. Members met with the senior management at the facility and were given a conducted tour to view the EfW process at first hand.

- 6.29 The EfW facility at Teesside will allow municipal and non-hazardous commercial waste to be diverted away from landfill by using it to generate power for the national grid. The facility will generate around 20.5 MW of electricity; enough to power the equivalent of 30,000 households.
- 6.30 The contract will save money compared with continuing to send waste to landfill when the effect of year on year landfill tax increases takes affect, with the savings coming into affect from 2015, one year after service commencement. and also reduce the impact of waste disposal on the environment.
- 6.31 Three associated transfer stations and a visitor and education centre will also be developed within Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland. The transfer station to be built at Jack Crawford House Hendon will sort and 'bulk up' the waste before it is transported to Teesside. Some waste collected from Washington area will be delivered to the new Campground waste transfer station being built at Wrekenton, which will help the efficient operation of the refuse collection service in this part of the City.
- 6.32 The levels of emissions from EfW facilities will be closely and continuously monitored to ensure that dangerous emissions are not released. Modern EfW facilities are extremely clean and environmentally friendly forms of energy generation with waste being burned at extremely high temperatures.
- 6.33 Member were impressed by the facility and felt that its construction and delivery represented a good example of partnership working. The facility will clearly make a substantial contribution to the sustainable treatment of residual waste in the city.
- 6.34 It was pleasing that the construction of the facility was ahead of schedule and was now expected to be fully operational by April 2014, though commissioning work will begin around July 2013 in order to allow time to fine tune the process.

Resident Engagement and Education Programme

- 6.35 Clearly, considerable progress has been made over recent years in the level of waste collection and recycling in the city. And with the introduction of the Energy from Waste facility there will be a major improvement reduction in the level of waste going to landfill.
- 6.36 While the success in maintaining weekly collection services is pleasing, it is important that the Council continues to take measures to ensure that improvements in household recycling are further built upon.

- 6.37 A feature of the City Council's bid for funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for the continuation of weekly refuse collections, was to deliver a high quality education and engagement programme, along with an incentives scheme to ensure recycling performance is maintained and enhanced.
- 6.38 The use of community engagement measures is not new. The Waste Strategy identifies potential measures to increase the level of education and understanding of waste reduction matters.
- 6.39 The Council has previously undertaken campaigns such as the 'No More Excuses' campaign which had a big impact on encouraging people to recycle more, along with the more recent "blue bin" campaigns which launched the new kerbside collection scheme in 2010. together with a recent promotion increasing what can be recycled in the blue bins.
- 6.40 However, the scale of funding now available to the Council allows it to undertake a substantial piece of consumer insight research into customer views and behaviours relating to recycling. The findings of this work will inform a communications campaign that resonates with the city's residents, the objective is to increase the volume and range of materials being recycled. As part of the recent bid to Govt, the City Council received funding of £150,000 to be used over the next three years for this purpose.
- 6.41 A central part of community engagement will be the design and delivery of a Resident Engagement and Education Programme. This will, through various methods of in depth research, seek to understand people's behaviour towards recycling and will include the views of Community Spirit and specific focus groups.
- 6.42 The Customer Insight Surveys will identify those areas of the city who are enthusiastic, active, passive, part time and non participants in recycling and try to understand not only where in the city, marketing work should be focussed, but more in depth information such as attitudes to the Council and the service, what barriers prevent or reduce participation, and what may incentivise a positive change in attitude and behaviour.
- 6.43 The Panel was informed that the insight programme is currently being developed and should be completed by summer. This will inform the design of a detailed communications and marketing plan.
- 6.44 As part of the review the Panel was consulted on the potential themes and objectives of the new communications plan, waste recycling incentives scheme and the approach to be being taken as part of the engagement Strategy.

6.45 The key themes of our responses are set out below:-

- Giving residents a clear message about their role and the full range of environmental, social and economical reasons for recycling will be the priority message;
- This will be informed by resident insight work, commissioned to understand what makes people recycle and what barriers if any prevent others, as well as identify the range of enthusiasm in residents across different geographical areas of the city;
- Subject to the insight findings, the messages could be informative, clear and direct, using a similar style to the previous “No more excuses” campaign in 2008/9;
- Following the information, education and engagement phase, the next phase will be to use enforcement measures to address the minority of residents who do not respond positively;
- This is a significant piece of work and we must ensure that we get it right and adopt the best approach which suits the city’s needs. The DCLG funding provides this opportunity;

6.46 Overall, the Panel referred to the importance of emphasising how recycling is good for the environment and links in to the principle of an attractive city.

6.47 We also feel that it is important to emphasise the value of recycling in terms of the better use of resources and the financial savings that will accrue from recycling rather than sending waste to landfill.

The Use of Incentives Schemes

6.48 Resident Recycling Incentives Schemes have been used in other parts of the country as an alternative to a direction and enforcement approach to residents. The Council is currently part of a regional scheme whereby identifiable stickers are placed on certain recyclable items put out by residents and each month a draw is made and prizes are won. These can include TV’s, lap tops, and shopping vouchers. To date, there had been good take up and increasing awareness of the council blue bin recycling service but the long term impact was not clear.

6.49 Other incentives may be operated in conjunction with supermarkets where there is a greater number of lower value, incentives such as money off coupons. Such a scheme has yet to be designed and finalised.

6.50 The Panel was cautious about the use of incentive schemes with high value prizes. Members also raised concern at the long term sustainability of such schemes. The operation of an incentive scheme was a central part of the bid to DCLG to secure funding for weekly refuse collection. The fact that the Council operated an existing

scheme may have impressed the award panel, but we feel further development of any new incentives scheme is required.

The Balance Between Education and Enforcement

- 6.51 The Environmental; Protection Act (EPA) 1990 Part II Section 46 gives the Council powers to specify to householders the frequency and day of collection the type of waste containers that should be used, and how this should be presented on collection day.
- 6.52 A number of Councils have used this legislation to enforce recycling. However, some would argue that taking such enforcement action can be classed as a disproportionate act, can increase the risk of negative publicity for the Council and in the present economic climate perhaps not represent a good use of resources.
- 6.53 Members felt that there was a general consensus among the public and service users of the advances the Council had made in promoting recycling in recent years and that some form of enforcement action may be appropriate for example where residents persistently fail to recycle.
- 6.54 The Panel feel that the Council should not be unwilling to take enforcement action where it is deemed appropriate. Such action would be supported by the local community and could act as an effective deterrent. Equally it was important that local Magistrates were supportive of local authorities when they chose to prosecute and made use of the penalties available.
- 6.55 The Panel does however highlight the dangers of blanket enforcement notices. The use of warning and enforcement letters holds the danger alienating the majority of people who recycle and so needs to be planned and targeted carefully.
- 6.56 We consider that it may be necessary to recognise varying levels of recycling participation in different areas of the city, and so make informed decisions on how to best align our effort and resources.

Approach to the Treatment of Side Waste

- 6.57 Tackling fly tipping and sending out a strong enforcement message is important in deterring medium and large scale fly tipping. The practice of putting out rubbish or bulky waste in back lanes or other council land with the expectation of it being collected and taken away by service teams, or putting out excess side rubbish with normal bins, whether or not the resident is participating in recycling, appears to be accepted in some areas of the city. When this happens there is often a negative perception of the neighbourhood which can attract arson and larger scale fly tipping, and lead to complaints from compliant neighbours. Fly tipping data indicates the presence of small scale back lane fly tipping

or that taking place on other council land forms a significant majority of all reported incidents.

- 6.58 Currently in Sunderland there is a policy of allowing up to 2 bags of side waste to be collected with residual waste collections. At Christmas time bulky waste services support refuse collection teams and there is a two week amnesty where service teams help clear up all waste presented to ensure we keep a clean and tidy environment.
- 6.59 Comparison of policies and practice in Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and Durham Council areas has shown that there appears to be no side waste allowed with the normal wheel bin collection. While the fly tipping statistics show high concentrations of small scale fly tipping activity as a percentage of the overall totals, and the potential impacts locally to be significant, the overall scale of the problem is very small when taking the whole population of the city into account.
- 6.60 The Panel supports of the Council's existing policy in relation to the treatment of side waste and feels that overall a flexible approach to the treatment of such waste does much to foster a good reputation for the service and the Council. We feel that it is best not to be overtly prescriptive but to use persuasion and education in this area. Again, it is important to target those who abuse the system rather than sanction the majority who comply.
- 6.61 Overall, the Panel would therefore suggest a balanced approach based on the 3 E's; education, encouragement and enforcement: using education first, then encouragement, with enforcement targeted towards those who persistently fail to comply.
- 6.62 We also feel that it is important for the Council to understand more about why people do and do not recycle. Such information would be important to help inform and guide Council policy. The commissioning of a comprehensive customer insight survey to gather this information will provide great value to the development of the new communications campaign.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Panel consider that the Council's waste and recycling service is both highly regarded and has made good progress over recent years in terms of quality and recycling performance.
- 7.2 Sustainable waste management requires partnership and is therefore not simply the responsibility of Government but also of individuals, businesses and other stakeholders.
- 7.3 Promoting awareness is central to the future development of waste services by providing the general public with a better understanding of

the issues involved in waste minimisation and the recycling of waste. Clearly, recycling initiatives can only work if there is public involvement and commitment.

- 7.4 We feel that communicating with the public is the key. A powerful education campaign must be sustained, however this will require investment to ensure its success. Any solution must involve public participation and Council must provide leadership through education, awareness and action.
- 7.5 We feel that it is important that future campaigns should be based on an understanding of why people do participate or do not recycle correctly.
- 7.6 We are unsure of the merits of adopting expensive incentive schemes particularly given the current economic climate. We would also point to evidence that suggests self-rewarding people for good behaviours may encourage people only to act in the future if rewarded, rather than acting because they care or value society and the environment. More work should be done on the development of incentive schemes using data collected from the existing trial, other trials and perhaps linking to the proposed customer insight survey.
- 7.7 It is pleasing that the City Council is undertaking a comprehensive customer insight exercise. The Panel suggests that it receives regular updates on the progress being made.
- 7.8 The Council needs to reinforce the message that residents have an obligation to deal with their waste responsibly. There is however, a balance to be struck between education, encouragement and enforcement.

8 Recommendations

The Panel recommendations are outlined below:-

- (1) That further update reports be provided on the findings of the Customer Insight Survey to inform a communications campaign for waste and recycling;
- (2) That the delivery of the new communications campaign be monitored including activities on promoting awareness and involvement in recycling and on tackling inappropriate waste presentation and fly tipping;
- (3) That further reports be provided on the progress on the delivery of a recycling incentives scheme, the impact on awareness and participation in recycling services and the impacts on recycling performance.

9. Acknowledgements

9.1 The Committee is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our review. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:-

- (a) Les Clark, Head Of Streetscene;
- (b) Colin Curtis; Assistant Head of Streetscene;
- (c) Jane Peverley, External Communications Manager;
- (d) All Staff based at Beach Street Depot
- (e) Jim Alproovich, South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership
- (f) Staff from SITA

10. Background Papers

10.1 The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:

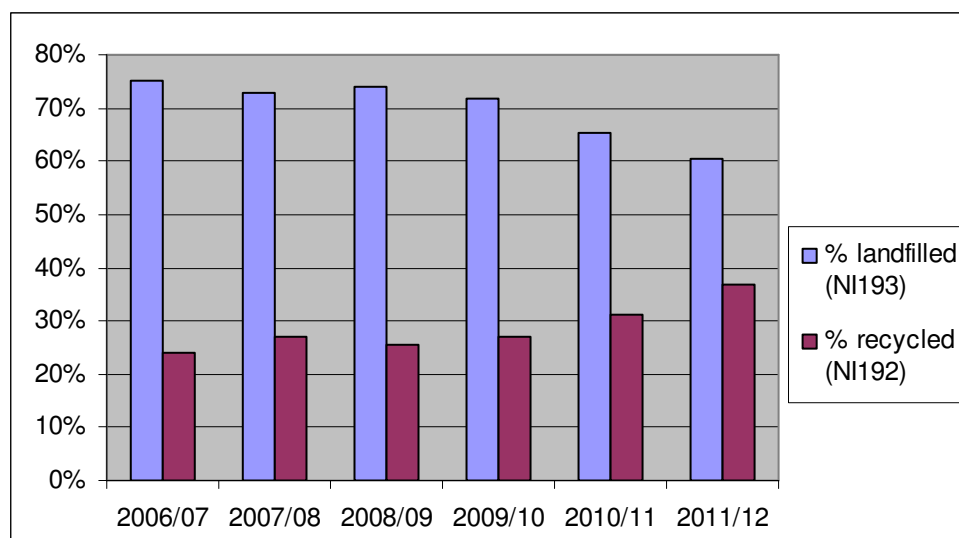
Joint Tyne and Wear Waste Management Waste Management Strategy
Agenda and Minutes of City Services Scrutiny Panel

Appendix 1

Municipal waste in Tyne and Wear 2011/12

	Gateshead	South Tyneside	Sunderland
Population	191,700	153,700	283,500
Households	92,330	69,820	124,850
Household waste (t)	84,361	63,603	126,977
Non Household waste (t)	9,841	14,318	13,641
Municipal waste (t)	94,202	77,921	140,618
Household waste per household (kg)	914	910	1017
Household waste per head (kg)	440	414	448

Percentage of waste sent to landfill or recycled in Sunderland 2006/07 – 2011/12



As the percentage of Sunderland's waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting has increased since 2006/07, the percentage sent to landfill has decreased¹.

¹NI 192 - Percentage of Household waste Sent for Reuse, Recycling or Composting, NI 193 Percentage of Municipal Waste Sent to Landfill.