

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 DECEMBER 2021

Present: Councillor Patel(Chairperson)
Councillors Derbyshire, Owen Jones, Lancaster, Jackie Parry,
Parkhill, Owen, Sandrey and Wong

36 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Parkhill.

37 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

38 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2021 were approved by the Committee as a correct record.

39 : MEMBER BRIEFING REPORT - DRAFT RECYCLING STRATEGY 2021-25 AND WASTE MANAGEMENT AND COLLECTIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a briefing report providing Members with an update on Cardiff's draft recycling strategy and an opportunity for officers to respond to the Committee's requests from its meeting in July.

The Cabinet will consider a report at a future meeting on the draft Recycling Strategy 2021-25. The report would seek Cabinet's approval to begin consultation on the draft strategy and an associated resident survey on improving recycling performance. The report would also seek approval for the following:

- To support a pilot of 3 stream segregated collection for glass, mixed containers (plastic and metal) and paper / cardboard; alongside the use of reusable bags.
- To retain the Recycling Centre booking system and 'no black bag' policy.
- To cease the provision of red and white striped bags for residents living in properties unable to store 140litre residual bins on the property and allowing residents to present three refuse bags from January 2022.

Members were advised that the Recycling, Preparation for Re-use and Composting Targets (Monitoring and Penalties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 impose a requirement for the Council to measure the tonnage of waste and recycling of both households and commercial business serviced by Cardiff Council. The target set by Welsh Government was for the Council to achieve a recycling rate of 64% by 2019/20 and 70% by 24/25. The recycling rate for 2019/20 was 58.10% and the Council has reported a recycling rate of 55.80% in 20/21 which is still to be validated by Natural Resources Wales.

Members were asked to note that due to changes in waste and recycling collections during Quarter 1 of the year, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, all waste and

recycling collected from residents was sent to the Energy from Waste plant. This impacted on the overall performance for the year resulting in the 64% statutory recycling performance target not being achieved. Welsh Government has chosen not to enforce financial penalties upon the Authority for failing to meet its statutory targets. However, there is a requirement for immediate intervention to ensure targets are met moving forward.

A summary of the key issues identified in the briefing report was provided including:

- that Cardiff has a high number of people living in flats and Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) at circa 30% of total properties. These types of properties have a disproportionately high level of non-participation in recycling and where recycling does take place, there are high levels of contamination within the co-mingled recycling;
- that performance for trade waste is significantly lower than that for the residential sector. Trade waste represents circa 9% of the total of waste collected by Cardiff Council and the poor performance of this sector drags down the Council's overall recycling performance;
- the briefing report details a series of proposed changes to be introduced in addition to the strategy including a proposed pilot for a 3-stream segregated collection of glass, mixed containers (plastic and metal) and paper/cardboard, alongside the use of reusable bags. This approach is being proposed to prevent the loss or reject of recycling material as a result of contamination and has been weighed up against a kerbside sort model;
- the pilot also aims to reduce single use plastics. As highlighted, the use of reusable bags will address the 24 million single use green bags per annum for dry mixed recycling (DMR) and will reduce the cost significantly from the £800,000 that is currently spent on purchasing and distributing green recycling bags each year;
- retaining the Recycling Centre booking system that was introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic and the 'no black bag' policy, which resulted in a large reduction in residual waste and in turn an improvement in the recycling recovery rate.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Michael Michael, Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment; Neil Hanratty, Director of Economic Development and Graham Harris, Head of Recycling and Neighbourhood Services to the meeting.

Councillor Michael Michael was invited to make a brief statement. Members were then invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members noted the difficulties associated with the collection of commercial waste in the city. Members asked whether Welsh Government is planning to require all commercial waste collectors operating in the city to recycle all the waste that they collect. The Cabinet Member advised that Welsh Government are aware of this issue and discussions are ongoing. Commercial waste accounts for 30% of the service and if that counted towards recycling targets then the authority would have a 3.5% to 4% higher recycling rate. Officers advised that Welsh Government had recently published Non-Domestic Waste Regulations which will

come into force next year. These regulations require businesses to separate their waste at source. It was anticipated that trade waste would then become a positive contributor towards the recycling target.

- Members asked whether, under the proposed collection method, waste would still be collected if residents put the wrong item in the wrong container. The Cabinet Member stated that most Authorities in Wales apply this method. There were some reservations when wheeled bins were first introduced but they ultimately lead to improvements. There were similar reservations when food waste collections were first introduced. The Cabinet Member was confident that the introduction of two separate containers will be successfully adopted by the public. Officers considered that recycling in the city has plateaued at around 58% and without a fundamental change in the way recycling is collected the 70% target would be unachievable. The pilot will inform decisions around contamination.
- Officers stated that should residents use the household collection service there should be no need for them to take recyclable materials to the Recycling Centres because they have a weekly collection. Streamlining the types of materials brought to Recycling Centres has helped to improve the recycling rate at the centres from 79% to between 87% and 90% and that puts Cardiff amongst the best performing recycling centres in Wales. The service was also considering the potential for increasing opportunities to recycling within the Recycling Strategy also. For instance, by providing mobile recycling facilities and facilities at local hubs.
- Members considered that Newport was a city comparable to Cardiff and that Newport Council currently operates a kerbside collection service that was performing very successfully. Members asked whether officers have consulted with colleagues in Newport to establish what works well. Officers stated that Newport Council has outsourced its collections and now operates a kerbside sort model. This option has been explored but it was considered that the pilot proposal was a better fit for Cardiff.
- A Member noted that the areas identified to participate in the kerbside collection pilot were not areas that have a lot of HMOs and flats. The Member asked officers to clarify how the pilot would be useful in addressing the waste collection issues recognised in residences of that type. Officers advised that in Cardiff 30% of housing stock are flats and HMOs. This is higher than comparable Welsh Authorities and recycling performance from these properties diminish the recycling rate. The pilot is not intended to be a 'one size fits all' solution and different options are being considered for flats and HMOs.
- A Member stated that evidence suggests that a single waste collection stream achieves a higher recycling rate than a segregated waste collection stream, whereas a segregated stream realises an uplift in revenue by producing better quality recyclable materials. Officers were asked to explain how the likely fall in the recycling rate would be countered. The Cabinet Member stated that it was anticipated that the new method would increase both the recycling rate and the quality of recycled materials. At present 30% of co-mingled recycling bags are contaminated and that needs to be addressed. Officers stated that contaminate reject accounts for around 8% of the co-mingled waste collected compared to a

Welsh average of 2%. Reducing the amount of co-mingled waste that is rejected will help Cardiff to achieve its 70% recycling target.

- Members asked how many reusable bags and boxes would be issued to each household participating in the pilot. The Cabinet Members stated that sufficient receptacles will be provided and households can request additional receptacles.
- Members asked officers to comment upon how the changes to segregated collection might impact upon collection times. The Cabinet Member stated that the move to a 4-day week has improved collection rates across the city. Officers advised that time and motion and the methodology around collections will be captured as part of the pilot. It was accepted that rounds would take longer as crews will need to spend longer at each property. The appropriate times will be built into the rounds to make them achievable.
- A Member raised concerns about the logistical issues associated with residents storing a number of different receptacles and questioned whether they would choose not to recycle instead. Officers advised that a lot of research has historically shown that where recycling methods are more complex recycling rates go down. However, Members were asked to note that we are now operating within a different context in Wales, where recycling has been growing. Data is now indicating that recycling performance increases when new schemes are introduced because new schemes are supported by communication and education. Therefore, the pilot and any rollout will ultimately need to be supported. The changes will be phased in, and lessons will be learned from the pilot and from the experience of other Authorities.
- A Member asked whether local ward Councillors in those wards participating in the waste separation trial would be given an opportunity to provide feedback on the trial. The Cabinet Member confirmed that local Members would be able to provide feedback. The Chairperson asked what would be done during the consultation process to get feedback from those sections of the community that have less access to online consultations, such as the elderly, disabled and BAME communities. Officers stated that communication is key to getting the message across in some communities. The Chairperson considered that leaflets and other printed materials would be less effective. Support was given to the Cabinet Member's suggestion that officers make personal visits to residents in some instances. Officers agreed to reflect on the Committee's comments.
- Officers stated that any contamination in the co-mingled collections is often not picked up until the bags reach the materials recycling facilities (MRF). The new system of kerbside sort will allow for those issues to be picked up at the kerbside. Therefore, those issues can be addressed with householders directly.
- Members raised concerns at the low level of recycling from flats and HMOs in comparison with regular households. The Recycling Strategy provides for a composition analysis of waste from flats and HMOs to be undertaken. Members asked what the proposed timescale was for this. Officers stated that the composition analysis has been completed and it has confirmed that the amount of recycling generated in flats is far lower than the amount generated in households. The analysis also showed that there was still a

large amount of food contamination from both flats and households. Data from the composition analysis, the aperture trial and a trial of litter bin sensors will be used to inform decisions on the waste collection model from flats moving forward. Officers are also working with colleagues in private sector housing to change the terms and conditions on licences to require landlords to provide receptacles for waste and recycling.

- Members referred to the tool kit for property management companies, particularly in relation to flats and HMOs. Members asked whether the strategy could link to the planning application process in a joined-up approach and to allow for recycling design to be considered in new planning applications at the planning approval stage. The Cabinet Member and the Director of Economic Development agreed with the point made and accepted that planning permission has been granted without much consideration being given to storage facilities. Waste Management will need to have better input into the planning process and those issues will need to be discussed with colleagues in the Planning Department. The Cabinet Member stated that blocks of flats that have large bins remain a challenge for the service. Considerable effort will also need to be made in educating residents in those properties to play their part in what Cardiff is trying to achieve.
- Members supported proposals to change the striped waste bags collections. A Member stated that in their experience the striped bag scheme has led to problems in areas of the city with high transient populations.
- Members asked why Community Protection Notices (CPN), that aim to address anti-social behaviour, result in a fine of only £100. Officers stated that enforcement fines are benchmarked with other Authorities on an annual basis and Cardiff is at the higher end of that spectrum. However, there are a range of powers available for Enforcement Officers. Problems with mis-presented waste can be addressed in a number of ways. For example, a small-scale fly-tipping fine is £400 and commercial waste enforcement allows for a fine of £300. Fines are capped under legislation and the Authority can only apply the maximum fine permitted.
- Members asked whether there was a systemic problem with bulky waste collections being collected on the correct date. A Member provided anecdotal evidence of problems they had experience with the service. Officers stated that the covid pandemic has resulted in a large increase in demand and there was a backlog. Extra resources have been provided to the service during October and November and the backlog has now been cleared. Monitoring of the service is ongoing.
- A Member stated that the blanket application of Section 46 notices in streets where there are large concentrations of HMOs often result in residents who do not have any problems with the presentation of their waste misunderstanding the notice. The Member asked whether Section 46 notices could be reworded to ensure that, whilst capturing all the necessary statutory information, the notice isn't misunderstood. Officers agreed to reflect on those comments.

- Members asked how work is progressing with landlords and the universities in addressing the problems commonly associated with student flats and student accommodation. Members were advised that officers continue to work closely with the universities and their representatives. Considerable outreach work has been undertaken including speaking directly with students at the residences to ensure that waste is presented correctly.
- Members queried how long separate collections would take if rolled out across the City. Officers stated that modelling has been undertaken and there was an acceptance that rounds will be slower and more vehicles will be required. It was anticipated that the pilot will provide more accurate data in terms of how long rounds are likely to take. The full business case will also take account of the increased income likely to result from the separation method.
- Members noted that residual waste also contained items that are recyclable. Members asked whether there was any viability in creating a sorting facility at the Energy from Waste plant to remove recyclables from the waste streams. The Cabinet Member considered that it would not be practicable to sort residual waste in this fashion.
- Member asked whether there were plans to engage with schools and increase recycling in schools. It was reported that the service does have plans to engage with schools as part of the One Planet Cardiff Strategy.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey any comments, observations and recommendations made during the way forward.

40 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Committee received a report providing an update on the Work Programme 2021/22 and the proposed recommendations of the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

Members were asked to note the proposed items on the Work Programme for January to March 2022 as set out in Appendix A to the report. A number of other potential items for the March meeting were detailed in Appendix B. The Committee requested that progress reports be brought to the March meeting on the Castle Street Modelling,, Highways Resurfacing and LED Street Lighting.

Members were also asked to consider and agree the RLDP Joint Task and Finish Group recommendations in Appendix E of the report.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) the Committee approves its a final work programme for the remainder of 2021-22;
- (2) approves the Committee Forward Work Plan attached at Appendix D, for publication on the Council's internet.

- (3) approves the recommendations of the RLDP Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group that are contained within the draft Chair's letter attached at Appendix E for submission to the Cabinet Member, Strategic Planning and Transport.

41 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were received.

42 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 13 January 2022.

The meeting terminated at 6.15 pm