

Management Response to Audit Wales review of Waste Management

R1 The Council should implement a strategy to significantly improve service delivery and increase its recycling rate as a matter of urgency

This Recommendation is accepted

The Council has a draft strategy which has been through a public consultation exercise and is being presented to Cabinet in September for final approval. The Council has delivered a pilot scheme to test one of the key interventions of the new strategy which has been successful and will enable the proposal for segregated recycling to be implemented once the Strategy is formally approved.

Although Cardiff has faced some difficulties in meeting the Welsh Government statutory targets, good progress has been made in recent years both in terms of agreeing a preferred strategy in line with the Welsh Government blueprint and also in implementing new initiatives to improve recycling performance which is now starting to be realised.

There has been a positive increase in performance from 58.19 in 2021/22 to 64.5% in Qtr 1 2022.

Several initiatives have been introduced including:

- 1) No black bags at Recycling Centres
- 2) No new 'residual only' contracts in trade services
- 3) The introduction of community recycling zones
- 4) Recycling of hygiene waste
- 5) The introduction of a Reuse Shop at Lamby Way

The Covid pandemic has delayed the realisation of the full benefits of these measures, but it is anticipated that this year performance will exceed previous years.

It is also worth noting that although Cardiff currently lags a little behind where it needs to be in terms of statutory targets, Cardiff performs extremely well compared to other large cities across the UK. It is the best performing core city in the UK, and one of the best performing cities for recycling in Europe.

R2 The Council should ensure it allocates the resources it will need to implement its recycling strategy in its financial planning

This Recommendation is accepted

The Council is working very closely with WRAP to model the resources required to implement the key elements of the strategy. This involves four key pieces of work:

- 1) Segregated Recycling Options Modelling
- 2) Trade Review
- 3) Material Recovery Facility / Waste Transfer Station Review
- 4) Flats Review (working in collaboration with Swansea)

Business plans will be created for each project to highlight resource requirements. The service has implemented pilots to ensure information in the modelling is real and robust. For example, the segregated recycling pilot has allowed real time data to be used in the options modelling for the business plan.

Based on the WRAP modelling and the recent trials the implementation of the Recycling Strategy can be delivered in line with current budget allocations. Any increase in costs should be largely mitigated through increased income from improved material quality. It is however acknowledged that there will be a requirement for capital investment to modernise the infrastructure to support the delivery of the strategy including new vehicles and a new transfer station. The Council will work closely with Welsh Government to address these costs.

R3 The Council should ensure it understands the risks concerning the implementation of the recycling strategy and takes appropriate action to mitigate those risks. This should include the development of an engagement and communication strategy with residents and effective governance and oversight arrangements with councillors and senior officers

This Recommendation is accepted

The Council is working with WRAP to learn from the experience of other local authorities in delivering large scale recycling programmes to ensure risks are identified and appropriately managed/mitigated.

The Council is treating the implementation of the Recycling Strategy as a major change programme and has put in place the governance and associated project management arrangements to ensure performance and risks are monitored effectively and reported corporately.

On top of this, regular meetings take place with the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance to ensure corporate oversight of the programme and progress is reported to the Council's Senior Management Team Programme Board at quarterly intervals.

Stakeholder meetings are also being set up to enable the community to have a strong on-going input into the Recycling Service.

The Council has made tackling climate change a clear priority through its One Planet Cardiff Strategy and the Stronger, Fairer, Greener Policy. Recycling Services are a key part of this and the department is working closely with colleagues across the authority, as well as external partners to ensure that the

implementation of the Recycling Strategy is not just about meeting targets, but 'doing the right thing'.

A communications strategy will be developed to support the roll-out of the Recycling Strategy with assistance from external experts to engage the public and businesses on the journey and to help the people of the city understand that recycling is a tangible action they can take to combat climate change and to improve our carbon footprint.

- R4 The Council must continue to develop an integrated and longer-term approach to waste management. This should take into account:**
- **policy developments from Welsh Government on waste and a circular economy.**
 - **wider social, economic and environmental goals that support the Council's wider objectives.**
 - **waste reduction and waste prevention; and**
 - **the sustainable development principle, including involving its communities and strengthening**

This Recommendation is accepted

The Council is aware of the future direction of Welsh Government policy – beyond recycling – and the move towards a zero waste, a circular economy, and a net zero carbon society which uses only its fair share of resources, sourced mainly from within Wales.

However, the Council has necessarily had to focus its attention on achieving the statutory recycling targets. Cardiff has a number of challenges that other local authorities in Wales do not have, such as the scale of the Council's trade waste service which has significantly skewed the performance of household recycling. This has meant that Cardiff has been behind the rest of Wales in its recycling performance.

Although the focus has been clearly on improving recycling performance, the Council has begun to implement initiatives that go beyond recycling including the introduction of a re-use centre at Lamby Way and a commitment to develop plans for further roll-out across the city.

The new strategy will also see the Council start to implement a squeeze on residual waste collections to encourage more of what is currently collected to be recycled. This is a flexible process that can be further extended as we work towards zero waste.

There are also examples of supporting the Council's wider objectives, including migrating our fleet onto green fuel sources including introducing Electric Vehicles into our collections fleet.

We have introduced pop-up recycling centres at various locations throughout the city to increase access to residents who ordinarily wouldn't visit our recycling centres.

The Council works with a number of community groups on joint-initiatives, such as litter picking groups and the rivers group, and we expect to build on these successful schemes over the months/years.

The Council is currently rolling-out textile recycling into all of the city's schools. We are working with charities and organisations to promote re-use including Pod-Back to recycle coffee pods.

The Council is also exploring possibilities to further integrate its recycling service into its economic development service to ensure the opportunities for the development of the circular economy become mainstreamed.

R5 The Council should continue understand how other organisations achieve better recycling outcomes and use this information to improve its own performance and shape its longer-term waste strategy

This Recommendation is accepted

Cardiff's recycling challenges more closely relate to the challenges faced by other major cities rather than the less urban authorities of Wales. Nonetheless, the Council proactively works with all Local Authorities across Wales through the CSS (Waste) group and CLAIRE Wales to understand best practice and has built learnings into our recycling service and strategy.

Cardiff's housing stock has a higher percentage of flats and HMO's (Houses in Multiple Occupation) compared to most LA's in Wales and this presents a unique set of challenges in meeting Welsh Government recycling targets. The Council is working alongside Newport City Council and Swansea City Council in conjunction with WRAP to find a solution to the low recycling performance in flats and HMO's. We have spoken with several cities across the UK experiencing similar issues with recycling performance in flats and HMO's and have yet to identify a successful solution to this problem.

The Council will continue to engage and remains keen to learn of any examples of best practice.