

# SCRUTINY REPORT



**MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny**

**DATE: 11 January 2017**

**SUBJECT: Waste Management and Recycling**

**REPORT FROM: Communities and Wellbeing - Waste Management**

**CONTACT OFFICER:**

**Glenn Stuart – Head of Waste Management**

---

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

**1.1** This report provides an update on a range of miscellaneous waste management and recycling related topics raised by Overview and Scrutiny.

## 2.0 WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING

### 2.1 What does the Council's recycling rate stand at now?

The Council's collected bin waste recycling rate is at an all time high. This follows the move to 3 weekly residual waste collections in October 2014, followed by the ongoing efforts of residents and the team of Recycling and Enforcement Officers in directly engaging with residents promoting the 'Right Stuff, Right Bin' message.

The table below shows the difference in tonnages collected for each waste stream for the first 12 months of the new service October 2014 – September 2015. As you can see from the figures, the tonnages of recycling materials collected increased and the tonnages of residual waste decreased significantly.

YEAR 1	Green Bin	Blue Bin	Brown Bin	Grey Bin
Cumulative Total for year	Increase of 673t	Increase of 726t	Increase of 1349t	Reduction of 5252t
Percentage	+9.20%	+9.16%	+9.14%	-16.20%

5252 tonnes less residual waste were collected over the 12 month period to September 2015, making a significant saving in avoided residual waste disposal costs. This tonnage reduction ensured that we achieved the projected savings in year 1 of £862,000.

The further table below shows the difference in tonnages collected for each waste stream for the second full twelve months of the new service October 2015 – September 2016. As you can see from the figures, the tonnages of recycling materials (blue bin and brown bin) continued to increase however paper/card (green bin) tonnages have levelled off, in line with national figures compared to year 1. The

tonnage of residual waste collected reduced by a further 361tonnes over the same period.

YEAR 2	Green Bin	Blue Bin	Brown Bin	Grey Bin
Cumulative Total for Year	Reduction of 25t	Increase of 535t	Increase of 1153t	Reduction of 361t
Percentage	-0.29%	+6.17%	+7.28%	-1.32%

The monthly rate peaked at 64% in June of 2016, whilst the average for the year is creeping ever closer to 60%. Recycling rates vary through the course of the year, due to the seasonal fluctuations associated with garden waste tonnages.

## **2.2 What progress is being made in increasing food waste recycling?**

In the Spring of 2016 the Service delivered an intensive food waste recycling campaign. The campaign had three elements to it. It involved knocking on doors of around 9,000 terraced properties, where participation was relatively low, going through a short survey to understand the barriers to food waste recycling and offering a roll of liners to each resident. At the same time a promotional flyer was delivered through every letterbox of every house in the borough (excluding flats) and 'No food waste please' stickers were attached to every grey bin lid in the borough.

Following the promotional campaign, in Quarter 1 of 2016/17 5,254 tonnes of bio waste was collected, compared to 4,892 tonnes in the same quarter of the previous year – an increase of 7.4%. The sustainment of this increase in food waste captured was a major contributory factor in the increase in the overall recycling rate.

Results of the campaign:

- 2860 households directly spoken to resulting in orders received for 500 brown bins, 598 kitchen caddies & 630 rolls of liners.
- 131 residents upsized from their street caddy to a brown wheeled bin.
- Between 14<sup>th</sup> March and 20<sup>th</sup> May 2016 - 2151 brown bins were ordered via the Contact Centre. During the same period 4184 kitchen caddies were handed out.

## **2.3 Households signed up to receive e-mail alerts about bin collections.**

About 16,500 households across the borough have now signed up to receive weekly e-mails alerting them to put their bin out for collection the following day. This constitutes nearly 25% of all households that present their bins for collections. Flats on communal bins are excluded from these figures because they do not present their bins for collection. This is an invaluable aid in reminding residents when their different bin collection days are and is an initiative that the service continues to promote.

## **2.4 Use of agency staff.**

Waste Management is provided through an in-house workforce. Agency staff is used on a temporary basis to cover for holidays and sickness. There are also several vacancies within the service that have been filled temporarily with agency staff.

There is a commitment to keep the use of agency staff to a minimum and following an appraisal of all agency staff it is proposed to fill vacancies on a permanent basis or where appropriate through providing opportunity for apprentices. The service will also consider providing holiday/sickness cover through permanent positions.

The recruitment of permanent staff to replace agency staff will commence in the early part of 2017. This is dependent upon the outcome of the forthcoming consultation exercise and the proposed remodelling of the service.

## **2.5 Development of 'in-cab' I-Pads**

The use of I-Pads provides the route for each waste collection crew. They also provide live connectivity with the back office and the Customer Contact Team. The I-Pads also provide any special instructions to the crews such as 'assisted collections' or bins stored in unusual locations. The technology also helps when there is a driver who is new to a route. The I-Pads provide a significant improvement to the old paper based systems.

The I-Pads in the vehicles are now over 5 years old. Connectivity has and continues to be a challenge. This is an issue for all mobile devices not just I-Pads and is related to Wi-Fi/internet coverage. It is not the fault of the software. Newer mobile devices perform better and this is why we upgrade phones, TV's etc. Advances in technology improve performance.

When signals are lost the information is stored on the I-Pad and sent when they next get a connection. This allows the crews to continue to work with the software and will update the back office and Customer Contact Centre promptly when connection is re-established.

Waste Management is in discussions with Corporate ICT at the moment, building a business case for replacing all of the I-Pads, which will provide the latest technology as well as improve connectivity and performance in providing an efficient waste management service.

## **2.6 Recruiting women operatives.**

Bury Council is an equal opportunities employer and fully supports the employment of women into all aspects of operational services including Waste Management. Women are currently employed in the back office within the recycling, waste management and trade waste teams. However, Waste Management has not advertised and recruited any front line operatives for some time.

Temporary staff are supplied by local employment agencies, the main one being Staff (UK), based in Bolton. Staff (UK) state that in their experience, despite all efforts, the roles offered by Waste Management tend not to be attractive to females, working outdoors in all weather conditions in a physically demanding role. Staff (UK) also supply temporary labour to other local Councils and it is exactly the same situation there, with no Council employing more than the odd individual female in a Waste Management operational role. The Council did employ one individual female via Staff (UK) on an ad hoc basis for a number of years but she has now obtained alternative employment elsewhere.

Women are currently under-represented in the waste management workforce and moving forward we will take positive action to address this.

## **2.7 Operational reporting to the Depot**

The Team Leader/Driver for each bin crew reports to the depot at the start and at the end of each working day. This is by default because all the vehicles are based at one central depot at Bradley Fold. Approximately 50% of Operatives currently start work from the depot in a morning.

A review is currently ongoing to consider how the wider workforce reports to the depot. It is not possible to provide any further detail at this stage, however the workforce will be consulted on any proposed developments or changes in current practice. The review will also consider the health and safety of staff as well as promoting good communication and teamwork between the workforce and Supervisors.

## **2.8 Stick-on house numbers for Bins.**

In 2011 every household in the borough was provided with a set of four stickers on which residents were encouraged to write their house number before attaching it to each of their bins. Unfortunately only about 20% were actually used.

All new and replacement bins delivered by the service on an ongoing basis should be stickered and numbered. At the same time when Recycling and Enforcement Officers are delivering recycling awareness campaigns in areas where we experience some difficulties with the service, such as areas of terraced housing with back street collections, they provide and encourage the use of bin stickers by residents on an ongoing basis.

It is important for residents to put their house number on their wheeled bins in order to deter bins from being stolen or misplaced which in turn will help alleviate the cost of a replacement bin.

In terms of tidiness of bins left on the footpaths or side streets, the waste service will investigate any complaint. If it is found to be from service quality, then in each case the collection crew will be spoken to and reminded of their responsibilities to leave bins tidily.

The Waste Management Service is also reviewing its general service quality standards as part of a wider service review. The workforce will be consulted regarding any proposed changes to the service.

## **2.9 Charges for extra and replacement bins**

There is a charge of £30 for new, replacement and additional grey bins only. This charge has encouraged residents to take more care and ownership of their grey bins, which was always the intention and demand for replacements has been suppressed as a result, saving the Council money.

The problem of bins going missing is particularly prevalent in areas of terraced housing with back street bin collections, and is something that the team of Recycling and Enforcement Officers are constantly targeting. Officers encourage residents to take more care of their bins, to number them and to not leave them out permanently.

However, we do have problems with recycling bins going missing with a few residents acquiring recycling bins sometimes on multiple occasions. Recycling bins can often turn up abandoned and contaminated with residual waste. This stresses the importance for residents to place their house number onto the bin.

In time the service retrieves the contaminated bins, brings them back to Bradley Fold depot to empty. This is a considerable drain on resources and is a cycle that the

service is working hard to break. An option may be to provide the initial recycling bins free of charge but then to apply a small charge for subsequent replacement bins. This will encourage residents to take ownership of all their bins, encourage bins them to number their bins and to make an effort to find their bin if it goes missing.

## **2.10 Recycling at flats where residents share communal bins.**

Recycling collections from flats where residents share communal bins can be more challenging due to the lack of ownership of the bins concerned.

In order to address this, the Recycling and Enforcement team (who are area based) systematically visit flats, trying to put measures in place to encourage residents to recycle better. Letters and information is hand delivered to flats, in an effort to engage with as many residents face to face. Hessian bags, for separation of recycling, are offered to residents to make recycling as convenient as possible. The same Officers also work with managing agents for private flats as well as registered social landlords such as STH and other Housing Associations in introducing recycling schemes into flats and addressing any problems that may arise. Where possible, Officers also identify and work with individual residents who might have a particular interest in recycling and are happy to work with the service in championing the cause. Such individuals can be an invaluable help.

The team is currently working with Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority on a campaign to improve recycling at 40 different flats locations across Radcliffe, Bury West, Tottington and Ramsbottom, using the above methods. In addition, bins are inspected weekly over 3 or 4 collections and stickers placed on the bins to indicate how well residents are performing. Postcards with information relating to the campaign are also posted to residents during the campaign.

Where dry recycling (in the form of blue and green bins) has been successfully introduced at flats Officers make every effort to then introduce food waste recycling. This is more of a challenge because of the nature of the waste involved and the more complicated process of separation but nevertheless there have been some notable successes.

## **3.0 CONCLUSION**

Over the last few years the Waste Management service has made huge strides forwards, in terms of making efficiencies and thereby significant financial savings, as well as in improving the Council's recycling rate. The majority of Bury residents have taken a positive approach to recycling and we thank them for their help and commitment.

In 2011 fortnightly residual waste collections were introduced and at the same time, the I-Pads were introduced into the collection vehicles, an innovation which attracted national headlines.

In 2014 Bury was the first Council in England to introduce a 3 weekly residual waste collection service, again making national headlines. Other Councils across the country are now following suit.

Over this time the collected bin waste recycling rate has improved from 27% to just short of 60%, achieving huge savings in avoided waste disposal costs. This follows the roll out of an improved container for paper and card recycling, as well as the collection of food waste for recycling.

Given the ongoing financial constraints that the Council and the Waste Management service must operate within, there is no room for complacency. A further review is being undertaken of the Waste Management and Recycling Service that reflects the ever challenging financial targets for the Service and for the Council.

---

**List of Background Papers:-**

None.

**Contact Details:-**

*Glenn Stuart, Head of Waste Management  
Neil S Long, Assistant Director Operations*