



To:
Councillor Mark Thomas
Cabinet Member for Environment
Enhancement and Infrastructure
Management

Please ask for:
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Date
Dyddiad:

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BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement and Infrastructure Management. The letter concerns the meeting held on 15th December 2021 and the Recycling and Landfill Annual Performance Report 2020-21.

Dear Councillor Thomas,

On the 15th December, the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel met to discuss the Recycling and Landfill Annual Performance Report (APR) 2020-21. The Panel are grateful to yourself and Matthew Perkins, Group Leader Waste Management, for attending to discuss the report and answer questions. Discussions focused on the following areas:

It was reported to the Panel that the recycling target of 64% was achieved last year, despite the challenges of the Pandemic. Members noted this as an incredible effort by crews and praised the efforts by all staff involved.

We also heard that Swansea Council is on course this year to reach the Welsh Government target, although officers explained that there is potential to dip slightly from 64.4% to 64%.

The Panel heard that Swansea Council will move away from landfill operations, towards an *Energy from Waste (EfW)* facility. We understand that more details on this will follow in the New Year, pending finalisation of contracts.

Panel Members queried the EfW scheme and whether there would be savings in landfill costs. Officers explained that EfW is a more costly process, however, by closing the landfill site the operational costs are reduced, thereby being more cost efficient going forward.

Regarding the EfW schemes, Members queried if this would add to the carbon footprint in terms of vehicles travelling out of county. Officers explained that there are

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no such facilities within Swansea and therefore must incur the added transport costs, however, we understand that these costs will counter-balance with the cessation of our creation of landfill waste.

Members also questioned whether the range of items collected for recycling would be expanded. Officers explained that there are numerous materials, such as textiles and electricals, that could potentially be collected. Officers did highlight that the new Welsh Government Strategy will roll out in 2025 to target new materials, including guidance around 'Extended Producer Responsibilities' and 'Deposit Return' schemes (DRS). Members queried the potential link between possible drops in recycling rates, under the DRS scheme. Officers explained that this will target high quality recyclable materials, therefore removing these items from the Council collection service and impacting upon the rates reported.

The Panel heard that cardboard collections have increased during lockdown, as home deliveries increased. It was pleasing to hear that Swansea Council collection vehicles were able to cope with this change in waste composition.

The Panel queried whether stocks of green bags were currently running low. Officers explained that, although levels did become low, the Council is now fully stocked and, going forward, will order half-yearly supplies to avoid any future shipping delays.

Panel Members raised concerns over fly tipping, particularly in relation to the collection of wood. Officers explained that, regarding hazardous wood, Natural Resources Wales have provided guidance on sorting wood, including separate outlet requirements for hazardous wood (painted or treated). Officers undertook to clarify further information regarding what constitutes hazardous wood and proposals for disposal.

The Panel discussed the possibility of moving the Tip Treasures recycling shop to a central location, although understood that storage issues may prevent re-location into the City Centre.

Panel Members commented on the fantastic operation of the waste disposal facilities / plant(s) during the Pandemic, praising all staff involved in this efficient and impressive operation.

We are interested in any thoughts you may have on the contents of this letter but, in this instance, we require no formal written response.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Chris Holley
Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel
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