



To:
Councillor Cyril Anderson
Cabinet Member for Community Services

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Date
Dyddiad:

18 January 2024

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Community Services. The letter concerns the meeting held on 12 December 2023 and the Recycling and Landfill Annual Performance Monitoring Report. A response is required by 8 February 2024

Dear Councillor Anderson,

On the 12 December, the Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel met to discuss the Recycling and Landfill Annual Performance Monitoring Report. The Panel are grateful to you and Chris Howell Head of Waste, Parks and Cleansing, for attending to discuss and answer questions.

The update we received included information on the 2022 Waste Strategy which sets out to achieve statutory recycling targets by 2024/25. We heard that in 2022/23 the Council exceeded the current statutory recycling target of 64% by achieving 71.8% which was principally due to switching from black bag disposal from landfill to energy from waste. This has resulted in Swansea Council being first in the Welsh league table for recycling performance. We passed on gratitude in the meeting for the work gone into achieving this.

You highlighted areas of development including a review of commercial waste operations in line with new legislation and also future direction of Welsh Government, including the introduction of a deposit return scheme, workplace recycling legislation and extended producer responsibility. We asked further about the compulsory workplace recycling legislation that is due to be introduced in April 2024 and if the Council were responsible for any additional containers for commercial companies and whether this would impact revenue and in higher costs for customers. The officer stated that is difficult to judge impact to revenue at this point, the code of practice has only recently been released however it will require some changes. There may also be some waste costing more than others but there should be less residual waste. We asked about the processes in place to consult with businesses and you told us that the service area has been advising commercial customers of the forthcoming legislation changes by email, verbally and through the website. Welsh Government

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have a communications strategy to ensure all workplaces in Wales are aware of the legislative changes. In addition, the Council will use the Welsh Governments Communication Toolkit to help and to engage with local community commercial waste customers.

We requested more information on the extended producer responsibility. We heard that this is complex but that the roll out across the UK will be coordinated. The producer of waste will pay for disposal which aims to encourage current producers to use different recyclable materials or reduce the wrapping which will therefore be less costly.

We asked for an update on the trial being undertaken in St Thomas and were informed that reusable containers for cans, glass, paper and card are being trialled with an overall positive response so far. We asked if storage for these containers was raised as an issue, so far officers reported this had not been a major concern however all feedback would be reviewed at the end of the trial. We asked about feedback from collection crews and heard that engagement was taking place to find appropriate ways of working. We also asked about cost and were informed of the plans to seek a Welsh Government grant for the initial purchase of reusable containers, and overall would be cost neutral. We asked if there were any plans for doorstep Tetra Pak recycling for domestic customers, however, were informed that the focus is on reusable containers at the moment.

We queried the status of collection vehicles and heard that Swansea does have an aging fleet with 12-15 new vehicles to lease on order with funding in place. Leases are for 5-7 years with flexibility to extend or buy. Regarding electric vehicles, Swansea owns one with no plans to increase this until there is more evidence of the benefits of switching the fleet over to electric. The leasing period will give time to gather more information on the costs and benefits of electric vehicles. You also mentioned the Councils plans to purchase 14 new green hydrogen buses.

We felt that litter is an issue, with external bins being used for domestic waste, single use gloves from garages and the increase of fly tipping, these are challenging issues. As these are part of the cleansing team's responsibility, we will invite this team to scrutiny in due course.

We asked if single use food waste bags were also being considered for replacement and heard that there are few viable alternatives to these at the moment and advice from food disposal contractors is that the plastic bags are stripped out then the food waste is composted through aerobic digestion. Compostable bags are less robust than a plastic bag therefore harder to strip out and it's the preference of the food waste contractor to use the plastic bags. Compostable bags would also increase costs. We asked about the level of certainty that all the elements of plastic from the bags are stripped out and would be interested to hear from the contractor on the evidence for this to provide reassurance. Since the meeting we have received a comprehensive response from the contractor in which the screening process was explained to us and that PAS110 Certificates of Analysis show their digestate tests zero for plastics under 2mm.

We also discussed home composting and the benefits of encouraging this with free compost kits, however, less can be composted at home than through food waste collection and the Council are not currently providing subsidised composting kits.

We would also be interested in a breakdown of the £8.1m income generated primarily through commercial contracts or the sale of certain recyclables which is referenced in the report. We understand that this may need to be circulated confidentially and can be sent separately to the letter response if required.

Your Response

We welcome your comments on any of the issues raised and request a formal response by 8 February to the following –

- A breakdown of the £8.1m income.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Chris Holley

Convener, Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel

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