



Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management

Scrutiny Performance Panel
15 December 2021

Recycling and Landfill Annual Performance Monitoring Report 2020/21

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| Purpose | To monitor and challenge performance and action plan for meeting statutory targets. |
| Content | This report explains the statutory recycling target, performance to date and actions to meet statutory target. |
| Councillors are being asked to | Consider the report |
| Lead Councillor(s) | Councillor Mark Thomas, Cabinet member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management |
| Lead Officer(s) | Chris Howell |
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1. Background

- 1.1 The Waste (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Welsh Governments National Strategy 'Towards Zero Waste' sets out a 70% recycling and composting target for 2025. It also sets out targets to reduce the amount of biodegradable waste sent to landfill.
- 1.2 Council adopted a Waste Strategy in 2012 which sets out a range of principles and actions to achieve the statutory targets set out in Welsh Governments plans. In addition the service was subject to a comprehensive 'Commissioning Review' in 2016 which looked at how the service can move forward in the most cost effective manner whilst meeting the statutory targets.

- 1.3 In 2020/21 the Council exceeded the increased statutory recycling target of 64% by achieving 64.6%; this was a reduction of 0.3% on the previous year. The decrease was mainly due to the impact of the Coronavirus lockdown which forced the closure of all our Recycling Centres, separate nappy collections, and our bulky waste collection service for 2 months, and a reduction in promotion and enforcement activities. The Re-use Shop also had to close for nearly 12 months.
- 1.4 This performance meant that the Council provisionally sits 17th in a league table of performance for the whole of Wales. As in previous years, it should be noted that most LAs in Wales are sending their residual waste for incineration, which means that they are also able to claim recycling tonnage for the residue ash produced. This usually increases the recycling rate by around 5%, so as we are incinerating very little at this time, our ranking is artificially low. When we stop using Tir John landfill and send our residual waste to Energy from Waste, our ranking will improve potentially into the first quartile, although we are unlikely to be able to compete with the rural LAs such as Monmouth, Ceredigion, and Pembroke etc. as we have a number of factors which adversely affect our recycling rate. These include:
- A large commercial sector being a city authority
 - A large student population
 - A large number of flats and other high density housing with less room to recycle.
- 1.5 The annual residual household waste produced per person in the Swansea Council area was 221kg, compared with a Wales average of 264Kg, putting the Council 7th in Wales.
- 1.6 Should the Authority miss the Welsh Government Statutory Recycling Target the Authority could face fines of £200 for every tonne that the target is missed, which represents £250k for every 1% short of the target.

2 What's next?

- 2.1 Our current recycling and composting rate for the first two quarters of this year has fallen below the levels of the previous couple of years due to an increase in domestic residual waste, a reduction in garden waste, and an increase in material sorting rejects. However the Authority is predicting meeting the 64% target this year due to an increase in our promotion and enforcement activities through the Keep it Out campaign, recovering recyclables from non-black bag residual waste, improved material sorting processes, and a rise in ash recycling from increased Energy from Waste in the new year.

- 2.2 The priority improvement areas to enable the Council to meet the statutory target going forward will include:
- Refreshing the promotion and enforcement of the Keep it Out campaign.
 - Restarting the recycling of separately collected nappies, and expanding the service to a full separate nappy collection service.
 - Continuing to promote recycling.
 - Waste minimisation
 - Increasing the recovery of recyclables from non-black bag residual waste
 - A further reduction in material sorting rejects
- 2.3 The Service will continue to monitor recycling performance and levels of residual waste and review new recycling technologies and markets to ensure it maximises recycling performance within available budgets.
- 2.4 The Service is also drafting a waste strategy to achieve the next Welsh Government (WG) statutory recycling target of 70% by 2024/25.

3 Welsh Government Policy Future Direction

- 3.1 Following the publication of Welsh Government's Towards Zero Waste in 2019, and Beyond Recycling in 2021, WG has clear aspirations for increased recycling and a move towards a circular economy.
- 3.2 WG state *"To maintain our trajectory towards zero waste by 2050, we will commit to setting out interim targets on a trajectory towards zero waste."* WG are highly likely to set increased recycling targets post 2025.
- 3.3 WG are also considering the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), where purchasers of products included in the scheme, such as beverage cans or bottles, will have to pay a deposit up front and then claim it back when they return the empty container. This could have a negative impact on Council's recycling rates and incomes from recyclable materials depending upon which products are included and how the scheme is administered.
- 3.4 Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is another scheme WG are considering. This operates under the principle of the producer of packaging which eventually becomes waste, pays for the cost of dealing with that waste.
- 3.5 All of the above uncertainties mean that it is difficult to set a long term waste collection strategy until some of the issues become clearer.

4 Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no additional legal implications to those already set out in the report.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The service has a circa £12.5M annual budget comprising of £19.3M costs and £6.8M income generated primarily through commercial contracts or the sale of certain recyclables. £1.1m of the income currently comes via grants from Welsh Government. The £19.3m costs principally comprise of staff, vehicles and waste/recyclable treatment/disposal costs.

Background papers: None

Appendices: None