

POLICY & REVIEW (OVERSIGHT) PANEL.

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Policy & Review (Oversight) Panel held on Wednesday 3 October 2007 at 4pm in the Executive Meeting Room, The Guildhall, Portsmouth.

Present

Councillors Mike Park (Chair)
Michael Andrewes
David Stephen Butler
Terry Henderson
Jim Patey
Caroline Scott
Luke Stubbs
Steve Wylie

Witnesses

Rose Timlett, Waste Development Officer.
Ken Rankin, School Services Manager.

29 Monitoring the Outcomes of Scrutiny Reviews (AI 4).

The Panel was reminded that the Review of Recycling and Recycling Initiatives was presented to the Executive on 20 March 2006, where all the recommendations were accepted subject to the responses given in the Strategic Director's report. The Executive also made some additional recommendations. A report setting out some background information about the review and the progress made with the recommendations arising from the review was circulated with the agenda for this meeting.

Rose Timlett, Waste Development Officer responded to questions from the Panel to clarify the following issues:

Recommendation 1.

- The statutory recycling target includes composting. In order to encourage home composting, garden waste is no longer accepted in household waste collection and home composting bins have been given free of charge to residents. As a result, recycling has increased by approximately 2%. If it is obvious that black bags left out for collection contain garden waste, these will be left with a note on. 1,300 free green bags were given out to residents and 500 more were purchased, which, if used, means that 80 tons of garden waste has been composted. Regular surveys suggest that residents take garden waste to the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) and 2,000 tons have been collected. It would not be viable to organise a kerbside collection for garden waste as an additional 5 crews and 5 vehicles would be required and much of the time these would not be full.
- Portsmouth's recycling rate is now 25%. Only 15% of waste is put into landfill, which is one of the best in the country; this is due in part to the high use of the incinerator. Some local authorities that have not achieved their recycling targets have had recycling policies imposed on them by Government ministers.

- The Panel was reminded that the report that went to the Environment portfolio meeting on 1 October gives further details on recycling options.
- In order to improve the recycling rate, a push from members is required.

Recommendation 2.

- 'Mayrise' is the customer service interface system, which logs customer enquiries.
- Recycling facilities were removed recently from some blocks of flats due to high levels of contamination and a need to save money. However, the contract is different and flats are now fully incorporated in the contract.
- 5,000 flats currently have no recycling facilities. The Waste Management Team is looking into methods of installing them along with education packages. Discussions are underway with Housing for a possible Mini Recycling Centre, which would come from the Housing Service's budget.
- Some residents who live in flats have been given reusable strong bags to transport their recyclable waste to the storage sheds on the ground floor. This combined with the advice from Waste Liaison Officers (WLOs) has had a significant impact on decreasing contamination. At the start of the scheme, communal bins were 66% full of contaminants; this has now reduced to less than 5%.
- It is Ms Timlett's opinion that WLOs are a cost neutral resource. If they were removed, the level of recycling would drop by 20%, which would in turn lead to increased disposal costs and lost revenue in the region of £120,000. There are currently 5 WLOs in post and 1 vacant position.

Recommendation 3.

- Yellow hangars are left on recycling bins that cannot be accepted due to contamination. Red hangars are left on bins that have been left in the wrong place. Since their introduction, the number of bins refused has gone down from 70% to 5%.
- The Panel was reminded that there are collection banks for glass, shoes, clothing and CDs placed around the city. Electrical items can also be recycled.

Recommendation 4.

- The Panel expressed its disappointment that there are no recycling bins in the conference rooms.

Recommendation 5.

- The event organisers are responsible for the cleaning afterwards. The Panel suggested that two sets of street cleaners be employed to collect recycling and normal waste. Ms Timlett agreed to put this suggestion to the Clean City Manager.

Recommendation 6.

- The Panel was reminded that there is a notice of motion due to be considered at the Full Council meeting on 9 October regarding the number of plastic carrier bags used in Portsmouth.

- Fareham has recently introduced limiting household collections to one wheeled bins for normal waste.
- The Executive is considering all the options at the moment.

Recommendation 7.

- 8 councils, most in inner London, have introduced mandatory recycling schemes for householders and as a result recycling rates have increased by 25%.
- 77% of householders regularly recycle their waste in Portsmouth, which means that there are 12,000 who either cannot or choose not to participate. WLOs have tried various measures to encourage them including personal visits and leaflets. The street with the best recycling rate will be revealed in the next edition of Flagship. A breakdown of participation for individual wards can be provided if requested.

Recommendation 8.

- Last year 9,000 flats (out of a total of 14,000 in Portsmouth) were visited and given strong bags in which they could take their recyclables down to the storage area. The Housing manager is also considering the possible introduction of a volunteering scheme in which local children could collect recyclables from flats for elderly residents.
- If one recycling bin is not sufficient, the resident can contact the helpdesk to request a bigger one or an additional one.
- Weekly recyclables collections are available in some blocks of flats where space is limited.

Recommendation 9.

The Panel was assured that local residents would be consulted before new sites for bottle bank sites are agreed.

Recommendation 12.

Ken Rankin, School Services Manager explained the following points regarding this recommendation:

- Head teachers prefer to look at recycling as part of sustainability issues in general.
- All 73 schools were surveyed about their recycling arrangements and 26 responded. 10 compost regularly, 2 recycle glass, paper and bottles. 5 recycle cartridges and mobile phones. Cost and lack of facilities are the main reasons cited for not introducing recycling at schools.
- 55 out of 73 schools have some recycling facilities.
- The Panel was reminded that in partnership with the City Council, Friends of the Earth manage allotments and wormeries and also has a part time member of staff who visits infant and secondary schools to raise awareness of the importance of recycling.
- Portsmouth City Council was part of a Hampshire Wide tender for

recycling in schools. Collection of recyclables currently costs the school £5 per bin (1,100 litres) whereas normal waste collection costs £10 per bin.

- Once collected, recyclables are sold onto companies at a set price per kilogram. Card and paper makes up 80% - 90% of waste from schools and is heavier than bottles. Therefore collection contractors are reluctant to introduce glass collections.
- The first update on recycling in schools will be given to the Executive Member for Education, Children and Families on 22 October 2007.

Recommendation 13.

- The Dove Scheme to encourage small businesses (with fewer than 10 employees) to recycle their waste ended this summer. 80 businesses signed up for the free trial. Feedback received indicates that there is no incentive to continue as collection of recyclables costs more than normal waste.

The Panel also considered the following recommendations made by the Executive:

- In the light of the recent budget decision, the operation of Alternate Weekly Collections (AC) not be pursued at this stage;
- A fully costed proposal for a monthly kerbside collection of mixed glass be developed for the consideration of the Executive;
- Consideration be given to the potential for initiating a street litter recycling service as outlined in note 15 (a supplementary suggestion, not put forward by Panel A);
- That the existing but presently un-enforced policy of mandatory recycling be further evaluated by an appropriate scrutiny panel which would report back to the Executive with a view on the suitability / effectiveness of such a policy in terms of improving recycling performance.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. Having considered the request from the Executive to undertake a scrutiny review of the city council's policy on the enforcement of mandatory recycling, the Panel agreed that this review should be undertaken by the Executive Member as part of his monitoring of recycling rates in the city.**
- 2. The Executive Member be asked to take urgent action to ensure that recycling facilities are provided at council run events in the city, in line with Panel A's original recommendation.**