

To: The Scrutiny Committee

Date: 5 November 2013

Report of: The Recycling Panel

Title of Report: Draft Waste and Recycling Strategy

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To report the comments and recommendations of the Recycling Panel on the draft Waste and Recycling Strategy.

Key decision: No

Panel Lead Member: Councillor Fry

Executive Lead Member: Councillor Tanner

Policy Framework: Sustainable Strategy for Oxford

Recommendation(s): For the Scrutiny Committee to recommend to the City Executive Board (CEB) the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1

That the strategy reflects in its vision the view that waste is a resource and a commodity from which the Council can generate income, and that the Council should continually be looking for further opportunities to benefit financially from the waste that the City produces through its activities as the collection authority.

Recommendation 2

That CEB expands on the reasons why food waste recycling in flats is not currently economically feasible in the strategy.

Recommendation 3

That CEB investigates the opportunities to increase the City's food waste collection by encourage commercial premises to recycle their food waste either through a promotional campaign or an incentive of 3 months' free food waste collection for new customers.

Recommendation 4

That CEB investigate the opportunities to pre-sort and divert recyclables from the household waste collection before sending it to landfill.

Recommendation 5

That CEB actively use penalty notices to force residents who don't respond to educational campaigns to recycle.

Recommendation 6

That CEB investigate the opportunities to reduce excess packaging. Either by:

1. Partnering with local supermarkets to investigate whether they can reduce the packaging that is produced from their products or offer recycling facilities to enable consumers to recycle their packaging.
2. Running a joint campaign with retailers and community groups to discourage the use of plastic bags in Oxford. The campaign could encourage community groups to design reusable bags and retailers to charge for the use of plastic bags.

Preamble

1. The Recycling Panel (Panel), made up of Councillors Fry, Jones and Simmons is also working on an inquiry into how effective incentives and fines are at encouraging recycling. Information is still being collected on this inquiry and it is envisaged that the Panel's conclusions and recommendations will be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in January 2014.

Introduction

2. The Panel considered the draft Waste and Recycling Strategy (strategy) on 29 October. They were supported in their discussion by Councillor Tanner and Ian Halliday and Mai Neilson from Environmental Development. The Panel would like to thank them for their time and advice.
3. The Panel was impressed and supportive of the ambition outlined within the draft strategy. The Panel has made 6 recommendations to the draft strategy for CEB to consider.

Conclusions and Recommendations**Recommendation 1**

That the strategy reflects in its vision the view that waste is a resource and a commodity from which the Council can generate income, and that the Council should continually be looking for further opportunities to benefit financially from the waste that the City produces through its activities as the collection authority.

4. The Panel believes that the Council needs to re-consider how it sees waste. The overarching vision of the strategy should view waste as a resource and a commodity which the Council can generate income from, rather than an expensive problem that must be dealt with. The Council should continually be looking for opportunities to make money from the waste that the City produces.

Recommendation 2

That CEB expands on the reasons why food waste recycling in flats is not currently economically feasible in the strategy.

5. The strategy does not clearly explain the reasons why the food waste pilot for flats will not continue past April 2014. The Panel would like to see it clearly explained in the strategy why food waste collection from flats is not currently financially feasible and what efforts the Council has explored to extend the scheme, for example, to explain why medium sized food waste containers cannot be provided to allow the current collection lorries to handle food waste from flats, without requiring special modification.

Recommendation 3

That CEB investigates the opportunities to increase the City's food waste collection by encourage commercial premises to recycle their food waste either through a promotional campaign or an incentive of 3 months' free food waste collection for new customers.

6. The Panel believes that diverting food waste from the City's waste stream is key to increasing the recycling rate. The strategy reports that food waste equates to 24% of the City's waste, and is the largest contributor to the waste stream. Given that the Council is going to stop the 'food waste pilot for flats' because of the cost of running the programme, the Panel would like to see more work done to increase commercial food waste collection. Businesses pay for all their waste to be collected, and so they need to be reminded that separating their food waste would save them money compared to the alternative of putting it in the general waste. The Panel would like to see Council promote the benefits of food waste recycling to businesses, especially the financial gains. Oxford Direct Services could offer an incentive to attract new customers by offering free food waste collection for 3 months when a new business signs up with the service.

Recommendation 4

That CEB investigate the opportunities to pre-sort and divert recyclables from the household waste collection before sending it to landfill.

7. One of the strategy's objectives is to "maximise the amount of waste recycled in Oxford" by diverting as much waste as possible (through recycling) from the landfill. The Panel agrees with the list of current and proposed schemes listed in the strategy to maximise recycling but is concerned that in some areas of the City, no amount of education is going to change people's behaviour. The Panel would like to see CEB investigate what opportunities exist to pre-sort and divert recyclables from the household waste collection before it is sent to landfill. For example, a pre-sorting facility could be built on land available at Redbridge to divert recyclables which would make a significant difference to the City's recycling rate and would minimise the amount of

waste going to landfill. The Panel would like CEB to further investigate and cost such options.

Recommendation 4

That CEB actively use penalty notices to convince residents who do not respond to educational campaigns to recycle.

8. The Panel would like to see Council use its powers under the Environmental Protection Act to penalise residents for not recycling more often. The Panel would like to see the Council publicise the consequences for not recycling through an enforcement campaign. Although education is a strong tool to encourage positive behaviour, repeat offenders should not escape penalty because the process is seen to be too time consuming. The Council is sending the wrong message if it refuses to fine those who repeatedly refuse to recycle.

Recommendation 5

That CEB investigate the opportunities to either:

1. Partner with the local supermarkets to investigate whether they can reduce the packaging that is produced from their products or offer recycling facilities to enable consumers to recycle their packaging.

2. Run a joint campaign with retailers and community groups to discourage the use of plastic bags in Oxford. Encourage community groups to design reusable bags and retailers to charge for the use of plastic bags.

9. An important objective of the strategy is to reduce residual waste in Oxford and the main corporate target for the recycling service is to limit residual waste to 445kg per household. One area that the Council could explore is to work with local businesses to reduce excess packaging. The Panel acknowledges that packaging directives are a national issue and the government is working with major retailers to reduce the overall packaging used. However, the Panel feels that there are opportunities for the Council to work with local retailers to reduce or recycle excess packaging at a local level. The Council could encourage local supermarkets not to stock products with excess packaging and push supermarkets to offer recycling facilities in-store to increase the opportunity for people to recycle, like they do in Germany.
10. The Panel would like CEB to explore the options available to the Council to work alongside local retailers to reduce the number of plastic bags in Oxford. A reduction in plastic bags could occur via a supermarket changing its procedure so that it stops offering a plastic bag every time a purchase is made. The Council could run a public awareness campaign to encourage consumers to use reusable bags and local community groups or schools could create their own reusable bags to sell to shoppers. Retailers could charge consumers 50p for each plastic bag that they used, which would make people think twice

whether they actually need the plastic bag or not. The CEB could review for example, how authorities in Ireland and Belgium have run effective programmes to reduce plastic bag use. This will generate ideas that might be relevant to Oxford.

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