

To: City Executive Board

Date: 9 February 2017

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Recycling

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee on Recycling Rates

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor James Fry, Scrutiny Committee Lead Member for Recycling

Executive lead member: Councillor John Tanner, Board Member for a Clean Green Oxford

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee in 2013/14 established review of Recycling Rates led by Councillor Fry. A report to the City Executive in July 2014 recommended resources to support targeted educational campaigns to encourage recycling and the trialling of a community incentive campaign. Following this, the council bid successfully for government money to fund the Blue Bin Recycling League recycling reward scheme for 3 years, starting from October 2015.
2. The Committee has continued to monitor recycling rates each year. A visit to the Recycling Team took place on 29 November 2016 for members to receive a presentation and monitor progress and performance. The Committee would like to thank Maria Warner, Recycling Team Leader, and James Baughan, Recycling Project Co-ordinator, for hosting an informative and engaging session, which was attended by Councillors Fry, Azad, Chapman, Pegg and Taylor.

Summary and recommendation

3. The Recycling Team Leader said that a fundamental review of waste services had recently concluded that the council was a 'low cost high performer'. This resulted in a decision for the service to remain in-house for the next 7 years. The review also found that the current mix of recyclates remains the best option, fortnightly residual waste collections are the most appropriate and the development of a waste transfer station in the city would reduce risks and cost.
4. The city's recycling rate fluctuates monthly and seasonally and has recently been around 49% (for April to October 2016), up from 46.25% in 2014/15. The Council is in the top 10% of local authorities in England for recycling and is one of the top three urban authorities; very impressive in view of Oxford's demographics. The ambition is to become the best urban authority for recycling.
5. The council has rolled out food waste containers to communal properties and supplied individual flats with a food waste caddy, compostable bin liners and leaflets, with the aim of providing all flats with this service by April 2017. Data for October 2016 showed that food waste recycling was up by 289 tonnes compared to the previous year. Members heard that it is significantly cheaper to dispose of food waste in this way and, while the bill is picked up by the County Council, the City Council benefits indirectly e.g. through recycling credits. The Recycling Team Leader said that there are additional benefits from recycling food waste in that it can be used as an energy source and to make fertiliser. Food waste recycling also supports the Council's ISO 14001 environmental management accreditation and the Courtauld 2025 voluntary agreement, which aims to make food and drink production and consumption more sustainable.
6. Members heard that the Blue Bin Recycling League is proving to be a very successful scheme in boosting recycling rates in deprived areas of the city. A total of 4,500 residents in the city have pledged to recycle as much as they can and the Leys area, where recycling rates have tended to be the lowest in the city, has seen the biggest improvement.
7. The £350k of grant funding covers three staffing posts as well as all the prize money. Staff actively raise awareness of the scheme and have attempted to visit every property in the Leys area, in addition to school visits and roadshow events. Plans are in place to continue these activities and to involve more community groups and charities. The cost of maintaining the scheme after the 3 years is estimated to be £100k per year and officers are planning to bid for continued budgetary support, which members strongly supported.

Recommendation – That every effort is made to fund recycling incentive campaigns beyond October 2018, when grant funding for the Blue Bin Recycling League comes to an end.

8. Other projects include efforts to reduce contamination as well as student engagement and social media campaigns. Future plans include continuing the incentive scheme, revisiting flats after 1-2 years, giving out free liners and

introducing kerbside textile collections. Members also discussed how residents should dispose of small amounts of garden waste, hygiene issues linked to food waste, fly tipping and the challenges of improving the ways in which students manage their waste.

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