

**To:** Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 3 April 2013

**Report of:** Scrutiny Recycling Panel

**Title of Report:** Recycling Rates and Council Targets – Update on the Panel's Work

## **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To inform the Committee on the progress made by the recycling panel,

To seek an extension of the panel's timeframe so that further engagement can be made to determine whether the Council's ambition to increase household recycling rates to 51% by 2015/16 is ambitious enough and what would be needed to improve this.

**Panel Lead Member:** Cllr James Fry

**Board Member:** Cllr John Tanner, Cleaner and Greener Oxford

**Policy Framework:** Corporate Plan

### **Recommendation(s):**

1. That the Committee note and comment on the report.
2. That the Committee extends the panel timeframe so that more work can be done to investigate whether the Council's recycling target for 2015/16 is ambitious enough.

## **Introduction**

1. The recycling panel is made up of Councillors Fry, Jones and Simmons. It has met three times in the last 6 months to discuss and determine the following brief:

“The Council’s ambition is to increase household recycling rates to 52% by 2015/16. Is this ambitious enough and what would be needed to improve this.”

2. The panel has meet twice with Philip Dunston and the recycling services team. The panel would like to thank Philip Dunston, Stewart Downs, Emily Martin and Joseph Jones-Jennings for their helpfulness and support.

## **Background**

### **Why do we need to recycle?**

3. In 1999 the European Union (EU) set strict targets for local authorities in terms of waste to landfill. To encourage councils to meet these targets, the EU set a fine of £150 per tonne of waste exceeding the set target. At that time, for Oxfordshire it was estimated that fines would be in the range of £9.2M in 2012/13 if waste disposal practices in the county did not change. (pg11, Oxfordshire Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2006) As a result, in 2003 the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (OWP) was formed between the 6 councils in Oxfordshire to investigate ways that the councils could reduce their waste to landfill by recycling more.
4. Extract from OWP  
*“Through this strategy, the OWP is addressing all wastes produced within Oxfordshire that comes under the heading of ‘Municipal Solid Waste’ (MSW). This includes all wastes produced by households, trade wastes collected by District Councils from small businesses, waste deposited at Waste Recycling Centres (WRCs), and fly-tipped materials.”*
5. Legislation strongly encourages the OWP to increase the recycling opportunities to residents and promote waste minimisation campaigns throughout Oxfordshire alongside this the OWP actively promotes the environmental benefits of reducing waste and reusing materials.
6. In 2011/12, the 6 Oxfordshire authorities together recycled 55.9% household waste and 1.4% of non household waste of the total waste they collected. (Defra 2011/12 figures).

### **Breaking down the percentages**

7. The recycling rate is the amount of household dry and green waste (by tonne) recycled as a percentage of the total amount of household waste generated. This is measured on a monthly basis, and reported externally, via Waste Data Flow, on a quarterly basis.
8. Recyclables are broken down into the following categories:  
Dry waste  
Household collections ie plastics, tins, paper, cardboard etc  
Bulky recyclables – fridges, tyres, mattresses etc

#### Green waste

Garden waste: ie weeds, branches, grass clippings.  
 Food waste: collected in the food caddies fortnightly.

Mechanical streets recycling

Recycling collected and separated from litter bins and street sweeps

9. Most of Oxford’s recycling comes from dry waste, as the city does not generate a lot of garden waste because of the built up nature of the city. Bulky waste collections contain a mixture of recyclable materials and refuse, they do not contribute greatly to the overall recycling rate. The breakdown of the recycling rate for 2011/12 is as follows:

**Table 1: Breakdown of Oxford City’s recycling rate 2011/12**

	Percentage of recycling rate (44.4%) 2011/12			
Dry Waste (excl bulking)	Bulky Waste	Garden and food	Food only	Mechanical streets recycling
27%	<1%	11%	3%	4%

**Comparative bench marked data**

10. When analysing the recycling rate it is important to compare like with like. Non urban councils tend to achieve a much higher recycling rate because they have more households with larger gardens which generate a higher rate of (heavy) garden waste for recycling, as opposed to urban authorities which have more people with smaller sections. Oxford City also has a high transient population which requires re-educating on recycling each year and large numbers of households living in HMOs and flats where recycling is difficult.
11. A WRAP report in 2009 outlined a correlation between Index of Deprivation (IoD), household size and recycling rates. It appears that these areas tend to recycle less, and also tend to have larger households. Deprivation levels however are only one factor contributing to recycling rates. The range of materials that a local authority recycles, the size of bins that householders use to recycle and the frequency of the recycling collection all have a greater effect on recycling rates than the deprivation levels. (p10. WRAP report)
12. The Council does collect a wide range of materials, offers decent sized recycling facilities to residents and collects fortnightly which all positively contribute to the recycling rate. The recycling team is attempting to overcome deprivation inequalities by targeting resources in areas of deprivation to encourage recycling, through the cleaner greener campaigns.

13. The City is benchmarked against the following similar councils for recycling.

**Table 2: Household waste: recycled and composted (%) - compared with similar councils**

Local Authority	Total Population	Students	Rural (%)	2009/10 (%)	2010/11 (%)	2011/12 (%)	2012/13 (March to June 2012) (%)
Royal Borough of Kingston	147115	23135	0.3	46.16	47.40	46.80	48.08
York	181168	13490	17.2	43.26	45.06	46.40	46.66
<b>Oxford</b>	<b>134475</b>	<b>33000</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>38.23</b>	<b>43.18</b>	<b>44.40</b>	<b>45.78</b>
Cambridge	108900	18396	0	40.68	43.68	43.20	46.94
Norwich	121607	19585	0.2	34.59	37.88	40.63	37.94
Reading	143139	22805	0.3	33.40	34.91	36.80	38.28
Southampton	217524	24735	0	26.38	25.07	23.30	26.46
Middlesbrough	134937	29285	0.3	22.82	23.36	22.70	25.00

14. Of these councils, Oxford has the highest number of students and in 2011/12 had the third best recycling results, behind Kingston and York. Middlesbrough is the closest to Oxford in terms of population and student numbers, but they are well behind Oxford in the recycling rates. As of December 2012, Oxford's recycling rate was 46.34%

15. Oxford City has made the top 15 of 43 city councils for recycling for the last 4 years. Oxford continues to increase the amount of waste it recycles each year, compared to some city councils which have seen their recycling rates drop. Oxford also produces far less household waste per capita overall compared to similar sized councils; this is despite having one of the largest population turn over rates of all local authorities.

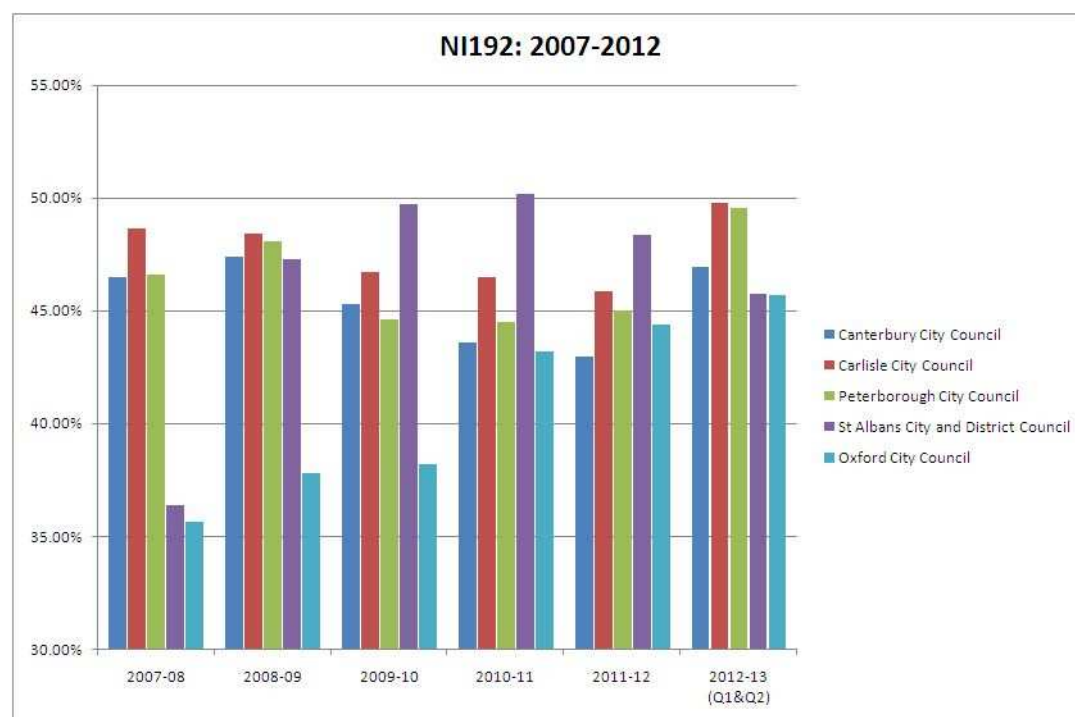
**Table 3: 10 lowest household waste generated per capita of population 2011/12**

Authority	Total Waste Collection Per capita (kg per head)
Tower Hamlets LB	271.61
Oadby and Wigston Borough Council	273.78
Crawley Borough Council	286.89
<b>Oxford City Council</b>	<b>288.65</b>
Hyndburn Borough Council	292.93
Lambeth LB	293.50
Lewes District Council	293.99
Norwich City Council	296.65
Tendring District Council	299.11
East Devon District Council	299.25

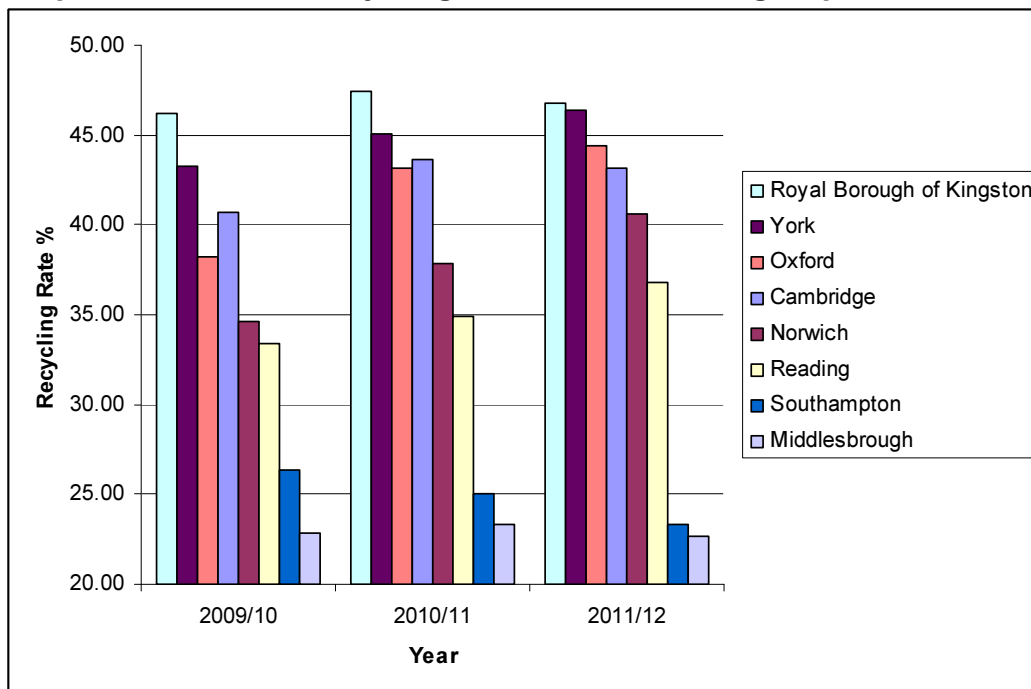
**Table 4: Household waste generated per capita of population 2011/12 for benchmark group**

Authority	Total Waste Collection Per capita (kg per head)
<b>Oxford City Council</b>	<b>288.65</b>
Norwich City Council	296.65
Royal Borough of Kingston	349.27
Cambridge City Council	351.77
Reading Borough	407.97
Southampton	411.88
Middlesbrough	416.34
York City Council	443.26

**Graph 1: Top 4 councils' household recycling rates compared to Oxford 2007-2012**



**Graph 2: Household recycling rate of benchmark group 2009-12**



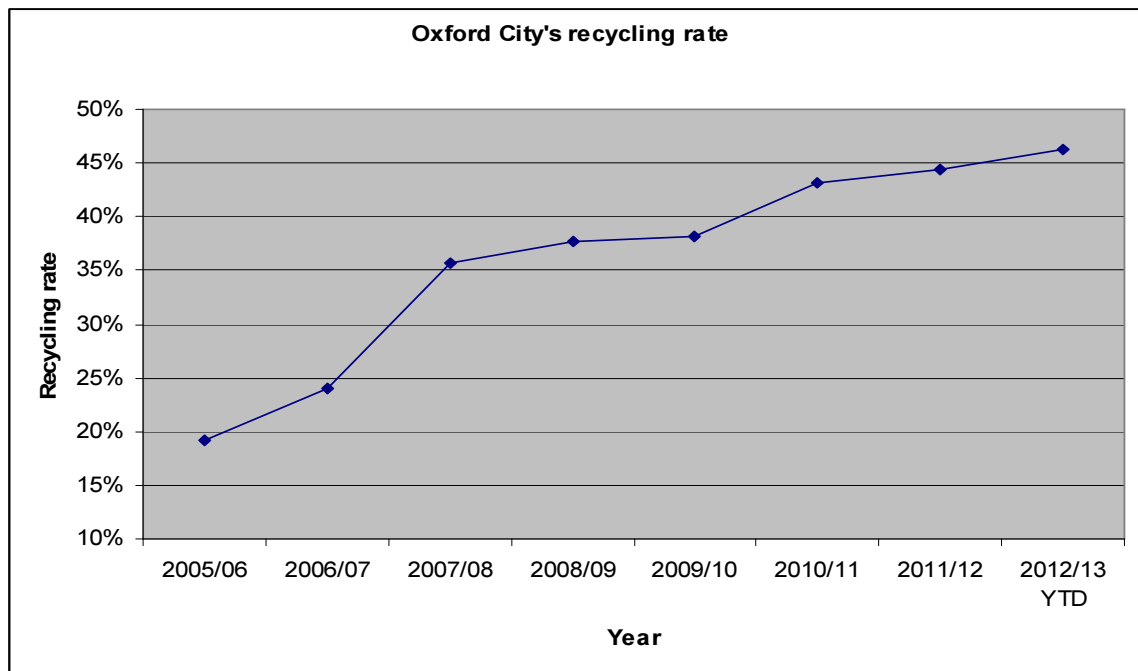
### Oxford's Targets

The Council has two significant waste indicators to measure success: household recycling rate and household waste going to landfill.

#### 16. Household recycling rate (NI 192)

Between April and December 2012, Oxford recycled 46.34% of its waste this is a vast improvement from 2005/06 when only 19% was recycled. The Council's ambition was to recycle 52% of household waste by 2015/16. The target has since been revised and downgraded by the City Executive as they feel that "to achieve 50% for an urban authority is a stretching target and therefore the proposal [is] to maintain it at 50% until 2014/15 and then increase it to 51% thereafter. The cost of achieving every additional 1% to the recycling rate becomes uneconomic as significant investment in the service would be required to increase the recycling rate beyond 51%". (Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017 report to CEB 14 February 2013).

"Significant investment" in the service means the cost of implementing such programmes as introducing a food waste collection to all flats in the city. The panel would like to explore with the recycling team various ideas that might increase the recycling rate which do not require significant investment.



Data from Waste Data Flow

#### 17. Household waste going to landfill (NI191)

The Council's target is to "reduce the amount of residual household waste collected per household per annum and sent to landfill to 430kg in 2014/15." In 2011/12, 419.51kg per household was sent to landfill. This figure continues to exceed the target due to a number of initiatives to reduce residual waste and encourage recycling implemented by the recycling team. These include increasing the range of materials that can be recycled ie electronics and textiles and targeted campaigns to encourage recycling amongst different groups in the city.

#### **Current recycling services offered by Oxford City Council**

18. The Council offers a free fortnightly recycling collection to most households across the city. Dry recyclables (plastics, paper, tins etc) are collected in the blue wheeled bin and all food waste is collected weekly in a green caddy. Garden waste can also be collected for an annual subscription of £36.75 or free for those residents who claim benefits. To date, 13,802 households get fortnightly garden waste collection, 10,158 subscribed to the paid service and 2927 are concessionary.

19. All dry recyclables are initially sent to the recycling processing plant at Enstone and then sent to Milton Keynes, where they are sorted and sold to various places across the UK to be re-used. The Council pays a gate fee and a separation fee (per tonne) for the recyclables to be sorted at the plant. This equates to approximately £3 per tonne. Food waste is sent to the County's processing plants where it is made into fertiliser and re-sold for agricultural use. Garden and food mixed waste is collected and sent to be composted, to be sold for agricultural use.

20. The Council also offers a bulky waste collection which entitles all households to two free inorganic collections ie tvs, mattresses, whiteware etc per year. The Council also provides WEEE banks at bring sites where residents can dispose of small electrical appliances. Any goods disposed of are then pulled apart and recycled. Batteries can be disposed of in a clear plastic bag on top of the blue or green wheeled bin as part of the kerbside collection.

### **Commercial Waste collection**

21. The Council offers a commercial waste collection. Providing this service is not a statutory requirement, but it does give the opportunity to generate revenue and encourage the commercial sector to recycle. The Council's commercial waste service controls approximately 50% of the commercial waste collection market in Oxford. It currently won't accept any new customers unless they choose to recycle. Direct Services currently recycle around 30% of the commercial waste it collects.

22. Unlike household waste, commercial waste is not part of the calculation for NI192. However, commercial recycling contributes to Oxfordshire County Council's objective of reducing the proportion of Municipal Waste sent to landfill.

### **Campaigns and policies to encourage recycling**

23. Officers have run several promotional campaigns to encourage residents to recycle.

#### 24. Cleaner Green Oxford Campaigns

The recycling team have been involved with a number of the Cleaner Greener Oxford Campaigns including East Oxford, Barton and Temple Cowley. Educational work has been carried out to improve the recycling scheme in these areas.

#### 25. Rebalancing Projects

A number of rebalancing projects have taken place to increase the recycling in Rose Hill, Barton and currently Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys. The projects aim to remove additional green bins and educate residents in the use of blue recycling bins and food waste caddies. This has encouraged recycling by making it easier for residents. There has been a positive response from residents with the areas achieving the following results.

<b>Area</b>	<b>Recycling rate before campaign</b>	<b>Recycling rate after campaign</b>	<b>Change in recycling rate</b>
Barton	42%	49%	4.9%
Rose Hill	39%	46%	7%



26. Introducing new material streams

Pink electrical banks (WEEE banks), have been rolled out across the city for residents to recycle small electrical items. Initially 9 banks were introduced and following the popularity, 9 more have recently been sited across the city.

27. A kerbside battery recycling scheme was introduced in September 2012. Residents are able to place batteries in a clear bag on top of their green or blue bin for recycling.

28. Students

Working closely with the student population, officers have door knocked and attended “fresher fairs” to increase awareness of the need to recycle. Working with the British Heart Foundation (BHF), officers ran a student “Moving Out” campaign in which students left out their unwanted furniture and the BHF collected and sold it on.

29. Targeting flats and HMOs

In 2012 The Council extended its household recycling scheme to tenants in Council owned flats by providing large recycling facilities on the ground level of each block. In December 2012 Council amended its Waste Policy so that *“at all relevant sites, the Council shall seek to collect no greater quantity of waste from domestic refuse bins than from domestic recycling bins”*. This policy change forces private property agents to purchase recycling bins for their flats in exchange for the Council collecting the waste/recycling every 3 days. Alternatively, agents can choose a private waste collection firm to collect their waste. So far the take up of privately run flats onto the Council’s scheme is promising.

**Ongoing work of the panel**

**Is the recycling target ambitious enough?**

30. The City’s current recycling rate of 46.34% (Dec 2012) means that the Council is currently 4.66% short of its target of 51% for 2015/16. Given that it is too soon to tell what affect the change in waste policy has had on the recycling rate, the panel would like to continue its investigations, before making a final decision on the ambitiousness of the council’s recycling target.

31. The panel would like to investigate the following issues:

Resident incentive schemes to encourage recycling in low recycling zones of the city.

Collecting food waste from flats.

Direct Services applied for funding from the Government to extend food waste collection into flats but the proposal was unsuccessful. A revised proposal was considered not viable.

The Panel would like to review these costs matched against the current cost of food waste from flats going to landfill.

Garden Waste scheme – the impact of charging for garden waste collection and the effect this has had on the number of households who recycle garden waste.

Is the garden waste collection price sensitive?

Are there ways of encouraging more garden waste into the waste stream.

Promotion/education campaigns – What more can be done to educate and promote recycling, including promoting WEEE banks, and the types of plastics that can be recycled.

## **Conclusion**

32. The panel is still unsure whether the City's recycling target is ambitious enough, as the impact on the recycling rate of several newly implemented recycling initiatives is yet to be assessed
33. The panel would therefore like more time to fully explore the impact of these new initiatives before making a final assessment on the Council's ambitions.

## **Recommendations**

**That the Committee note and comment on the report.**

**That the Committee extends the panel timeframe so that more work can be done to investigate whether the Council's recycling target for 2015/16 is ambitious enough.**

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### **Background papers:**

Oxfordshire Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy  
[http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/publicnet/council\\_services/enviroenmen](http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/publicnet/council_services/enviroenmen)

[t\\_planning/waste\\_recycling/alternative/joint-municipal-waste-management-strategy-2006.pdf](#)

DEFRA, LOCAL AUTHORITY COLLECTED WASTE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS FOR ENGLAND – FINAL ANNUAL RESULTS 2011/12  
[http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/files/mwb201112\\_statsrelease.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/files/mwb201112_statsrelease.pdf)

[http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/files/2011-12-ANNUAL-publication-LA-level\\_WITHOUTLINKS.xls](http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/files/2011-12-ANNUAL-publication-LA-level_WITHOUTLINKS.xls)

WRAP report Analysis of kerbside dry recycling performance in the UK 2008/09

<http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/EVA143-000%20Kerbside%20Dry%20Benchmarking%20UK%2008-09%20Report%20FINAL%20for%20publication%20V2%201.pdf>

Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017 report to CEB 13 February 2013  
<http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s12352/Final%20CEB%20Corp%20Plan%20report%20101211.pdf>

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