

To: The City Executive Board

Date: 13 November 2013

Report of: The Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: DRAFT WASTE AND RECYCLING STRATEGY

Summary and Recommendations

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

Key decision: No

Scrutiny Committee Chair: Councillor Mills

Executive Lead Member: Councillor Tanner

Policy Framework: Sustainable Strategy for Oxford

Recommendation(s): For City Executive Board to agree 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.

Recommendation 2

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

Recommendation 3

That the City Executive Board provide to the Scrutiny Committee more detailed information on the costing and feasibility for the options to recycle food from flats that have been considered alongside the details of the current capital bid.

Recommendation 4

That CEB more actively use the penalty at its disposal to convince residents who do not present waste in the manner required.

Recommendation 5

That CEB investigate, through the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership, local opportunities to reduce excess packaging and reduce the use of plastic bags.

Recommendation 6

That CEB take all opportunities to promote the benefits of food waste separation to commercial customers and investigate opportunities to offer incentives to new business customers.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee set a Recycling Panel (Panel), made up of Councillors Fry, Jones and Simmons. To date this Panel has considered the Council's recycling target and reported to the Scrutiny Committee and the Board Member. It is currently looking at incentives to recycle and the findings on this will be available to the Scrutiny Committee at the end of the year.
2. The Panel has also pre-scrutinised the Waste and Recycling Strategy and presented the following recommendations which have been agreed by the Scrutiny Committee for presentation to the City Executive Board. Scrutiny was supported in their discussion by Councillor Tanner, Ian Halliday, Mai Neilson and Geoff Corps and would like to thank them for their time and advice.
3. Overall the Scrutiny Committee was impressed and supportive of the ambition outlined in the draft strategy but would offer recommendations for consideration.

Conclusions and Recommendations

4. The Scrutiny Committee 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.
5. 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 landfill. The Scrutiny Committee 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 peoples' behaviour. The Scrutiny Committee would like to see the City Executive Board (CEB) investigate and cost the opportunities to pre-sort and divert recyclables from household waste collection before it is sent to landfill, including the possible provision of a pre-sorting facility in or close to Oxford.

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.

Recommendation 2

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

6. Food waste collection from flats is important and provides a significant opportunity to improve recycling rates. The strategy does not clearly explain the reasons why the food waste pilot for flats will not continue past April 2014. The Scrutiny Committee would like to see it clearly explained why food waste collection from flats is not currently financially feasible and what efforts the Council has explored to extend the scheme. The Scrutiny Committee noted the capital bid within the current budget round to address this and issues for green waste collection and has asked to see the details of this bid. The other possibility discussed by the Panel was medium sized food waste containers for flats that could be accommodated within the current fleet.

Recommendation 3

That CEB provide to the Scrutiny Committee more detailed information on the costing and feasibility for the options to recycle food from flats that have been considered alongside the details of the current capital bid.

7. The Scrutiny Committee would like to see Council use its powers under the Environmental Protection Act on a more routine basis to penalise residents who do not present waste in the manner required. 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 chase those who repeatedly fail present their waste correctly.

Recommendation 4

That CEB more actively use the penalty at its disposal to convince residents who do not present waste in the manner required.

8. 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 through the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership is to work with local businesses to reduce excess packaging. The Scrutiny Committee acknowledges that packaging directives are a national

issue and the government is working with major retailers to reduce the overall packaging used, however, the Scrutiny Committee feels that there may be more opportunities for the Council to work with local retailers to reduce or recycle excess packaging at a local level. The Waste Partnership could encourage local supermarkets not to stock products with excess packaging and encourage supermarkets to offer recycling facilities in-store to increase the opportunity for people to recycle, like schemes in Germany.

9. Similarly the Scrutiny Committee would like options explored to work alongside local retailers to reduce the number of plastic bags in Oxford through direct relationships or public awareness campaigns.

Recommendation 5

That CEB investigate, through the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership, local opportunities to reduce excess packaging and reduce the use of plastic bags.

10. The Scrutiny Committee 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. The Scrutiny Committee recognise that the Council also has a role to promote recycling more widely within the City, even outside the remit of household waste and would therefore like to see more work done to increase commercial food waste collection. All interactions with commercial customers should encourage the separation of waste and give examples of how food waste separation could save them money through lower charges for this type of collection. The Scrutiny Committee would like to see Council actively promote the benefits of food waste recycling to businesses, especially the financial gains. Consideration should also be given to incentives to new business sign ups.

Recommendation 6

That CEB take all opportunities to promote the benefits of food waste separation to commercial customers and investigate opportunities to offer incentives to new business customers.

Comments from the Board Member and Director

11. I am very happy to agree all the proposals from Scrutiny except recommendation 2. Residents are in fact recycling more right across Oxford. The creation of a small Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) just for Oxford is unlikely to be cost effective. I consider that the City Council should for now stick with its successful policy of requiring householders to sort their refuse into recyclables and mixed waste at home."

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