

To: City Executive Board
Date: 16 October 2017
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Recycling

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations on recycling rates and recycling incentive schemes
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member	Councillor James Fry, Chair of Recycling Panel
Executive Board Member:	Councillor John Tanner, Climate Change and Cleaner Greener Oxford
Corporate Priority:	A Clean Green Oxford
Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report	

Appendices
None

Introduction and background

1. The Scrutiny Committee established in 2013/14 a 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, from October 2015 to October 2018.
2. The Committee has continued to monitor recycling rates each year. A visit to the Cowley Marsh depot took place on 21 September 2017 for scrutiny members to receive a presentation and monitor progress and performance. The meeting was attended by Councillors Fry, Gant and Lygo. They would like to thank Maria Warner, Recycling Team Leader, for organising the session and Ian Bourton, Motor Transport and Fleet Manager, Alex Mates, Recycling Promotions Officer, Stuart Guest and Ray Wild, Recycling Liaison Officers, for hosting the session.

Summary and recommendations

3. The Panel found that the Council's recycling percentage rate for the year to date (August 2017) is 51.29%, which is the first time the figure has been over 50%. This is over 2% higher than a year ago and over 4.5% higher than 2 years ago. It puts the Council in the top 25% of local authorities for recycling nationally and first compared to similar cities, which is an excellent result.
4. The recycling rate has been boosted by increased recycling of organics (food and garden waste), which are up 9.5% on the year. It is hoped that food recycling will continue to increase given that residents can now use any type of bag in their kitchen caddy, not just the relatively expensive biodegradable caddy liners.
5. The figure for residual 'landfill' rubbish (which is actually incinerated) per household is 157.3kg, down 10.56kg from a year ago. Overall, the volume of rubbish collected is down by 525.61t (-6.29%) and recycling is up 86.78t (+1.59%).
6. The panel heard that 10% of households in the city have now pledged to take part in the Blue Bin Recycling League. The Recycling Team have knocked on 13,000 doors and visited 14 schools. Voter turnout in the choice of local beneficiaries averaged 26% and £9,200 has been donated to local charities and community events. Local dry recycling rates had increased by between 4.28% and 11.70% across the city.
7. The £350k of grant funding the Council received in 2015 to run the Blue Bin Recycling League over 3 years funds 3 recycling promotion officer posts plus the prize money and other costs associated with the scheme. Proposals would be put forward in the budget round to continue with an equivalent level of resource for recycling promotion activities moving forwards. The plan is to keep the Blue Bin Recycling League but to make some changes to the organisation and value of the financial incentive for residents.
8. The Panel voiced their support for the development of these proposals (Scrutiny has previously recommended that every effort is made to continue to fund recycling promotion activities). The panel encouraged officers to think about what more could be achieved with an additional officer post and to consider making that case in a more ambitious budget bid.
9. In discussion the Panel also noted that:
 - Maintaining a quality recycling operation requires excellent service, infrastructure and communications.
 - Simple messages about recycling work best.
 - The Recycling Team work closely with planning, licensing, the HMO team and the Great Estates team (e.g. for the tower block refurbishment project) and are a statutory consultee on the waste aspects of major planning applications.
 - The Council app is proving to be more popular than the text messaging service.
 - The Council has little control over other commercial waste operators in the city centre.
 - The student liaison officer would be proactively engaging with new students from October.

- Contamination remains an issue at blocks of flats but a flat bin audit has been undertaken and street crews regularly inspect bin sheds.
 - The Council still receives recycling credits (from Oxfordshire County Council) but now has to pay for disposal of dry recyclate (the value of which has dropped significantly), resulting in a net financial loss.
 - There is a national issue with packaging which often causes confusion about which materials can and cannot be recycled.
 - Language is a barrier for some communities but there are plans to address this by dropping the use of text where possible.
 - There are plans to trial placing awareness notices on lampposts.
10. In discussion a number of suggestions were made about additional promotional activities and other improvements that could build on the already impressive performance of the Recycling Team.

Recommendation – That, alongside the previous recommendation about making every effort to continue to fund recycling incentive campaigns beyond October 2018, the work of the Recycling Team is broadened to build on the Team’s already impressive performance. This could include:

- a. Expanding school visits to try to reach every school in the city;***
- b. Co-ordinating volunteer recycling champions in schools and communities;***
- c. Running an incentive scheme for students based on competition between campuses;***
- d. Creating awareness videos, e.g. showing what happens to different materials once they have been recycled;***
- e. Facilitating more trips to waste disposal facilities for members of the public, which are so popular they are booked up until April 2018;***
- f. Proactive engagement with landlords, both directly and through the forum;***
- g. Trialling a ‘moving out campaign’ where the Council offers to collect students’ waste at the end of their tenancy for a one off fee;***
- h. Improving the visual appearance of public bins, e.g., by using different colour schemes for recycling and other waste or installing recycling bins with holes the shape of drink cans, as is done in other countries, etc.;***
- i. Trialling removing bins from part of the city centre, e.g., Cornmarket, for a day to let people appreciate the problem of litter;***
- j. Simplifying the message of what is and what is not recyclable, using images where possible.***
- k. Reviewing good practices from other local authorities, especially well performing Welsh authorities.***

Report author	Andrew Brown
Job title	Scrutiny Officer
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252230
e-mail	abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

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