

Place Scrutiny Committee - 20th January 2016

Report of the Chief Officer Environmental Services

Recycling Participation

Purpose of Report

1. To update Scrutiny Committee on the ongoing work to increase participation in the household recycling collection service.

Background

2. Data for England from the Government's WasteDataFlow database shows that recycling rates are flat-lining nationally, reaching 43.7% for 2014/15, a 0.2 percentage point increase on the 43.5% rate achieved in 2013/14. A number of reasons are being cited: people's reading habits have changed (moving to online publications); glass is used less than previously and where it is used tends to be lighter in weight; retailers are using less packaging generally; and the economy continues to fluctuate.
3. The amount of household waste that English local authorities recycle varies hugely, with the best recycling as much as 67% (South Oxfordshire in 2014/15) and the worst as little as 14% (Isles of Scilly).
4. Dudley's recycling rate was 42.2% in 2014/15, an increase of 6.6% compared to 2013/14. This makes Dudley's 2014/15 recycling improvement the best in the West Midlands. Table 1 below compares our rates with neighbouring authorities. It also confirms that recycling rates have reached a plateau and indeed are falling in some cases:

Table 1: West Midlands Councils Recycling Rate Comparison

Council	2013/14	2014/15	Direction of Travel
Dudley	35.6%	42.2%	↑
Birmingham	28.7%	26.6%	↓
Coventry	35.7%	34.1%	↓
Sandwell	44.6%	40.9%	↓
Solihull	39.5%	39.8%	↑
Walsall	41.1%	42%	↑
Wolverhampton	45.5%	44.1%	↓

5. The UK has a recycling target of reaching 50% by 2020. While Dudley's performance is heading in the right direction, there is still a long way to go to

achieve this. Our current three-year targets are 43% for 2015/16, 45% for 2016/17 and 46% for 2017/18.

6. Dudley were awarded £1.8M following a bid to the DCLG's Weekly Collections Support Scheme (the 'Pickles' Fund), to assist in the introduction of the enhanced recycling service. A key criteria of the bid was that the service would be financially sustainable once the grant funding had ended, i.e. April 2015. Collected tonnages of recyclables have not increased as much as we had hoped following service transformation (most likely due to the reasons outlined in paragraph 2) and the service is therefore not yet self financing.
7. It is important to note that the recycling rate is made up of dry recycling (paper, card, glass bottles etc) and green garden waste. In 2014/15 our dry recycling rate was 24.8% and green waste 17.4% (total 42.2%). Green waste does not provide an income, and instead we have to pay for its disposal, with haulage costs currently at approximately £30 per tonne (we collect around 21,000 tonnes of green waste per year). It is therefore the dry recycling, with the income attached to it, that is the focus of the work to increase resident participation.
8. Councils with much higher recycling rates than Dudley's tend to be motivated by the need to extract as much waste out of the waste stream as possible to reduce landfill. Many of these councils will therefore operate alternate weekly collections for residual waste and/or co-mingle all recyclables in one container. Dudley's landfill rate is one of the lowest in the country (3.4% in 2014/15) as over half of the waste collected in the Borough is incinerated at the waste to energy plant at the Lister Road Depot.
9. Co-mingled collections do offer the easiest and most straightforward way for residents to recycle, and therefore attract higher tonnages than separate collections. However, it produces a low quality material which provides a low income to the Council. Furthermore, the revised Waste Framework Directive published in 2011 introduced a need for there to be separate collections of recyclable glass, metal, paper and plastic from both residential and commercial properties unless it is not technically, environmentally or economically practical (TEEP) to have separate collections. Dudley's household recycling service accords with this legislation following the 2013 and 2014 service transformation programme. Collecting recyclables separately also ensures a better quality product and therefore a higher level of income to the Authority.

Committee Members Sub-Group

10. The Place Scrutiny Committee Recycling Participation Sub Group met on Wednesday 16th September 2015 at the Blowers Green Recycling Depot. The Sub Group received a presentation by the Waste Operations Manager, which provided a background to the recycling operation, followed by a tour of the operational area of the Depot.

11. The presentation and Depot tour were followed by a workshop session, which focussed on the following key areas:

How do we target the poor performing areas?

How can we work with schools to spread the recycling message?

What should the household promotional campaign look like?

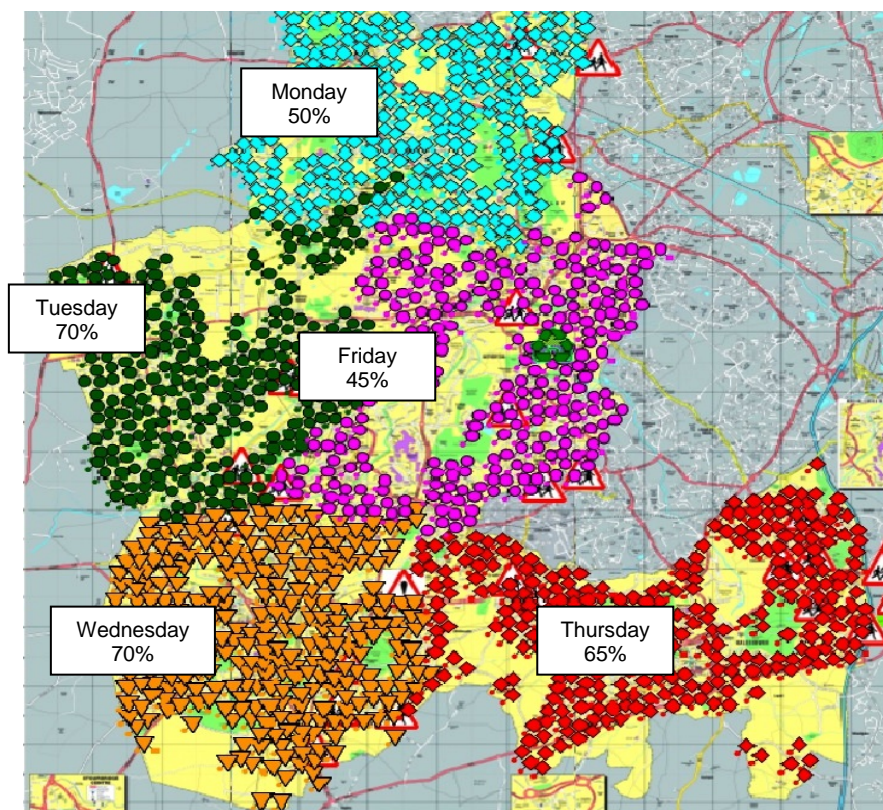
How can we use different media campaigns to target different groups? e.g. press adverts, social media etc.

How can we work with community groups and other organisations?

Targeting Poor Performing Areas

12. The presentation highlighted to Members the 'zoned collections' operated by the Recycling service, whereby different areas of the Borough receive collections on specific days.
13. While all areas of the Borough have pockets of poor participation, across the five days as a whole, tonnage is lowest on Fridays. It is therefore these areas that will be the focus of targeted promotional activities in the future (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Average Participation in the Recycling Service 2015



Working with Schools to Spread the Recycling Message

14. Councillors agreed that primary schools are key to any education campaign around recycling.

It is recognised that each of the areas identified as having low levels of

participation in the recycling service will have a primary school within it, and it was agreed that these should therefore be the initial schools targeted in the refreshed education campaign.

The 22 primary schools identified within the Friday collection round areas are:

1. Blowers Green
2. Brierley Hill
3. Brockmoor
4. Dudley Wood
5. Jesson's CE
6. Kate's Hill Community
7. Milking Bank
8. Mount Pleasant
9. Netherbrook
10. Netherton CE
11. Netherton Park
12. Northfield Road
13. Priors
14. Quarry Bank
15. Russells Hall
16. Sledmere
17. St Joseph's RC (Dudley)
18. St Mary's RC
19. CE Primary School of St Edmund and St John
20. Withymoor
21. Woodside Community
22. Wrens Nest

15. While these schools will be targeted initially, it is our intention to take the education and awareness programme to as many of the 79 primary schools in the Borough as possible.

Working with Community Groups

16. The value of working with community groups is essential in spreading the recycling message, and the Sub Group discussed ideas around engaging with young people in particular.
17. A Scout leader from the north of the Borough had already expressed an interest in working with the Council on a recycling initiative. The group agreed that working with such a large organisation, and one that has groups in all areas of the Borough, would be hugely beneficial to our goal of increasing recycling participation.

The Household Promotional Campaign

18. In addition to targeting the low performing areas, there is a need to run a campaign that will encompass all households in the Borough.
19. A comprehensive recycling guide was distributed as part of the service transformation in 2013 and 2014. The full-colour booklet provided information about how to recycle using the new service, as well as information about Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), Love Food Hate Waste, home composting and how to recycle items not collected at the kerbside. Although every household received a copy, and it is likely that some have kept it for reference, the length of the guide and quantity of information may have been a barrier to some residents reading the key recycling message. Furthermore WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) recommend 6 monthly reminders are delivered to residents about what can and cannot be recycled. With the focus on completing service transformation and undertaking route optimisation work, no follow up literature has been provided to households since the original recycling guide.
20. The Committee Members Sub Group agreed that the most important aspect of a household promotional campaign is that the message on what can and cannot be recycled is 'no nonsense' and easy for residents to understand. It was acknowledged that collecting materials separately has clear benefits in terms of income levels and material quality, but that it makes things more difficult for our residents. We must therefore do everything we can to make the process easier – and providing clarity on what can and cannot be recycled is key to this.
21. Examples of marketing literature used by other councils were looked at by the Sub Group, and other options were considered including the use of social media for target groups, posters in libraries and at other public locations around the Borough and a revamped internet site.
22. The Sub Group agreed that all of these options should have a common 'theme' or 'brand'; something that stands for 'recycling in Dudley'. This would form the basis of all promotional material and for the Recycling Officer's educational work in schools.

Progress So Far

23. The Place Scrutiny Committee Recycling Participation Sub Group met again on 2nd November to discuss progress against actions agreed at the meeting on 16th September.
24. A 'Dudley recycling' branding style was agreed at the meeting. This will be used on all future recycling promotional materials, information leaflets and the website.
25. The annual recycling calendar provided an immediate opportunity to launch the branding and promote the recycling service, with little additional cost. The 2016 recycling calendar was therefore refreshed to incorporate both the new branding and the comments of Members at the meeting on 16th September. It included a simplified calendar and on the central section of the leaflet, pictorial images of

common household items with easy to read ticks and crosses, highlighting what can and cannot be recycled via the household collection, and reference to the new Council app. During Summer 2016, schools will be invited to take part in a competition to design the 2017 recycling calendar front page.

26. In addition to the calendar, the branding was used on a dedicated recycling page in the Christmas edition of the Council's Home Affairs magazine. This included a recycling specific word search. Home Affairs is distributed to 25,000 properties in the Borough, and a number of these are in our target areas for increasing recycling participation. The magazine is also available on the Council's website.
27. The use of social media has been enhanced through monthly recycling promotions via corporate Facebook and Twitter feeds. Subscribers are reminded of items that can and cannot be recycled. The message is being adapted to suit the time of year (Christmas, Easter etc) and/or in response to common questions the crews are being asked and/or current news events.
28. The Recycling Officer has had further discussions with the Scout Leader and community representative/organiser of East Coseley community group, regarding a suitable joint initiative. It is hoped to start working with the Scouts, and other community groups who engage with young people, early in the New Year.
29. The main recycling participation campaign will take place in Spring 2016. It will utilise the new branding throughout, with images and text courtesy of WRAP. Their communications material has been tested and proven to work nationally. The campaign will be set around recyclable materials found in each room of the house. More information can be found at <http://www.recyclenow.com/are-you-recycling-everything-you-can> including a video that will be promoted on the Council website as part of the campaign.

Future Monitoring/Expectations

30. Recycling tonnages are continually monitored and our recycling rate is reported quarterly to Corporate Board and Cabinet. We would hope to see an increase in recycling levels from quarter 2/3 2016/17, when the impact of the household campaign and increased educational activity in schools should start to show.
31. Recycling figures can vary year on year due to many variables, e.g. individual household behaviours and changes in the economy. All we can do as a local authority is to provide the best recycling service we can and to actively market and promote this to our residents.

Finance

32. In order to achieve budget following the end of Pickles subsidy we need to collect 25,000 tonnes of recyclable material per year based on the breakdown in Table 2. In 2014/15 we collected 20,000 tonnes of material and therefore participation and quality of product needs to increase and the revenue we receive per tonne needs to be maintained to deliver the budget.

33. Note: the figures in Table 2 assume current contract prices. A number of our recycling contracts are due to be re-tendered in 2016 and prices per tonne and income levels may therefore change:

Table 2: Tonnes of Recyclables Required to Deliver to Budget

Type of Material	Tonnes	Price Per Tonne	Income
Textiles	50	£420	£21,000
Mixed Plastic & Cans	3,000	£142	£426,000
Mixed Paper & Card	12,500	£59	£737,500
Paper (centres)	500	£30	£15,000
Mixed Glass	8,950	£30	£268,500

Law

34. The Waste Framework Directive 2008 sets the basic concepts and definitions related to waste management, such as definitions of waste and recycling and a legally-binding five step waste hierarchy. The Directive includes targets to reuse and recycle 50% of household waste by 2020.

35. The revised Waste Framework Directive was published in 2011, and implemented in England and Wales through the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011. Part 5 of the regulations covers the 'improved use of waste as a resource':

13.—(1) An establishment or undertaking which collects waste paper, metal, plastic or glass must, from 1st January 2015, take all such measures to ensure separate collection of that waste...

36. The Council delivers its legal obligations through its fortnightly recycling collection service, which was expanded during 2013 and 2014 as a result of Government funding.

Equality Impact

37. The Council's Waste Care section operates in line with the Council's Equality Policies, and any major service changes would be subject to Equality Impact Assessment.

38. Assisted collections for waste and recycling are currently being delivered to over 6,500 residents in the Borough.

Recommendation

39. It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee note the contents of this report and support the campaign and educational activities highlighted within.

M. Williams

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List of Background Papers

n/a