

Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Recycling Briefing Note

Introduction

Plymouth City Council (PCC) needs to increase its household recycling and composting performance to help meet statutory performance targets and to divert biodegradable waste from landfill. In order to meet these targets; many councils have introduced household kerbside recycling to collect specific materials and maximise the amount diverted from landfill.

In 2007 a local composition analysis was carried out, to see what was being thrown away by householders. This study concluded that a maximum of 42% of waste put out could be recycled (Excluding food waste and garden waste) in the current kerbside recycling scheme. However current figures indicate that households are only recycling 20.5%.

Currently householders are provided with a weekly rubbish collection and fortnightly recycling collection. The recycling service accepts all paper and card, clean foil, tins, aerosols, and rigid plastic containers. The recycling is collected in one container mixed together to make it easy for residents.

In addition garden waste is collected from April to October which is sent for composting and projects the year end composting rate to be around 9.1%

Plymouth has done well to increase its recycling rate from 26.7% (May 2007) to 30.5% for 2008/09 and the total tonnage sent to landfill decreased by 9% (7,700 tonnes). Residual waste per household has fallen from 1000 kg in 2002/03 to 718 kg in 2008/09.

This has been achieved by rolling out a kerbside recycling scheme to all households in the city and providing over 163 bring recycling banks as well as providing two Recycling Centres (Chelson Meadow and Weston Mill).

However the LAA recycling stretch target is **33%** recycling rate by **2009/10**. It is unlikely that we will meet this target. This is partly due to the effects of the economic recession on the volatile recycling markets. The projected overall **recycling and composting rate for 2009/10 is 29.6%**.

Current Initiatives

Initiatives carried out this year (2009) to further increase the City's recycling rate and to help meet the 09/10 recycling/composting target of 33% is as follows:

- Extending the Garden Waste Collection Scheme to 3,000 more households.
- £2 million refurbishment of Chelson Meadow Household Recycling Centre making it more user friendly and easier for people to recycle large unwanted goods.

- Recycling a wide range of goods from plastics to Christmas Trees.
- An education and awareness raising programme on what can and can't be recycled in Schools and at Community Events.

However to achieve the 33% recycling rate is extremely challenging as we need to influence people's behaviour to recycle more of their household waste (Even though currently 70% of Plymouth residents recycle 70% of everything they can, we could improve on this). Residents need to see recycling as a key element in being able to 'do their bit' to reduce climate change and dependency on scarce natural resources.

In addition Recycling Markets remain volatile and finding outlets to take all grades of material is challenging with reprocessors able to be choosy in this economic downturn.

Future plans to Increase Recycling Rates

To improve the Cities recycling rate further, Plymouth is currently investing in:

- Extending the garden waste scheme to a further 30,000 households during 2010
- Carrying out targeted campaigns that tie in with national ones, such as Real Nappy week, Compost week etc.
- Door-stepping which involves sending out a small team of staff to talk to residents on the doorstep about a particular issue (Dependant on available resources).
- Ensuring enforcement policies are monitored (Dependant on available resources).

Financial Drivers

National Policy and legislation is driving up the cost of landfill whilst promoting minimisation and recycling. Currently the cost of recycling and the cost of landfill are similar. However Landfill Tax is set to increase to £72 per tonne by 2013 (currently £48.00 per tonne) with fines of up to £150 per tonne if Plymouth landfills more biodegradable waste than the allowance.

Every tonne landfilled costs the Council £86 (including tax) and in 2009/10 we are predicting on sending approximately 87,000 tonnes of municipal waste to landfill costing the authority approximately £7.5 million. In 2008/09 each person in Plymouth paid £46.00 to have waste collected and sent to landfill but only £11.00 to have waste collected and diverted from landfill. Each of us is responsible for producing 550 kg (average weight of 7 adults) of waste per year of which 64% (360 kg) is currently landfilled.

If the recycling rate can be increased by 2% this would **save over £78,000** in disposal costs.

Meeting the challenge – How to increase recycling further

In the Waste industry it is generally accepted that promotion of recycling services, with ongoing drip feed of information, is necessary to increase the amount collected. However there are also other methods that can be used to increase awareness, participation and tonnages. Some current and planned interventions using various methods have been included in appendix I.

Monitoring and Targeting

Monitoring is carried out across the city on the recycling tonnages collected and levels of contamination etc. Officers can then target resources and devise methods to resolve or improve the issue wherever possible. This could involve providing new literature or changing an aspect of collection.

Correlations can also be found between deprivation and high levels of recycling contamination with 24% of loads from the worst performing neighbourhoods rejected contrasting with no rejected loads from the best performing areas.

Best and Worst areas for Recycling Plotted against Deprivation score

Highest			Lowest		
Neighbourhood	Kg /Household/ Year	Deprivation Score ^a	Neighbourhood	Kg /Household/ Year	Deprivation Score ^a
Elburton and Dunstone	277.81	26.38	Devonport	88.27	72.47
Goosewell	239.78	32.79	Stonehouse	84.98	64.63
Leigham & Mainstone	229.97	28.63	Ford	82.08	50.37
Plympton St Maurice	226.47	40.91	Morice Town	80.63	47.96
Hartley & Mannamead	220.70	30.23	Mutley & Greenbank	80.61	48.47
Elburton and Dunstone	218.75	26.38	Devonport/Stoke	78.93	61.10
Plymstock	217.20	37.56	Stoke	77.26	52.09
Widewell	214.75	37.25	East End	77.25	46.93
Crownhill & Eggbuckland	211.56	26.58	City Centre	76.09	68.69
Colebrook & Newnham	207.10	31.38	Mutley & Greenbank	54.59	47.96

Collection rounds with the ten highest and ten lowest average weights of kerbside recycling per household collected during 2007. Please note that some areas have more than one figure, this is due to more than one round in that area.

The most deprived areas also statistically produce up to 80% less recycling per household than more affluent ones (A single household in Elburton and Dunstone produce the same weight of recycling annually as five households in Mutley and Greenbank - see table above). Cross referencing information has also highlighted that 16 – 24 year olds do not tend to participate in these schemes. Therefore areas with high student densities do tend to perform poorly.

Targeted action has been carried out in these areas, including talks, attending community meetings, school visits, workshops, distributing leaflets and letters and working with the Neighbourhood wardens. However this approach is resource intensive and progress in changing behavior can be slow.

Partnership Working

Partnership working is a key principle used widely in the waste industry, as it is a good method to get the message out to large groups of people with limited resources. This approach is encouraged in Plymouth, and there are many examples of long term partnerships. The department is always keen to gain new partners to work with, as this assists with getting out a clear consistent message. It is important that householders get reinforced messages in several places, and it is this continuous drip feed of information that hopefully will make a big difference.

A list of some current interventions is included in Appendix 1.

Suggested Key Areas to Target with Partnership Working

Using the table of best and worst areas for recycling, it is proposed to target three different groups/ areas. The East End has not been selected as work has already been carried out in this area.

- Mutley and Greenbank
- Stoke
- 16 – 24 year olds

Key Recycling Messages We want to Reinforce

1. Use the recycling schemes available

For further information on the kerbside recycling scheme, recycling banks, and Household Waste and Recycling Centre contact www.plymouth.gov.uk
Or call 01752 668 000.

2. Unsure of what goes in the recycling container?

- All paper and card
- All cans and clean foil
- All plastic bottles
- All hard plastic food containers (No flexible packaging like bags)

3. Purchasing Power

- The cost of over-packaging is part of the price you pay, choose items with less packaging.
- Wherever possible choose packaging that can be recycled.
- Minimise waste – don't buy what you don't need.

Appendix I

Current and Proposed Partnership Working

Organisation	Event	Intervention	Current or proposed initiative
PCC Council Tax	Move of house	Document included with bill	Proposed
PCC schools	Online pack for schools to utilise as part of national curriculum	Improved awareness at home via children's education. Currently school class talks and activities are carried out by our team and their partner organisation.	Proposed/ Current
University	Freshers week	Attend each year, with information handed out to students.	Current
		Working with university to set up successful recycling, and work with them regarding student accommodation	Current
Customer Services	Move of House	Considering creating a welcome pack for new residents, if this goes ahead then we will feed into that – but this will be similar to Council tax information.	Customer services may be investigating this avenue.
		Alternatively message on answer phone prompting residents to ask if they are unsure about any waste issues. Will need to liaise to see if this is appropriate.	Proposed
Health	Birth of a child	We have a very successful 'Real Nappy Campaign'. It is estimated that up to 4% of household waste could be nappies - therefore this is a good scheme to continue.	Current
Residential Social Landlords/ Housing Associations'		Information put in bin stores or lifts. Talks to local groups etc.	Current
	Move of House	Liaise with PCH, to see if they would be prepared to send out information when issuing new tenancies on recycling and waste information.	Proposed
Neighbourhood Wardens	Site visits	Discussing ways to provide information to residents whilst they are doing their site visits.	Current