

Transport and Environment Committee

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Enhancing Communal Recycling Services

Item number	7.7
Report number	
Wards	All

Links

Coalition pledges	P44, P49, P50
Council outcomes	CO17, CO18, CO19
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4

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Executive summary

Enhancing Communal Recycling Services

Summary

The report outlines the challenges and opportunities associated with the provision of recycling facilities for people living in flats and tenements. It proposes piloting a number of changes aimed at enhancing recycling provision.

The report also proposes the commencement of a refurbishment programme to enhance and protect the assets provided for disposal of waste and recyclable materials.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee approves the development of the two pilots. The outcome will be reported to Committee after the pilots are completed.

It is recommended that Committee approves the proposed three year rolling programme of bin repair and refurbishment to improve the appearance of on-street bins.

Measures of success

The pilots will be deemed successful if:

- They encourage participation in recycling services; and
- They deliver a high level of customer satisfaction with the recycling and waste collections offered.

Financial impact

There are no significant resource requirements arising from the implementation of the pilots and any additional costs can be contained within existing recycling budgets.

The cost of the proposed bin refurbishment programme are estimated to be £200,000. The costs of this programme will be contained within the Waste Services budget for 2014/15 through re-allocating resources from elsewhere particularly from back office and management budgets. Capital investment of approximately £20,000 will also be required for specialist equipment and to make some adaptations at Powderhall to create a bin wash and refurbishment area that is compliant with Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) requirements. This capital investment will be funded from Waste Services capital budget for new bins.

Equalities impact

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) general duties will be accommodated through the provision of a service which is easier to use, and by enhancing the access to recycling facilities for residents in the pilot areas.

Sustainability impact

The provisions of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, and the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2013 would be met in the following ways:

- The provision of an enhanced recycling service will divert additional waste from landfill that will reduce the carbon impact of managing this waste;
- In particular, access for residents in flats in the pilot areas will receive enhanced services for the recycling of mixed plastics and glass; and
- The diversion of waste from landfill will ultimately provide wider environmental, social and economic benefits and so contribute to a sustainable development.

Consultation and engagement

The pilots outlined in this report take cognisance of feedback obtained by Zero Waste Scotland into attitudes to recycling among residents of tenement flats, and from the Council's own resident feedback.

Background reading / external references

1. [Recycling Redesign Research, Qualitative Research Findings. Progressive, carried out on behalf of Waste Services, April 2013.](#)
2. [Recycling Attitudinal Survey of Tenement Households, Exodus Research for Zero Waste Scotland, November/ December 2012.](#)
3. [Redesign of Recycling Report to the Transport and Environment Committee on 27 August 2013.](#)

Enhancing Communal Recycling Services

1. Background

- 1.1 This report outlines proposals to enhance recycling services for people living in tenements and flats who are served by on-street waste containers.
- 1.2 Approval is sought to develop two pilots to achieve the aims of making recycling easier to use and enhance the range of materials collected while achieving an improved balance between recycling and residual (mixed landfill waste) bins. These pilots will inform the development of strategy for recycling services in communal bin areas.
- 1.3 This year will see the roll out of an enhanced kerbside recycling service to replace the current blue/red box recycling service for low density properties. This will simplify the way the service operates and expand the range of materials collected. This service enhancement was approved by the Transport and Environment Committee in August 2013.
- 1.4 The report also outlined the opportunity to improve the services offered for tenements and flats by replacing the current arrangement of paper and packaging banks with a single bin collecting the majority of materials. These would be the same as those proposed for residents receiving the kerbside recycling service (paper, card, mixed plastics, cans, tins and foil). Glass, food and landfill waste would continue to be collected as separate streams. This would achieve an equality of service across low density and tenement properties in respect of the mix of materials collected. The initial costings for making these enhancements were high and Committee agreed to a further report looking at lower cost options for enhancing communal recycling provision

2. Main report

- 2.1 This report focuses on the services provided in “traditional” tenement areas where waste is collected in on-street communal bins and recycling points; there are fewer challenges in other types of developments where waste is collected from bin stores, car parks, etc. Lessons learned as a result of the proposed pilots will also be applied to these locations where it is appropriate to increase the range of materials that can be recycled.

Context

2.2 Providing a comprehensive recycling service for residents living in flats presents specific challenges:

- Lack of storage space for different streams, both in the home and externally;
- Competing pressures for space on the street itself (e.g. between bins, parking spaces and visual impact); and
- Communication in some areas, where residents may be frequently moving house or where English is not the main/first language.

2.3 In spite of these challenges, this Council has developed a comprehensive network of on-street recycling points in tenement areas with recycling points provided for mixed packaging, paper and food.

2.4 Historically, glass has been provided less frequently at on-street locations due to concerns over noise and broken glass. In recent years a number of mixed glass banks have been provided at locations in Leith and Newington which have demonstrated that glass banks can be sited on-street without these issues arising.

2.5 The provision of a comprehensive glass collection service is a requirement of the Waste (Scotland) Regulations. These sites demonstrate that there is an opportunity to considerably expand glass collections in areas served by communal recycling facilities across the city and result in a positive impact on recycling performance.

Public Consultation

2.6 Zero Waste Scotland carried out surveys of residents' attitudes to recycling in flats and tenement areas in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen . In addition, Edinburgh's Waste Services have also carried out surveys of residents in both kerbside recycling and communal bin areas. Both these pieces of research have helped shape the options for enhancing recycling provision.

2.7 The Zero Waste Scotland report concluded in general terms that there is a need for local facilities for tenements which are readily accessible, safe and easy to use. Residents need to be guided by clear information regarding the facilities and the materials accepted.

- The same barriers to recycling were identified across all four cities. Lack of understanding of where or how to recycle key materials (plastics were seen as a particular issue in Edinburgh, possibly because current services only collect plastic bottles and not other types of plastic);

- Issues with existing services such as lack of capacity for recycling versus landfill bins or recycling bins being full;
- Lack of access to facilities. Glass was identified as a particular concern in Edinburgh. Food was also highlighted, but this service has subsequently been rolled out to most flats; and
- Access and hygiene issues (often related to bin stores being poorly lit, but also regarding the condition of bins).

It also takes into account issues around the higher than average mobility of residents (i.e. the frequency of moving house) as well as language and gender.

- 2.8 Overall the report was reasonably positive regarding the services provided in Edinburgh and attitudes towards steps taken by the Council to encourage recycling were more positive compared to the other cities. For example in comparison to Aberdeen and Dundee, there were significantly less instances of recycling facilities being “too far away” being used as a reason for not recycling in Edinburgh. Also when asked whether Councils should provide an equivalent recycling service for residents who live in flats, the demand for better facilities appeared lower for Edinburgh. The report notes that this is likely to be because this Council already provides an established and widespread recycling service for flats.
- 2.9 One issue on which Edinburgh did not do so well was on access to glass recycling facilities. A high number of respondents (more than in the other three cities) cited a lack of facilities as a reason for not recycling glass.
- 2.10 The report suggests a demand for more bins and more information. Additional information from the Council is identified as an issue across all the four local authorities surveyed, and there is scope for a greater use of less traditional communication methods such as email and social media.
- 2.11 In Edinburgh there appeared to be some appetite among residents to reduce the capacity provided for general waste while maintaining or increasing capacity for recycling. This should be considered against the risk of additional waste dumping by people who do not recycle.
- 2.12 The main opportunities identified to increase recycling in tenements in Edinburgh included reducing the disposal of plastics to landfill, increasing awareness of how to recycle materials and providing information to households.
- 2.13 These results largely mirror the Council’s own research which suggested that there was a high level of awareness about on-street recycling bins, although some confusion around which materials can go in them (such as whether or not a jiffy bag is recyclable). The number of recycling bins was viewed as an issue, with bins filling quickly and items being left beside them.

- 2.14 There was a desire for more on-street glass bins, in spite of the potential for noise to be an issue, while residents requested that information on the bins should be as simple and clear as possible. There was some desire to know more about what happens to the materials collected, while the challenges of delivering information to flats was noted.
- 2.15 To summarise, there is a need to better balance the relative capacities of recycling versus landfill bins, to make the system as easy to use as possible, to improve access to glass recycling and to enhance communications. These are all in line with the Council's strategy.

Proposals for Pilots

- 2.16 It is proposed to develop two recycling pilots which seek to achieve these objectives. The aim will be to rebalance the capacity provided for recycling versus residual waste and to seek to better balance the walking distance to recycling points versus residual bins.
- 2.17 The following outlines the general principles which will be applied in each case. It is recognised that it may not be possible to directly swap one type of container for another in every case and that some sites may need to move.

Pilot 1

- 2.18 In this pilot, the mix of materials that can be placed in a recycling bin will be changed and simplified and glass recycling bins will also be provided. Currently there are two recycling bins in communal areas, one for paper and the other for 'packaging' (cardboard, cans, plastic bottles). It is proposed that these will be combined as one bin. Where possible the bin that was used for paper will be converted to a mixed glass bin. The general landfill waste and food waste provision will remain the same.

Pilot 2

- 2.19 This pilot will take place in areas where the large 3200 litre side-loading bins are currently used for residual/landfill waste. The mix of materials will be changed as in Pilot 1 but the capacity for recycling will be increased while the capacity for landfill waste will be reduced. The 3200 litre bin will be used to collect mixed dry recyclables while the smaller 1200 litre wheeled bin (which is currently used for packaging) will be used for residual/landfill waste. A separate bin for glass will also be provided. There will be no reduction in overall capacity and Waste Services will seek to take a pragmatic view to the split between the recycling and residual waste capacities to minimise the risk of fly-tipping. Close working with the relevant Neighbourhood will be critical to monitoring the impact of reducing capacity for residual waste.
- 2.20 Prior to each pilot commencing, there will be a period of monitoring how full each container is. This will provide a baseline against which the impact of the changes

on usage and volumes of recyclate can be measured. Regular checks will take place throughout the pilot period to establish how well used the recycling bins and to monitor any issues with side waste and fly-tipping. Local residents will also be surveyed to get their feedback on the pilot and find out whether it has led to them recycling more of their household waste.

- 2.21 The pilots will be developed in consultation with the relevant Neighbourhoods, as a mean of ensuring that sufficient capacity is provided. It is likely that support from Environmental Wardens may also be required during the pilots. In addition, a comprehensive community engagement package will be developed to support their introduction and improved information on what can be recycled in each bin or container will also be provided.
- 2.22 Subject to approval for the proposals, a project plan will be developed to outline the timescales for identification of the trial areas, a communication timeline, a 'go live' date, follow up consultation and monitoring. It is anticipated that the trials will be completed within the 2014/15 financial year with a view to informing a wider strategy to be implemented in subsequent financial years. The outcome of the pilots and recommendations on rolling out communal recycling enhancements will be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

Communal Facilities – Refurbishment Programme

- 2.23 In addition to the pilots outlined above it is proposed to commence a refurbishment programme for on-street recycling and residual waste bins, and continuation of the programme of washing communal food waste bins.
- 2.24 There are in the region of 13,000 communal bins currently located on-street. It is proposed that a three year rolling programme is established to ensure all bins are adequately refurbished and repairs are carried out where necessary. A combination of internal resources and external refurbishment partners will be needed to deliver the programme. Ongoing repairs and small scale refurbishment are currently carried out internally whilst major refurbishment of a bin is undertaken by the bin manufacturer. Subject to the condition of the bin, this arrangement is proposed to continue. However the service provided by the in-house team will be enhanced to better address the cosmetic appearance of on-street bins and wash bins regularly where necessary.
- 2.25 While communal bins are being repaired or refurbished, it is our intention to take the opportunity to 'refresh' and replace the stickers on the bins. As part of the sticker refresh, we will take into account feedback outlined earlier in this report about clarity on what can or cannot be recycled.

Conclusion

- 2.26 While the Zero Waste Scotland report in particular recognises the measures the Council has already taken to provide equivalent recycling services across the city, it also highlights the opportunities to further improve this, particularly with

increased information, better balanced capacities for recyclable materials versus landfill waste and better glass recycling facilities.

- 2.27 The measures outlined in this report provide a cost effective mean of testing the efficiency of different approaches towards enhancing the range of recycling facilities for residents in tenemental and flatted properties prior to committing to a wider roll out.
- 2.28 The establishment of a regular programme of bin maintenance and refurbishment will also help to prevent the condition and look of communal recycling facilities becoming a disincentive to recycling by local residents.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Committee are recommended to:

1. Approve the development of the two pilots; the outcome of which will be reported to Committee after the pilots are completed.
2. Note the proposed three year rolling programme of bin repair and refurbishment to improve the appearance of on-street bins.

Mark Turley

Director Services for Communities

Links

Coalition pledges	P44	Prioritise keeping our streets clean and attractive.
	P49	Continue to increase recycling levels across the city and reducing the proportion of waste going to landfill.
	P50	Meet greenhouse gas targets including the national target of 42% by 2020.
Council outcomes	CO17	Clean – Edinburgh’s streets and open spaces are clean and free of litter and graffiti.
	CO18	Green – We reduce the local environmental impact of our consumption and production.
	CO19	Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm.
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4	Edinburgh’s communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric