

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Zero Waste Management Sub Committee
DATE	22 November 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	<b>Mixed Recycling Contamination Policy</b>
REPORT NUMBER	ZWSC/16/7677
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to seek agreement of a policy and procedure for dealing with collections of mixed recycling when contamination is evident and to clarify how these are identified as contaminated.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the Zero Waste Management Sub-Committee approves the proposed Mixed Recycling Contamination Policy included at Appendix 1
2. That the Zero Waste Management Sub-Committee instructs officers to report back to the appropriate committee in November 2017 with a review of the implementation of the policy and recommendations relating to any changes to the policy.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The collection of good quality recyclable materials is of high importance to ensure that the onward sorting and processing of the materials can be carried out efficiently and effectively. High rates of contamination (where non-target recyclables are mixed with the recyclables) will result in increased processing costs and reduced income for sale of recyclables and ultimately could result in the material having to be treated as residual waste at a significantly increased cost.

As the service is not yet rolled out and due to the variable nature of the recycling commodity market, it is not possible to estimate what the cost of higher contamination might be at this stage, although this will be closely tracked and monitored as the service progresses.

#### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

The adoption of this policy will clarify the Council's position when dealing with contaminated mixed recycling bins and help to ensure that consistency is applied across the city in order that all householders understand the requirements and are treated equally.

In sustainability and environmental terms, better quality recyclables means less waste as a by-product of the process.

In terms of policy implications, this is in line with the Council's Waste Strategy in terms of encouraging householders to manage their waste responsibly and maximise the value of materials collected for recycling.

In addition, this is in line with the Scottish Government's Household Recycling Charter and Code of Practice which states the following: "Policies to encourage the proper use of recycling containers is important in maintaining high-quality recycling and giving confidence to contractors that will manage the onward processing of collected recyclables. It is also important in re-assuring citizens that the material they have taken care to sort is being handled properly".

It is intended to review this policy in November 2017, this will be an opportunity to consider whether any amendments are necessary following the experiences of the first few months of the new collection service. In addition, Zero Waste Scotland are expected to release guidance on contamination policies and this will allow any changes to be made in order to align with that guidance where appropriate.

#### **5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

##### **5.1 Introduction**

5.1.1 The existing kerbside sort recycling service which is currently operated using a black box and white bag has been in operation for a number of years. This type of service has the benefit of enabling collection crews not to collect materials that are considered as contaminants. Currently, crews can leave undesirable materials in the box or bag and return them to the householder. This means the quality of materials being collected has a generally low level of contamination. The downside of this method is that it is labour intensive, not suited to more densely populated areas, has health and safety concerns regarding manual handling and noise, and does not have capacity for adding more materials to the collection service.

5.1.2 The new, mixed recycling service (also known as comingled), which will be rolled out from March 2017, will mean that all of the

recyclables are now collected in one 240 litre wheeled bin mixed together. This means that the above concerns are either resolved or greatly reduced, however, there is an increased risk of contamination as the crews will no longer be able to manually remove any unwanted items. Therefore, this policy has been developed to ensure that there is clarity for both collection crews and householders in the way that contamination is now dealt with for this service.

## **6. Mixed Recycling Contamination Policy**

### **6.1 Acceptable Materials**

The 240l mixed recycling bin is only for the items that can be recycled as listed below:

- Steel and aluminium cans, tins and foil
- Glass bottles and jars
- Paper and cardboard
- Plastic bottles, trays, tubs and pots (all colours)
- Food and drink cartons (e.g. Tetrapak)

### **6.2 Defining Contamination**

Collection crews will check recycling bins as they are emptying them for evidence of contaminants such as food waste, plastic bags or film, garden waste, nappies, clothing, and other general waste materials that cannot be recycled.

**This will be a visual inspection when they open the lid of the bin. Crews are not expected to wade through the materials.**

Table A is a guide to help determine whether a bin is deemed to be contaminated or not and the action to be taken:

**Table A**

<u>Contamination level / Reason</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Action</u>
Severe contamination; or repeat offender of medium contamination	Filled black bags, food waste, nappies, more non-recycling than recycling. Or repeat offender of medium contamination.	1) Do not empty bin 2) Attach Bin Hanger/Sticker 3) Record on Collective 4) Letter sent to householder
Moderate contamination	Obvious misunderstanding of materials accepted – more than two but less than ten wrong items visible when bin lid is opened (there needs to be more recycling than non-recycling)	1) Empty bin 2) Bin Hanger/Sticker 3) Leave wrong items in a bag tied to the bin or remove if possible 4) Record on Collective
Low contamination	Two or less visible wrong items when the bin lid is opened.	1) Empty bin – likely that it is accidental. 2) No requirement to record

Severely contaminated recycling bins will not be emptied and it is then the responsibility of the householder to remove any contamination from the recycling bin before it can be emptied.

If this is not carried out by the next collection cycle the bin will be emptied as a general waste bin and the householder will be notified either in writing or in person.

### 6.3 Procedure

#### 6.3.1 Bin identified as **low** contamination (as per Table A above)

- a. Where a domestic recycling bin has been identified as having low contamination by the collection crew, the crew will empty the bin. No further action is required.

#### 6.3.2 Bin identified as **moderate** contamination (as per Table A above)

- a. Where a domestic recycling bin has been identified as having moderate contamination by the collection crew, the crew will log this using their in-cab electronic system. This information is available to the Contact Centre and Waste Team staff in real time.
- b. Crew will notify the householder (bin hanger/sticker, etc.) of the issue.
- c. If the same household has moderate contamination on a repeated basis (more than twice), this will be deemed as

**severely contaminated** and the process followed under 6.3.3 (bin not emptied, etc.).

6.3.3 Bin identified as **severely** contaminated (as per Table A above)

- a. Where a domestic recycling bin has been identified as having severe contamination by the collection crew, the crew will log this using their in-cab electronic system. This information is available to the Contact Centre and Waste Team staff in real time.
- b. Crew will notify the householder (bin hanger/sticker, etc) of the issue - why the bin has not been emptied and that they must remove the offending items prior to the next collection.
- c. A letter will be sent to the householder (standard letter) reminding the householder of the correct items for recycling that they must remove the offending items prior to the next collection to take any excess materials to a Recycling Centre or Point to contact the Waste & Recycling Team for advice if they are having difficulty.
- d. If the same household has repeated severe contamination, an Officer will contact the householder to discuss and give advice.

## 7. **COMMUNICATION**

- 7.1 Details of this policy will be available on the Council website for public perusal. Information regarding the destinations of materials will also be available online. In addition, the policy will be communicated during the roll-out of the new service and will be included in the information provided when the new service starts.
- 7.2 Ongoing communication will be developed that will give feedback to residents on the recycling performance of the authority and to give clear information about what happens to the materials that are collected.

## 6. **BENEFITS**

- 6.1 The Mixed Recycling Contamination Policy will result in giving both the householders, collection crews and customer services staff a clearer system for dealing with missed bins. The implementation of the new in-cab system for reporting of contamination issues allows for a greater

understanding of where contamination issues are occurring in order that resources can be appropriately targeted.

6.2 Improved recycling and waste collection service in terms of:

- Better quality of materials collected
- Increased householder awareness of what can be recycled

6.3 The implementation of this Policy will assist the Council in its aim to improve services through efficiency and continuous improvement and establishes a clear and consistent approach to service delivery.

## 7. **IMPACT**

### **Improving Customer Experience –**

This policy will provide clear guidelines for staff and residents on the policy for contamination of recyclables. It will also ensure that the Council is being open and transparent and fair and consistent in its approach.

### **Improving Staff Experience –**

This policy will result in improved morale for staff by providing clear guidance on this issue and reducing the instances where collection crews are sent back to collect bins that should not have been left unemptied.

### **Improving our use of Resources –**

This policy will result in higher quality materials being collected which can be processed in a more efficient and cost effective manner and reduce the risk of severely contaminated recyclable materials being sent for disposal.

### **Corporate -**

This policy helps us to work towards achieving the Smarter Environment element of the Smarter City vision by helping to manage waste effectively and maximise recycling by providing clear and convenient services.

### **Public –**

It is expected that the introduction of this policy will give clarity over what the acceptable standard for mixed recycling is. To publicise the service change to residents we will increase awareness of the policy by making it available online on the Council website and on social media. In addition, this policy will be communicated as part of the information materials that will be delivered to householders as part of the new service delivery.

An EHRIA has been completed and is attached. There are no significant equalities impacts, those householders who find they have difficulty in managing their waste and recycling will be able to apply for an assisted collection service which is available for those people who fall under the protected characteristics categories as defined by the Equalities Act 2010. A PIA is not required for this report.

## 8. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Risk	Mitigating action
Public acceptability of policy content	Communication campaign consisting of general awareness raising on Council website and direct contact with households in writing and/or in person as part of the new service roll-out. Training of Waste Team and Contact Centre Staff.
Risk of increased fly-tipping or littering due contaminated bins not being emptied.	Provision of adequate information and support to assist householders. Monitoring of implications and consideration of introduction of process for enforcement action.

## 9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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## APPENDIX A

<b>Policy Name</b>	Contamination of Mixed Recycling Policy
<b>Committee Date/Name</b>	Zero Waste Sub-Committee, 22 November 2016
<b>Review Frequency</b>	1 year
<b>Next Review Due</b>	November 2017
<b>Implementation Date</b>	1 March 2017

### 1.0 Purpose of Policy

To establish a policy that details how bins presented with contaminated recyclables will be dealt with and to define what contamination is.

### 2.0 Acceptable Materials

**2.2.1** The 240l mixed recycling bin is only for the items that can be recycled as listed below:

- Steel and aluminium cans, tins and foil
- Glass bottles and jars
- Paper and cardboard
- Plastic bottles, trays, tubs and yoghurt pots (all colours)
- Food and drink cartons (e.g. Tetrapak)

Items should be predominantly clean and free of food waste and plastic bags/film in particular.

### 2.3 Defining Contamination

**2.3.1** Collection crews will check recycling bins as they are emptying them for evidence of contaminants such as food waste, plastic bags or film, garden waste, nappies, clothing, and other general waste materials that cannot be recycled.

**This will be a visual inspection when they open the lid of the bin. Crews are not expected to wade through the materials.**

**2.3.2** The following is a guide to help determine whether a bin is deemed to be contaminated or not and the action to be take:

<u>Contamination level / Reason</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Action</u>
Severe contamination; or repeat offender of medium contamination	Filled black bags, food waste, nappies, more non-recycling than recycling. Or repeat offender of medium contamination.	1) Do not empty bin 2) Attach Bin Hanger/Sticker 3) Record on Collective 4) Letter sent to householder
Moderate contamination	Obvious misunderstanding of materials accepted – more than two but less than ten wrong items visible when bin lid is opened (there needs to be more recycling than non-recycling)	1) Empty bin 2) Bin Hanger/Sticker 3) Leave wrong items in a bag tied to the bin or remove if possible 4) Record on Collective
Low contamination	Two or less visible wrong items when the bin lid is opened.	1) Empty bin – likely that it is accidental. 2) No requirement to record

**2.3.3** Severely contaminated recycling bins will not be emptied and it is then the responsibility of the householder to remove any contamination from the recycling bin before it can be emptied.

## **2.6 Procedure**

2.6.1 Bin identified as low contamination (as per 2.3.2 above)

- b. Where a domestic recycling bin has been identified as having low contamination by the collection crew, the crew will empty the bin. No further action is required.

2.6.2 Bin identified as moderate contamination (as per 2.3.2)

- c. Where a domestic recycling bin has been identified as having moderate contamination by the collection crew, the crew will log this using their in-cab electronic system. This information is available to the Contact Centre and Waste Team staff in real time.
- d. Crew will notify the householder (bin hanger/sticker, etc) of the issue.
- e. Where possible, crew will remove offending items and either bag them and leave them attached to the bin or remove them (where there is the ability to properly dispose of them elsewhere).
- f. If the same household has moderate contamination on a repeated basis (more than twice), this will be deemed as **severely contaminated** and the process followed under 2.8 (bin not emptied, etc).

2.6.3 Bin identified as severely contaminated (as per 2.3.2)

- g. Where a domestic recycling bin has been identified as having severe contamination by the collection crew, the crew will log this using their in-cab electronic system. This information is available to the Contact Centre and Waste Team staff in real time.
- h. Crew will notify the householder (bin hanger/sticker, etc) of the issue - why the bin has not been emptied and that they must remove the offending items prior to the next collection
- i. A letter will be sent to the householder (standard letter):
  - reminding the householder of the correct items for recycling
  - that they must remove the offending items prior to the next collection
  - to take any excess materials to a Recycling Centre or Point
  - to contact the Waste & Recycling Team for advice if they are having difficulty.
- j. If the same household has repeated severe contamination an Officer will visit the householder to discuss and give advice.

## **References**

