

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Net Zero, Environment and Transport
DATE	27 March 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Opportunities to increase recycling and reuse
REPORT NUMBER	RES/24/089
DIRECTOR	Steve Whyte
CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Reilly
REPORT AUTHOR	Martina Klubal
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on current projects and future opportunities to increase household recycling and reuse.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee:-

- 2.1 note the report for assurance; and
- 2.2 instruct the Chief Officer - Operations to report the review of the waste strategy through this Committee starting in Autumn 2024.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

Background

- 3.1 Aberdeen City Council's waste and recycling service has faced a number of challenges in recent years affecting its recycling performance. Current projects and future opportunities seek to address these challenges and continue building on past successes.
- 3.2 In 2019, Aberdeen achieved a household recycling rate of 49.9%, compared with 39% in 2016, the year before the current co-mingled collection service was rolled out. In 2020, the recycling rate decreased to 45.6% and further decreased until 2022 to 41.6%. Despite this, ACC remains the highest performing urban authority in Scotland.
- 3.3 Scotland's recycling target is 70% by 2025 and progress has stalled towards reaching this. For several years the national recycling rate remained stable at around 45% and decreased to 42% in 2020, in part due to the impacts of Covid-19, and then increased to 43.3% in 2022. To address this plateau, changing legislation aims to drive improvements in the waste sector and there is more information on this later in the report.

- 3.4 In line with national trends, ACC's recycling rate decreased during the Covid-19 pandemic in part due to behavioural changes such as lifestyle and consumer choices. Decreasing national and local recycling rates are a timely reminder that continued focus on recycling participation remains a priority. An on-going programme of communication and engagement plays a key role in building and sustaining good waste management habits and contributes to rebuilding our recycling rate. Regular messages to householders ensure they understand what to recycle, how to recycle and why it matters.
- 3.5 In 2022, the fire that destroyed ACC's Material Recovery Facility required the waste service to implement a contingency plan that alters normal disposal arrangements for the duration of the facility's demolition and rebuild. This temporary arrangement means a loss of control for processing recycling and a narrower tolerance for contamination levels resulting in more rejected loads. This situation impacts negatively on recycling rates.

Funding and projects

- 3.6 Since 2021, the waste service has secured more than a million pounds in grant funding to deliver service improvements. Three projects were funded from the Scottish Government's £70 million Recycling Improvement Fund including: identification tags fitted to communal bins to help improve data and performance (£207,298.47); expansion of re-use facility at Hazlehead Household Waste and Recycling Centre (£34,959.52); and new storage bays at Sclattie waste transfer station to enable better separation of materials for recycling and re-use (£933,667.75).
- 3.7 Improved facilities at Sclattie waste transfer station offer an additional benefit by providing space for separating and pre-treating waste upholstered domestic seating containing persistent organic pollutants. This space enables the waste service to work towards full regulatory compliance whilst also separating more materials for recycling from bulky waste.
- 3.8 A grant from Material Focus Electricals Recycling Fund was secured to introduce a network of recycling bins across the City for small electricals (£27,414). These new bins are expected to be rolled out in May 2024.
- 3.9 Colleagues in waste, education and communities have partnered to deliver a network of collection points for free reusable period products. A communication and engagement campaign was launched to provide information about distribution points and raise awareness of the benefits of reusable products as a plastic-free, no waste alternative to disposables.

Communication and community engagement

- 3.10 Regular communication and engagement activities to promote waste reduction, reuse and recycling are planned and delivered using a range of approaches including digital, advertising, community channels and in-person engagement. The service links in with national campaigns such as Recycling Week, Love Food Hate Waste and Pass it On Week.

- 3.11 In January 2024, a bespoke, local campaign called 'Stick to the Six' ran on bus sides, bus shelters, BT screens, radio and social media. Its aim was to promote recycling participation and raise awareness of the importance of recycling the correct materials. Community engagement events were organised to further promote the campaign's messages and gather feedback on their effectiveness.
- 3.12 In 2022 and 2023, the waste service promoted the national 'Take Charge' campaign which seeks to increase recycling of small electricals and raise awareness of the fire risks associated with disposing incorrectly of batteries.
- 3.13 A programme of community engagement activities is planned throughout the year including doorknocking, information stalls and presentations.

Infrastructure and disposal

- 3.14 Work is underway to deliver a new Household Waste and Recycling Centre in Bridge of Don. The new site will replace the existing HWRC at Scotstown Road which is no longer fit for purpose. The new facility will significantly improve the scope for separation of materials for reuse and recycling including an onsite reuse shop. The project is currently progressing through stages of the planning process and is expected to be operational by spring 2025.
- 3.15 NESS energy from waste facility is fully operational and accepting most of the City's residual waste. Bottom ash leftover from the incineration process is recycled into aggregate, primarily for road surfacing.
- 3.16 The rebuild of the Material Recovery Facility at Altens, following the fire in 2022, is underway with the facility expected to start its commissioning phase early next year. ACC is currently operating a contingency plan until the new facility is built and this arrangement limits our recycling performance.

Regulatory compliance and emerging legislation

- 3.17 ACC is fully compliant with the biodegradable landfill ban ahead of its implementation in 2025. The service operates a citywide food waste recycling collection and biodegradable material is sent for In-Vessel Composting. No food or garden waste is sent to landfill.
- 3.18 ACC is fully compliant with the landfill ban for waste upholstered domestic seating containing persistent organic pollutants. New bays at Sclattie waste transfer station (see sections 3.1 and 3.2) have enabled progress towards compliance for collection and pre-treatment and interim solutions are now in place, whilst options for full compliance are developed.
- 3.19 The Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill was introduced in 2023 and is currently progressing through Parliament. Its associated Route Map to 2030 is structured around four strategic action areas: Reduce and Reuse, Modernise Recycling, Decarbonise Disposal, and Strengthen the Circular Economy. A consultation on the draft Route Map closes on 15 March 2024 for which ACC is co-ordinating a response. It is expected that the final version of the Route Map will be published later this year. Waste colleagues are participating in stakeholder

engagement events and actively monitoring legislative changes as they develop.

- 3.20 The draft Route Map outlines a package of interventions that will directly and indirectly impact local authority waste and recycling services. Direct impacts are expected to be: an introduction of new recycling and reuse targets; the addition of new materials to kerbside recycling collection (e.g. flexible plastics); and co-design of collection methods. It is also possible that local authorities will be required to provide a garden waste collection and at this time, it is unknown if authorities will be permitted to charge for this service.
- 3.21 Other changes on the horizon include Deposit Return Scheme, Extended Producer Responsibility, Digital Waste Tracking and Emissions Trading Scheme.
- 3.22 Proposals for Extended Producer Responsibility will see producers being responsible for the full cost of managing packaging placed on the market in line with the producer pays principle. It is intended that this scheme will bring revenue to local authorities for managing packaging waste, however it is still unknown how it will operate in practice. The list of packaging materials is likely to be those commonly collected for recycling – paper, card, glass, cans and plastic – and plastic film is expected to be added as a new material.
- 3.23 The UK Government plans to introduce mandatory digital waste tracking from April 2025 to enable monitoring of waste and resources in real time. Currently a portal is established to trial digital waste tracking and ACC has registered to participate in it.
- 3.24 The inclusion of energy from waste in the UK Emission Trading Scheme is expected from 2028. This scheme will administer a carbon tax that is intended to drive reductions in carbon emissions and increase efficiencies in energy from waste facilities through incentivising recycling, improving mixed waste sorting (ex: removing fossil content) and carbon capture. Some of the costs associated with the scheme are expected to be passed on to local authorities.
- 3.25 Due to the scale of change proposed under this legislation, and significant uncertainty surrounding it, there is a need to further support and develop the waste team in order to build capacity to enable us to anticipate, plan and deliver changes.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In the past 2 years ACC has successfully bid for £1.2 million to support reuse and recycling initiatives.
- 4.2 It is anticipated that further external funding streams will become available in future and new funding opportunities will be pursued.
- 4.3 It is worth noting that the proposed Deposit Return Scheme represents a risk to ACC. The scheme will remove valuable materials from the household and trade waste streams including glass, metal and plastic. Diversion of these

materials from kerbside recycling collections will represent a loss of tonnage and income to the Council. However, it will also take material out of the residual waste stream and reduce litter. Implementation of the scheme was due to begin in July 2022 but has been delayed until at least October 2025.

- 4.4 Financial implications arising from impacts of Extended Producer Responsibility, Emissions Trading Scheme and Persistent Organic Pollutants regulations will be significant but are currently unknown due to the uncertainty surrounding legislation and its associated package of interventions. The Route Map also outlines a co-design of the Household Recycling Charter’s Code of Practice which may require local authorities to change their method of collection and if so, this is expected to have a significant financial impact.
- 4.5 Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging is expected to bring additional income to local authorities for managing the collection and disposal of packaging waste.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There will be significant legal implications arising from the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill in relation to meeting new targets, statutory reporting and compliance with new schemes. However, due to the uncertainty surrounding legislation and its associated package of interventions, the scope for understanding these implications is at present limited.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Improved recycling and reuse services, and better separation of materials in disposal processes reduces risk from greenhouse gas emissions.
- 6.2 Diversion of materials from landfill to energy from waste supports a reduction in carbon emissions, in line with the Council’s targets of net zero emissions by 2045.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Insufficient approach to meet scale of legislative changes. Failure to meet new statutory	Delivery of specific strategic plans and projects while anticipating and adapting to legislative needs.	L	Yes

	recycling targets.			
Compliance	Failure to meet legislative requirements. Failure to stay informed of legislative changes. Financial implications from failure to meet regulations.	Monitoring of legislative changes and targets to adapt to emerging requirements. Ensure legal ramifications of regulatory changes are understood.	L	Yes
Operational	Lack of resources and understanding of planned approach. Competing priorities.	Internal engagement across waste service to build knowledge and awareness of emerging legislative changes.	L	Yes
Financial	Lack of resource, including staff to effectively plan for and implement requirements to meet new statutory obligations. Budget pressures to meet operational requirements. Increased costs from failure to meet legislative goals.	Identify and cost projects where required to support the plan. Look into external opportunities to fund projects where available.	M	Yes
Reputational	Failure to address recycling rates would affect net zero goals, and environmental reputation.	Delivery of plan. Governance, monitoring and review through Waste and Recycling Dept.	L	Yes

	Risk if commitment conflicts with other council decisions. Risk of delays to progress.			
Environment / Climate	Failure to meet reuse, recycling and waste reduction targets. Effect on emission targets	Delivery of on-going communication and engagement plan	M	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-2024</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strive to achieve Net-Zero to deliver a city that is fit for future generations.
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 13 – Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.</p> <p>The paper outlines current projects and future opportunities to increase household recycling and reuse.</p>
Regional and City Strategies	<p>The projects and future opportunities outlined in this report support Aberdeen City Waste Strategy 2014 – 2025.</p> <p>Reducing carbon emissions contributes to delivery of the Net Zero vision for Aberdeen.</p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	No assessment is required at this time; however, an Integrated Impact Assessment is intended once further legislative clarity is achieved (see sections 3.19 and 3.20 for further information). I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Mark Reilly, Chief Officer, Operations and Protective Services, on 29/02/2024.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 No background papers were used.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 No appendices are attached.

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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