

Improving Recycling of Household Waste – Briefing note

Motion on notice submitted by Councillor Paul Stubbins as proposer.

Seconders are Councillors Mandy Bannon and Tim Dant.

Purpose:

- To increase the proportion of local household waste that is recycled and to minimise residual waste (which cannot be recycled).
- To achieve this through greater collaborative work between Lancaster City Council and its residents by raising awareness of recycling issues, sharing targets and consulting widely on how best to facilitate this.

Recommendations

Full Council, welcomes the progress that is being made to reduce residual waste per household and to increase the scope of plastic that can be recycled.

Council recognises that there is a pressing need however to improve recycling efforts within our City and with the support of County. Council aims to achieve this by putting recycling high on our agenda and committing to share the responsibility and actions needed to be taken.

Full Council therefore:

- Commits to being active in promoting waste prevention, reduction and reuse activities in all wards across our City.
- Requests that Overview and Scrutiny committee investigates best practice in achieving higher recycling rates by consulting with other councils, residents and City Councillors. For example asking residents and members what they want to know about recycling, how this might be presented and how they wish to be kept informed.
- Requests County provides the necessary local recycling information needed to support our aim to substantially increase public engagement and outcomes for recycling.
- Requests that better, more meaningful targets for recycling be set and progress reported at least quarterly on the Council Website, annually on the recycling guidance cards that are posted to residents, and by any other means that Overview and Scrutiny may recommend.
- Requests that more detailed information be provided on the Council's website of the ways materials can be recycled in our own district particularly where materials might be reused by local organisations.
- Encourages individuals and community groups to create specialist reuse or recycling projects for their areas.

Notes

There are many effective ways to reduce the generation of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane. Composting reduces anaerobic decomposition of organic waste at landfill, whilst reducing waste and increasing recycling saves energy that would have been used in the production of materials.

Using recycled materials, instead of trees, metal ores, minerals, oil and other raw materials harvested from the earth, also conserves the world's scarce natural resources.

Whilst the majority of Household Waste is derived from households, it also includes waste from street bins, street sweepings, parks and grounds.

Lancaster is making progress in reducing residual waste per household. In 2017/18 residual waste per household was 482.9kg, the 6th best in Lancashire. We continued to reduce that figure in 2018/19, achieving the biggest in-year improvement in Lancashire.

In the financial year 2017/18, **35.64%** of household waste was recycled in Lancaster, which fell below the North West and England rates of 44.7% and 43.2% respectively. At the district/unitary level, recycling, reuse and composting rates varied between a low of 29.8% in Preston to 47.5% in Fylde, with the best achieving local authority in the North West Region being Trafford at 59%. Our target in Lancaster this year was **45%** but we have achieved just **36%**. With the City Council set to adopt the EU target of 50% of household waste to be recycled by 2020, it is clear that we need to make huge strides to achieve this.

Although targets are being set and monitored by Lancaster City Council for the percentage of household waste recycled and residual waste collected, this information is not widely shared with residents. This is a lost opportunity to develop awareness amongst the public and to share the challenges that we face. Detailed recycling information is collected and reported by County for DEFRA and so this could be accessed and presented for local use.

Greater support is required to let people know what can and cannot be recycled, in particular, awareness of types of plastics that can be recycled and how food residue contaminates recycling. In doing so, Council needs to support elderly and transient populations on an ongoing basis, without expecting such residents to be proactive in accessing the internet.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The Government's 'Resources and Waste Strategy' sets out plans to overhaul the waste system, cut plastic pollution, and move towards a more circular economy. At the time of writing the Environment Bill (of which this is part) had moved a step closer to becoming law following its second reading by MPs on 28th October. It will now progress to the Committee stage for further scrutiny and onto the next stages of the Parliamentary process for becoming law.

The Resources and Waste Strategy will inform how Councils provide household waste collection and recycling in the future. Of particular interest are the range of materials that Council's will have to recycle and the funding for this.

In this area Lancashire County Council are the Waste Disposal Authority and Lancaster City Council are the Waste Collection Authority. The County Council have statutory duties with regards to making suitable provision for disposal of the waste (including recycling) collected by the District Councils.

The recent Climate Change emergency is a major factor in how the City Council plans its waste collection services in the future. Particularly there is a need to reduce the overall amount of household waste produced, further encourage re-use, design the service in way that positively drives residents make full use of the recycling service and minimise the environmental impact of the collection operation.

Work is already taking place, involving the County Council, to establish how we might deliver the service in the future in a way that will achieve the above.

Successful introduction of any significant changes to the waste collection / recycling service requires Elected Members to contribute to the development of policies and strategies that will provide the steer Officers need to design operations in a way that deliver the intended outcomes..

The intended outcome of the motion would seem to be very much aligned to the above.

However, the motion prescribes a number of very specific recommendations which will require significant time and effort to implement.

If approved the resource needed to be allocated to it would slow down the greater goal of a systematic review of the way we deliver the service, and the positive outcomes that would produce.

Officer advice can be summarised as-

- There is a clear need to review the waste / recycling service, within the context of Government Strategy, Lancashire's strategy and the climate change emergency.
- Elected Members have a key role in this process. Particularly with regard to the development of the policies and strategies that Officers will then use to design the operation.
- The approval of the specific recommendations in this motion would mean allocating resources to a series of operational actions as opposed to development of policy and strategy that allow Officers design operations in a way the delivers the intended outcomes.

SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS

Any additional Council resource required to deliver the recommendations outlined in this motion would need to be considered in accordance with the Council's budgetary framework.

DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER COMMENTS

The Deputy Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments.