

7 February 2019		ITEM: 8
Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Recycling Service Update		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Report for noting	
Report of: Claire Harvey, Strategic Lead – Waste Services		
Accountable Assistant Director: Daren Spring, Assistant Director for Street Scene & Leisure		
Accountable Director: Julie Rogers, Director Environment and Highways		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The 25 year Environment plan, published in December 2018, sets out the government pledge to leave the environment in a better condition for the next generation. The new “Waste, our resources: A Strategy for England” document sets the vision for all waste collection and disposal authorities to meet this commitment. The document sets out strategic ambitions, targets and key milestones up until 2050 and the service is in the process of reviewing this document to establish the possible implications for Thurrock.

Thurrock is committed to improving recycling rates, residents continue to provide circa 37% recycling, however focus needs to be on the quality of recycling to ensure costs for disposal are kept to a minimum. In the past recycling waste disposal costs were significantly lower, circa 50% of residual which have been increasing and currently sit around 70-75%, primarily due to the changing markets and international influences.

The recycling rate reported over the last five years has shown steady decline from 40.93% in 2013/14 to 36.97% in 2017/18, with the more significant decrease in 2015/16, however since then the recycling rate has remained consistent.

Thurrock Council remains committed to weekly residual and recycling collections and this report provides an update on performance in 2018/19 and the focus for 2019/20.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 It is recommended that Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the report for information and comment.**

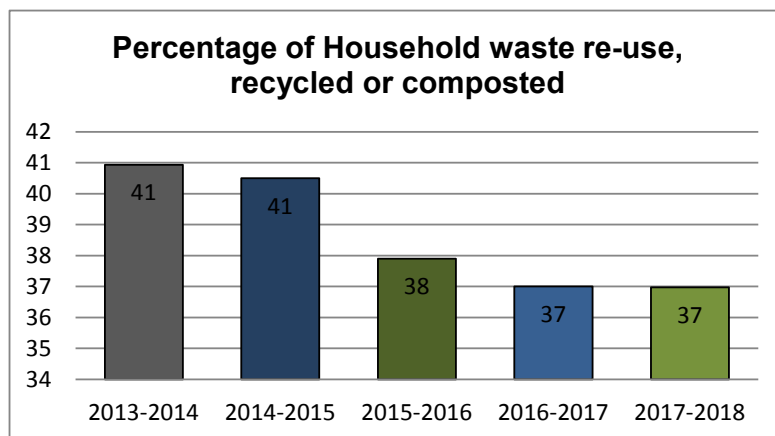
2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Thurrock Council as a Unitary Authority has a statutory obligation under the Environmental Act 1990 to arrange for the collection and disposal of waste. The Council discharges these obligations by operating a weekly, in-house waste collection service for all streams.
- 2.2 The overall household tonnage disposed of in 2017/18 was 77,612 tonnes; of this 28,431 tonnes were recycled, reused and composted.
- 2.3 The Resources and Waste Strategy for England sets out a number of recommendations to '*drive better quantity and quality in recycling.... To help local authorities and waste management companies act in the most sustainable and resource efficient way possible*'. This includes:

To improve recycling rates by ensuring a consistent set of dry recyclable materials is collected from all households and businesses. A circular economy for plastics is the ambition where:

- products are made from the same recycled materials and are easy to recycle
- Some products are no longer made from plastics but from alternative materials
- More plastics are reused, repaired or recycled
- Consumers use more reused items and know what can be recycled

- 2.4 The recycling rate reported over the last five years has shown steady decline from 40.93% in 2013/14 to 36.97% in 2017/18, with the more significant decrease in 2015/16, however since then the recycling rate has remained consistent.



The change in 2015/16 was primarily due to a change in legislation and a directive which placed increased pressure on Material Recovery Facilities (MRF's) to improve the quality of processing such that the quality and quantity of output is suitably high. Comingled collections routinely have higher levels of contamination than separate collections. However comingled collections typically attract greater quantities of recyclate substantially more than offsetting the higher contamination

level.

- 2.5 A number of interventions have been actioned by the council to mitigate the declining recycling rate locally. The key focus of the activity has been an ongoing and dedicated communication programme across a number of channels.
- 2.6 Evidence and experience from other authorities that are achieving much higher recycling rates are that there are two key service changes which have led to improvements: smaller residual bins for all residents and fortnightly waste collections.
- 2.7 Since 2010, 180 litre residual bins have been issued to customers as replacements for the 240 litre residual bins. 240 litre recycling and food/garden waste bins continue to be provided in order to support and encourage recycling.
- 2.8 The two key approaches for this coming year will focus on continuing to increase recycling rates and improving the quantity and quality of dry recycling material by reducing the levels of contamination and targeting communications to poor performing areas.

3. Current performance

Thurrock has set a target of 41% of all household waste to be recycled, re-used and composted in 2018-19. The table below shows the monthly recycling performance, including previous years' performance:

	2016/17 Outturn	2017/18 Outturn	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	YTD
% of household waste, reused, recycled & composted	37.62 %	36.97 %	43.25 %	46.39 %	40.24 %	45.52 %	39.40 %	39.86 %	38.46 %	33.63 %	39.88 %

Despite decreases in the tonnages of total household waste collected in the last few months, the cumulative figure (39.88%) remains at a similar level as the same point in the previous reporting year (39.83%). The pattern follows the trend of performance of the last few years and which indicates some seasonal trends especially during winter months when recycling levels decline, primarily due to lower levels of garden waste. The service remains committed to improving this figure, mindful of package reduction, e.g. thinner glass packaging and thinner aluminium cans which reduce the weight in the kerbside bin.

- 3.1 A number of additional recycling initiatives will be implemented in the forthcoming year to influence continuous improvement via a twofold approach:

Broad recycling messages

These have been re-enforced and communicated to all residents with Council Tax information, poster boards in waste collection vehicles, regular Social Media messaging, eNewsletters, etc.

Targeted recycling messages

These are on specific items of recycling which will have the biggest impact on overall rates. By targeting through a range of location, channel and message, the same level of resource which would be allocated to a broad campaign can have a focussed impact on behaviour change. Some very successful targeted campaigns completed include the WEEE Amnesty and provision of blue bags for additional recycling side waste collections over Christmas and the New Year.

The 'Ooops' bin tags campaign was launched on 10th December 2018. The bright orange bin tags were designed as an eye catching, easy to understand visual aid to help residents understand about contamination and alert them if their recycling bins were not emptied. The introduction of the bin tag campaign was preceded by a comprehensive Communications campaign across a variety of information channels. The bin tags have been very well received by residents to date and early indications are that there has been no rise in service requests or complaints. The 'recycling in flats' pilot scheme is currently ongoing and the Managing Agents and residents we are working with are keen to work in partnership with Thurrock Council to improve their recycling arrangements, tackle bin shed fly tipping and engage with residents. The launch of the pilot is expected to take place in the last quarter of this year.

Further targeted work will focus on specific campaigns around plastics and metal recycling. We will be aiming to educate where there is current confusion about recycling which leads to contamination.

The introduction of the Bartec Waste management system across the domestic waste collections service will allow collection of key service data, including recycling participation levels and contamination information. This means we will be able to particularly target our efforts in areas of the borough where recycling rates are low and contamination rates are high. Bartec is already being used very successfully by the two crews to manage all the commercial waste collections for both refuse and recycling collections. A separate update Bartec report will also be considered at this meeting.

The Service has invested in a one year fixed term contract for a Waste Services Education Officer to carry out the following activities:

- Support for the programme of encouraging recycling in multi-occupancy buildings
- Engagement with housing and managing agents
- Review of bin stores to assess adjustments needed to support recycling (e.g. different bins, better lighting and signage)
- Developing educational material and ensuring distribution within communal/high rise buildings
- Engaging with residents to understand and address potential blockers
- Feasibility study into the options regarding recycling of fabrics
- Introduction of other tailored schemes that are more likely to have the greater impact on Thurrock residents.
- Support for the bin tag recycling contamination programme and other activities included in the 'Recycle it' Plan.

- Social media campaigns to highlight contamination and impact on the environment

The draft 'Recycle it' Plan for the forthcoming year is attached as Appendix 1 and gives a more detailed update of the recycling schemes that have been introduced, are ongoing and future projects.

4. Summary

- 4.1 Thurrock Council and its residents continue to be committed to weekly recycling collections which provides a greater challenge in considering opportunities that many authorities have taken to fundamentally reduce the amount of residual waste being presented, resulting in increased recycling rates.

A number of broad and targeted initiatives have been introduced and a range of new initiatives will be implemented to continue efforts to improve Thurrock's recycling rates.

Improving recycling rates will be an ongoing challenge for the authority, particularly in light of the new Resources and Waste Strategy. Emphasis is on quality of recycling and producer responsibility, this has been seen in the reduction of packaging and thickness of glass products previously. Focus will be to continue to reduce packaging waste, removing non recyclable products from the market, e.g. the potential introduction of a plastic bottle deposit scheme which has the potential to reduce the level of recycling in the kerbside bin.

Improving recycling rates relies heavily on really good communication, education and most importantly the willingness and participation of our residents to reduce contamination and increase recycling.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 This report is an overview of recycling in Thurrock, including the current position and planned actions. No consultation was required or undertaken.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The implications of the recommendations in this report may require a review of local policies and procedures.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Management Accountant (Environment and Highways)

The Service has invested in a one year fixed term contract for a Waste Services Education Officer to carry out the various activities to try to improve recycling rates.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
**Assistant Director of Law & Governance
& Monitoring Officer**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**
Community Development Officer

There are no specific implications for equality and diversity arising from the report.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

There are no other implications arising from this report.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report

The Resources and waste strategy for England, December 2018.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/resources-and-waste-strategy-for-england>

9. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1 - 'Recycle It' Plan

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