

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board
Improving recycling through effective communication and education

Desired Outcome: That the council's website is used to promote the importance of reducing waste and provides clear and accessible information regarding the options available for recycling in Leeds and advice on how to reduce waste.

Recommendation 1 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that the Council's web based information relating to the refuse collection service reflects effective design principles and is accurate, easily accessible and provides comprehensive guidance on how to reduce, re-use and recycle waste in Leeds.

Formal Response:

This recommendation is agreed and fully supported by the Waste Team who following the launch of the new council web site in July 2012 have subsequently worked with the web team, communications and customer services to develop a customer friendly structure and content where re-use and recycling remains one of the key messages throughout the content of the section.

Current, key features of the waste web-pages are:

- 'Check your bin' application re-developed to make it easier to use, and to provide up-to-date information for properties moved onto an AWC.
- When searching 'recycling' on Google and the LCC website search, the relevant pages are prominent in the results.
- Key information that customers require is within one click of the home page (e.g. check your bin day, recycling sites, bulky item collection service).
- Functionality of the site was fully tested for accessibility during development, and the website will be shortly going through a formal accessibility audit.
- The site works on mobile browsers, but due to the increasing use of the site by residents using their mobile phones the web team is leading a project to improve the mobile experience on the site.
- Twitter and Facebook are monitored, and customer queries about recycling through these channels are responded to by customer services and web team.

As part of a review in early 2013, it was identified that the web pages would benefit from an A to Z recycling guide, similar to the guide on Calderdale's webpages (<http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/environment/waste/>), the development of which has been delayed by the limited capacity in the web development team. However, the service are now actively working with the web team to develop A to Z guide and the current plans for the A to Z are as follows:

- Title: Recycle for Leeds (with WRAP iconography)
- Description: A to Z Guide to Reducing, Re-using and Recycling
- Filters on the app to enable residents identify what to do with waste items by A to Z.
- Filters on the app to enable residents to clearly identify which items go in which recycling bin.
- The guide will use WRAP iconography
- The guide will be viewable and accessible from the "Bins, Recycling and Clean Streets" landing page.

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The style and presentation of the waste web-pages is in line with corporate branding guidelines for the Leeds City Council website and Services have been unable develop their own brands. Positively however, Waste Management will introduce the WRAP iconography in the new A to Z function.

Desired Outcome: That the Recycle for Leeds brand is widely recognised across the city.

Recommendation 2 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods actively promotes the Recycle for Leeds brand on all forms of communications linked to the refuse collection service and is also made visible on refuse collection vehicles.

Formal Response:

This recommendation is agreed and as stated in the response to Recommendation 1, the Service is working with the web team to develop an A to Z Guide to Reducing, Re-using and Recycling and this search function will carry the 'Recycle for Leeds' logo and contain WRAP iconography. Recognising the need for the 'Recycle for Leeds' logo to be on the web pages, we have added a photograph of the 'Recycle of Leeds' logo to the 'Find your nearest recycling site' application. This application is found on a number of waste and recycling web-pages.

The 'Recycle for Leeds' logo continues to be included on all information leaflets and letters about the Service, including the new permit scheme and communications about the new bin service.

In addition, the Service is currently organising new uniform and identification badges for the site staff on the Household Waste Recycling Sites. This uniform will also carry the 'Recycle for Leeds' logo.

Moving forward, the service is going to review its current branding and marketing strategy, including the liveries on the refuse collection vehicles. The new strategy will deliver the key messages the service wants to provide to residents, and give a robust and recognisable brand for the waste management service as a whole.

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Desired Outcome: That reasons associated with a contaminated bin are indicated clearly on the bin for the resident to correct and not repeat in future.

Recommendation 3 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on developing an approach enabling crews to indicate to a resident the outline reasons why their bin is contaminated and what actions they need to take.

Formal Response:

This recommendation is agreed and work to implement this approach was developed during phase 1 of the roll-out of Alternate Weekly Collections (AWC).

A business process was developed to implement the new no side waste policies and to deal with heavy and contaminated bins in AWC phase 1. This process enabled crew to notify residents by leaving a sticker or tag on the bin and a relevant letter. In addition the crews are directed to annotate the route sheet. This information is then updated at the depot and where necessary a Waste Advisor visit is scheduled. The actual education is delivered by the Waste Advisors but the initial notification to residents is done by the collection crew. The effectiveness of this approach is being appraised as part of the Phase 1 AWC evaluation in August 2013, which will involve a Scrutiny working group.

Desired Outcome: That the residents within ALMO properties are made fully aware of the council's refuse collection services at the start of their tenancy.

Recommendation 4 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on working with the Chief Executives of the Leeds ALMOs to ensure that existing tenancy management systems are used to provide clarification to new tenants about the recycling options available to them, how these are to be used and details of collection dates.

Formal Response:

This recommendation is agreed and work is already underway to improve communications with new tenants as detailed below:

Aire Valley Homes currently have a working group looking at the information provided at tenancy sign up. This group will consider how best to provide new tenants with information about recycling options available to them, how these are to be used and details of collection dates. Communal recycling points have recently been placed by housing management at Crescent Grange, Crescent Towers, Cottingley Heights, Towers and Meynel Heights. These properties previously had no access to recycling and the new facilities are proving to be a great success.

East North East Homes currently advise all new tenants on sign up about the locations of recycling facilities in their area. Housing Support Officers then provide further information on recycling collections at the post tenancy commencement visit

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which takes place within the first fourteen days of a new tenancy starting. Regular articles on recycling are included in the tenant magazine.

West North West Homes have pushed forward on a 'keep it clean' campaign which encourages people to leave the property clean and empty when they go.

Overall, with evolution of the New Environment and Housing Directorate, there will be further opportunities to ensure best practice and learning is used across the city.

Desired Outcome: That all contractors undertaking repair works within ALMO properties are fully aware of the council's refuse collection services and their responsibilities associated with the disposal of waste.

Recommendation 5 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on working with the Chief Executives of the Leeds ALMOs to ensure that contractors undertaking repair works within ALMO properties are fully aware of the council's refuse collection services and their responsibilities associated with the disposal of waste.

Formal Response:

This recommendation is agreed.

Under current arrangements, contractors are responsible for removing trade waste. The contracts contain recycling policies to reduce landfill and there are KPIs within the contracts to monitor performance. Under the Morrison contract, there is a requirement for 2013-14, to recycle 97.3% of waste. In April 2013, Morrison reported a recycle rate of 98.29%.

Aire Valley Homes (AVHL):

Since April 2012 the Caretaking service has been managing and clearing out void properties. As part of the Bulky Waste Project, working in partnership with Leeds Community Sector Groups, re-usable furniture has been collected and made available to disadvantaged groups. This has been a huge success. Furniture containers have also been sited at waste disposal points which are used by the estate teams.

Community Sector groups are then invited to collect the re-usable items. To date there has been an estimated 3 tonnes diverted from landfill.

Current waste contractors Skelton Waste take all the waste streams and consistently recycle up to 80%. Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) is also sent for reprocessing.

East North East (ENE):

Contractor Waste: ENE has reminded contractors that they are not to use domestic bins for trade waste. Supervisors monitor waste disposal post repair and check for inappropriate use of bins. Construction Services has recycling skips at the Depot where waste is sorted and recycled. ENE also use Skelton Waste who sort general waste delivered to them and recycle as appropriate.

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West North West (WNW):

WNW homes, as part of the Bulky Waste Project and in co-operation with Morrisons, Emmaus and St Vincent de Paul (SVP), had a 3 month trial from January 2013 whereby the re-use organisation provides a van and staff to clear void properties. This replaces the Morrisons resource in a specific area and allows the re-use staff to be able to target re-use items in a broader way. The re-use organisations essentially being a sub-contractor to Morrisons, required to remove all items from the voids, not just the re-usable items. Reusable items are taken back to the Morrisons site and shared between the two re-use partners. Scrap metal is retained by Morrisons for recycling. If the trial is proven to be a success, the organisations would need extra capacity to expand.

Belle Isle Tenant and Management Organisation (BITMO):

The BITMO has smaller numbers of void turnarounds than the ALMOs, with only ~2000 properties in total. They currently use a contract with Skelton Waste, and are keen to talk to partners from re-use organisations and also have their estate caretakers trained in a similar way to the Morrisons/Emmaus partnership.

Desired Outcome: That Elected Members are fully aware of whom to contact to report service failures relating to the refuse collection service so that appropriate immediate action can be taken.

Recommendation 6 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that clarification is provided to all Elected Members regarding appropriate contacts to report service failures relating to the refuse collection service, including missed bin collections, so that appropriate immediate action can be taken.

Formal Response:

The recommendation is agreed.

In order to improve the management and co-ordination of Member queries, on 25th March the Members Group Office support teams were requested to forward all future enquiries to MembersRefuseQueries@leeds.gov.uk to ensure these could be managed in a timely manner and appropriately detailed responses be provided.

Two additional officers have also been seconded into the team to provide this support for the Executive Members, Councillors and MPs. Responses are being co-ordinated via this route to streamline the existing process and to avoid duplication.

Changes to the Waste Management staffing structure changes were agreed Q4 2012/13 and recruitment into 3 new case work posts will be finalised in July during Q1 2013/14. This will have a significant impact on the overall handling of queries and complaints on a day to day basis.

Out of normal office hours remains more problematic and the service are considering options to this once the new case work team are in place.

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Desired Outcome: That both staff and residents understand the expectations placed upon them in addressing missed bin collections.

Recommendation 7 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods clearly categorises certain circumstances/scenarios that may impact on the ability of the refuse collection service to complete collection rounds as scheduled and the associated actions to be taken by the service and residents i.e. service expectations under normal circumstances and during minor and severe disruptions.

Once established, this needs to be effectively communicated to all relevant staff and the public via the council's website and contact centre.

Formal Response:

The recommendation is agreed.

Since January 2013, customer announcements are frequently put on the waste and recycling webpages about Service issues, for example, severe weather and issues completing garden waste collection roads. These announcements are highlighted and are in a prominent position on the relevant waste and recycling webpages.

These announcements are triggered either by the call centre receiving a high level of customer enquires or by the Service following service disruption. The Service is working with the web-team to develop a procedure for the announcement to be promptly uploaded on to the web site whilst ensuring its content is appropriate for the audience.

Any page content or announcement can be immediately published and removed from the Council's website meaning messages about minor service disruption can be communicated in the short term and removed once normal collections resume.

The service are working to document a clear and concise Business Continuity Plan that will underpin the actions above and ensure consistency of approach and message for a broad spectrum of disruptions to service delivery.

The Service has procured new in-cab technology for the refuse and recycling collection vehicles meaning that there will be potentially improved communications from the front line service and the web-site. When this is rolled out across the fleet this will mean that potentially messages about service disruption will be announced in real time.

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Desired Outcome: That where appropriate, social media and SMS communication tools are used to facilitate interactive information sharing with residents relating to the refuse collection service.

Recommendation 8 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods analyses the potential service benefits of utilising social media, such as Twitter, and SMS texting as communications tools to deliver service reminders and notifications of service disruptions directly to residents.

Formal Response:

This recommendation is agreed and the work to develop and implement this is already underway as part of AWC phase 1.

Following the appointment of the Waste Advisors, accounts have been set up on Facebook and Twitter to promote the new recycling service and to provide information to residents.

The effectiveness of this approach is being appraised as part of the Phase 1 AWC evaluation in August 2013, which will involve a Scrutiny working group.

Further work is being undertaken in the planning of phase 2 AWC regarding the channel shift towards new communication methods alternative to direct mail.

Desired Outcome: That escalated and complex problems linked to particular residents in relation to the refuse collection service are addressed efficiently by the service.

Recommendation 9 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods pursues that an operational supervisor from the refuse collection service is located at the contact centre to work with Customer Service Officers in immediately addressing escalated and complex issues linked to specific residents.

Formal Response:

This recommendation is agreed, although has been addressed slightly differently.

With the ongoing development of the services operational Logistics system and improved two way information flows between the Waste Management Service and the contact centre, a joint contact centre post – currently filled by a member of staff from the contact centre and based at Knowsthorpe Way Depot, was established on a secondment basis with effect from 3rd June.

This position will further develop the internal systems and information management, analysis and reporting between the contact centre and the service.

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Desired Outcome: That a social contract is put in place to outline the responsibilities placed upon the Council and residents in achieving an efficient and cost effective refuse collection service in Leeds.

Recommendation 10 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods pursues the introduction of a social contract setting out the key responsibilities of the Council and residents in delivering an efficient and cost effective refuse collection service. This should be a clear document that staff and residents can refer to easily and absorb quickly.

Formal Response:

This recommendation is agreed.

The Service is developing a suite of operational waste collection policies which clearly define the kerbside collection services. This will set out commitments to ensure that services are safe, efficient, consistent and reliable and that the needs of residents are met. Evaluation of the proposed policies is underway as part of the delivery phase of 1 alternate week collections where they are being implemented.

Following completion of the evaluation, a report will be submitted to Executive Board later this year recommending their adoption. As part of this process it is also intended that the Council should formally sign up to the national 'Waste Collection Commitment'. This is a 'contract' between the Service and Residents and will support further the delivery of efficient services. The content of the web pages will reflect the new policies and provide guidance in simple format for residents.

Desired Outcome: That the customer data utilised by the refuse collection service is periodically cleansed and effectively managed by the service.

Recommendation 11 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Business Intelligence Unit to ensure that customer data utilised by the refuse collection service continues to be cleansed periodically and managed effectively by the service.

Formal Response:

This recommendation is agreed.

The Development Team, within the Waste Service, use a system called Route Manager which was commissioned in 2012 to administer property, collection container and collection route data. Data transferred from an unsupported former system was not robust and caused some quality issues which have now been resolved.

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The new system is supported internally. Future data quality will be assured via production of monthly exception reports and amendment of data as required. Access to a reporting tool for operational staff and administration officers has also been made possible so they can access standard reports for example route changes or new assisted collections, which all aim to reduce all missed collections. Improvements have already been made to the data transfer systems to enable live information exchange. The 'Check my bin day' search facility on the council's website and the internal Siebel system now instantly reflect any changes made. Route Manager will be superseded in 2014 by an integrated ICT solution. One of the essential requirements of this new system is data management and reporting. Every team using route or bin detail data will be involved during the detailed development. Continued input to the IWMS project and future system requirements will ensure that data continues to be as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

Desired Outcome: That cost effective measures are adopted in effectively reminding residents of operational changes planned during the Christmas period.

Recommendation 12 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that residents continue to receive separate reminders about operational changes to refuse collections linked to the Christmas period and in doing so, explores the use of alternative communication channels to the traditional approach of using printed materials.

Formal Response:

This recommendation is agreed.

In addition to the traditional mail-out of the Christmas collection arrangements, the Service already publicises the revised collection days on the web-site, social media, council newspaper and through issuing press statements.

Moving forward, the Council is exploring ways to prompt service users to go to the web-site for information about service changes and disruption. This could be by written communications providing joint messages (e.g. introduction of AWC and Christmas arrangements) or via a bin sticker or tag.

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Desired Outcome: That Ward Members are regularly consulted on the developments of any planned operational changes to refuse collection services that affect their areas.

Recommendation 13 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that relevant Ward Members are identified as key stakeholders as part of any planned operational change to the refuse collection service.

Formal Response:

This recommendation is agreed.

The New Recycling Service (AWC) Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plan has continuously identified relevant ward councillors as key stakeholders and the importance of regular and timely communications and active engagement.

Member briefings with political groups took place very early on in the planning stage for AWC Phase 1. This included early information about current collections performance, approved plans and service priorities, the Phase 1 area/ boundary, rationale for its inclusion, key messages and benefits about the New Recycling Service, timing, key project activities and on-going engagement and communications with relevant ward members.

Member Briefing Notes accompanied these initial consultations, including Frequently Asked Questions.

Individual meetings took place throughout the AWC planning phase with relevant members on a ward by ward basis. These provided on going updates about progress and issues, and importantly provided a key opportunity for members to comment on the emerging plans and feedback with any issues and comments (for example, locations to focus AWC communications activities such as Waste Recycling Advisor road shows and face to face (door step) engagement with residents. This included both the pre and post GO LIVE communications campaign.

At the same time, member highlight reports were also produced from a very early stage in the planning phase. These were circulated every two weeks and provided project updates about progress, issues and also performance information (for example, volume of resident contact via Customer Services, in response to service introductory letters, green recycling bin requests).

A series of member briefings were also held in the weeks leading in to the Phase 1 GO LIVE; providing information to ward members about the final resident communications, collections calendars, household information packs inc. FAQs, introductory leaflet. These briefings took place before resident communications were distributed.

Project and operational staff also attended Area Committee and Environmental Sub Committee meetings when requested by ward members and locality staff.

The successful approach adopted in relation to AWC Phase 1 will be continued as part of successive phases including Phase 2 which is currently being planned.