

## Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Inquiry into Recycling

### Summary report of the working group meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A working group of the Board met on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009 to consider evidence in line with session one of the Board's Inquiry into Recycling.
- 1.2 The purpose of this meeting was to consider the following issues:
- Identifying specific areas across the city which do not have access to appropriate and convenient recycling facilities;
  - The challenges presented by different property types, particularly flats, back to back properties, terrace housing and any other property types that have limited access to recycling facilities.
- 1.3 The following Members and officers attended the working group meeting to discuss the evidence submitted:
- Councillor B Anderson (Chair of the Scrutiny Board)
  - Councillor A Blackburn
  - Angela Brogden, Principal Scrutiny Adviser
  - Susan Upton, Head of Waste Management
- 1.4 A summary of the key issues raised by the working group is set out below.

#### 2.0 Main issues raised

##### The challenges presented by different property types

- 2.1 The working group acknowledged that the Council has a unique collection of properties and situations that present a challenge in the delivery of recycling services. Some examples were shared with the working group and considered individually during the meeting. These were as follows:

##### **High rise dwellings**

- 2.2 The working group was informed that Leeds has c70,000 high rise flats, ranging from many that were built 20-30 years ago to the recently constructed "executive city living" city centre developments. Blocks are either made of privately owned flats, run by managing agents or owned by Leeds City Council.
- 2.3 It was reported that the infrastructure for waste storage and collection is often unsuitable for the collection service provided, even in new-build premises. Members noted that the bin stores are usually too small for the volume of

waste and number of recycling/residual waste bins required therefore two or more collections per week may be needed. Members noted that bin stores may also be located away from vehicle access points requiring the bins to be wheeled a long way, which presents problems with manual handling of heavy bins over uneven ground/absence of dropped kerbs. It was also noted that if there is a waste chute for residual waste then there is little incentive for residents to carry their recycling downstairs to a collection point. Most city centre bin store locations also require one or more keys/codes /swipe cards to gain access which can take time to organise.

- 2.4 It was reported that the DEFRA high-rise route has adapted to many of the problems listed above and provides 26,000 properties with communal bins for recycling. These are provided for the separate collection of cardboard, mixed paper, cans, plastic bottles (SORT), and glass. The location of the communal facilities is determined by the layout of the building and requires the landlord's permission. It was highlighted that the landlord or managing agent is also required to purchase the communal bins. However, it was noted that many landlords are opposed to the installation of these communal sites due to the cost of purchasing the bins or potential loss of income-generating parking spaces. In view of this, it was suggested by the working group that discussions are held with officers within Housing and Environmental Enforcement to explore opportunities to further encourage landlords to adopt the communal bin approach. Members also questioned the role of City Development in ensuring that developers are making adequate provision for recycling within their planning proposals. Whilst acknowledging that the Head of Waste Management has recently been invited to regularly attend the Regeneration officer meetings to put forward issues around waste management, it was felt that more could still be done. It was noted that this matter would be addressed in more detail during session five of the Board's inquiry.

### **Back-to-back terraced houses**

- 2.5 The working group learned that there are 19,500 back to back terraced houses in the Leeds district which tend to be in inner city areas e.g Hyde Park, Armley, Harehills, Chapeltown, Chapel Allerton. Such properties do not have any yard area/or garden where wheeled bins for either residual or SORT collections can be stored. This leads to the presence of large numbers of residual and SORT bins in the street where residents attempt to store them as close to their property as they are able. It was noted that SORT collections may be offered through the use of the green bag scheme in these areas.
- 2.6 Although some back to back terraces have "bin yards"; small yards that are in shared ownership and used by a number of properties, it was highlighted that some may be locked by the adjacent property for their sole use leaving other residents with nowhere to store their waste. It was also noted that whilst these bin yards provide an area where wheeled bins for both residual and SORT collections can be stored, they are prone to fly-tipping, dumping of large furniture items, and arson attacks. Whilst some bin yards in the Hyde Park area (and other areas) have been landscaped by Groundwork, through the

use of mosaics, raised garden beds and decorative iron railings, these often leave minimal space for the bins and vandalism and fly-tipping continues to be a problem.

### **Student houses of multi-occupancy**

- 2.7 The working group acknowledged that the large transient population of students resident in Leeds is mainly concentrated into the areas of Headingley, Hyde Park and Woodhouse. It was noted that former family homes have been divided into flats, bedsits and shared houses where several independent residents occupy the same building. This has led to entrances to flats being at both the front and back of properties, leading to waste storage and collections being required from both sides of a property and wheeled bins being stored in front gardens and rear alleys. The working group learned that whilst shared houses are provided with a residual waste and SORT wheeled bin, houses divided into flats and bedsits have multiple wheeled bins for both residual waste and SORT as they are provided for each flat. These tend to be stored in the garden or on the street in lines. It was reported that there are high levels of contamination of the SORT recyclables collected in this area, which requires the waste to be treated separately at the receiving materials reclamation facility at additional cost to the Council. The working group noted that the development of communal recycling areas is being investigated in the area but due to the narrow roads with high demand for car parking, there are limited opportunities for new bring sites.
- 2.8 The working group questioned whether more needed to be done in terms of targeting students and raising their awareness of the recycling facilities currently available within Leeds to help reduce levels of contamination of the SORT recyclables collected. It was noted that the Council is already looking at developing a closer working relationship with the Student Union to help determine a more timely and targeted education campaign, particularly for those students who reside within the private rented sector. The working group suggested that both the Student Union and Unipol be invited to contribute to the Board's inquiry to discuss how students and landlords could be engaged further to improve recycling.

### **High density housing developments**

- 2.9 The working group noted that there are a number of housing developments built in the 1980s-90s e.g. Holt Park Cottingley, Little London, Beckhills) where there is a high density of dwellings comprising of houses, two-storey flats and maisonettes built in cul-de-sacs. These properties may have yards or lockable outside storage for waste, but due to the layout of the estate, it was highlighted that access to these storage areas involves several flights of steps prohibiting the use of wheeled bins. As the design of the estates includes open communal green spaces and limited vehicular access, parking and garages, this makes it difficult for collection crews to access properties. It was acknowledged that there are limited opportunities for introducing new communal recycling areas due to a lack of space.

- 2.10 In view of the problems facing high density housing developments, the working group emphasised the value of the green bag collection service for such areas.

### **Hard to reach properties**

- 2.11 It was reported that there are 50,000 properties that are classed as being hard to access as a wheeled bin service cannot be provided. This will include hilly areas where slopes prevent the use of wheeled bins, and also where there is poor access. It was highlighted that some of these properties are already provided with the green bag collection system for recyclables. This includes some back-to-backs, high density housing etc. as described above.

### **Farms**

- 2.12 It was noted that residences on farms tend to have difficult access down long narrow, unmade lanes. The waste collection, whether on bags or wheeled bins, is made at the end of the lane, on the main road. These properties can be provided with either the green bag system or a SORT bin.

### Areas currently not offered a SORT/green bag collection

- 2.13 The working group acknowledged that some areas of the city are currently not offered a SORT/green bag recycling collection service. Members received 5 maps covering each wedge of the city which illustrated these particular areas. Copies of these maps are attached to this note.
- 2.14 The Head of Waste Management highlighted that the future intention is to consult with Ward Councillors to find out whether their local intelligence around particular areas could help to address the gaps in service identified across the city. It was also highlighted that following this process, a number of options would be presented to local residents for them to reach a consensus as to which recycling service would best meet their needs. This approach was welcomed by the working group.