

**Draft Scrutiny Inquiry report  
Recycling  
September 2010**

DRAFT



# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Introduction

1. It is clear that more people are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental threat posed by the vast quantities of waste that is produced each year.
2. Whilst recycling has become a part of every day life for many people, it is recognised both locally and nationally that further action is still required to divert waste away from landfill. One of the key aims set out within the Leeds Integrated Waste Strategy 2005-2035 is to achieve a combined recycling and composting rate of greater than 50% by 2020.
3. Recycling continues to be an area of interest for Scrutiny. The former City Services Scrutiny Board conducted an in-depth inquiry into Recycling back in 2004/2005 and more recently the Young People's Scrutiny Forum conducted an inquiry which was focused around 'Protecting our Environment'.
4. Scrutiny has also continued to monitor the Council's progress in implementing the Leeds Integrated Waste Strategy 2005-2035, which sets out its aims to reduce the impact of waste management on the environment and significantly reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.
5. However, in June 2009 the Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board received a referral from the Executive Board Member for Environmental Services to conduct a further inquiry into Recycling with a focus on improving the long term recycling infrastructure for Leeds.
6. Whilst acknowledging that over 90% of residents have access to kerbside recycling, it was highlighted that there is still significant scope for improving the recycling infrastructure and making recycling facilities more accessible to everyone.
7. Based around the principle that 'one size does not fit all', the main focus of this particular Scrutiny inquiry was to explore the different options available for collecting recyclables, taking into account the diverse range of communities and housing types that exist in Leeds. Attention was also given to producing high quality material streams to encourage the long term development and sustainability of secondary material industries.

## Scope of the Inquiry

8. The purpose of this inquiry was to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:
  - Details of the current range of recycling facilities/methods available across the city (including kerbside collection, drop-off sites and Waste Sorting Sites) and the advantages and limitations of each;
  - 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;



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- Examples of other recycling facilities/methods used outside of Leeds and the potential cost implications for adopting these across the city;
  - Regional and national approaches towards recyclable collection methods, with specific reference to the role of DEFRA and WRAP (The Waste & Resources Action Programme)
  - The relationship between Environment and Neighbourhoods and City Development to ensure that future recycling service proposals are reflected in planning policy and guidance;
  - The role of the Council in ensuring that developers are making adequate provision for recycling within their planning proposals.
9. We welcomed the contribution of a wide range of witnesses during our inquiry. These included a number of external organisations (the Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP), the Waste Regional Advisory Group (WRAG), CO2Sense and Leeds Friends of the Earth) whose commitment towards this particular area of work was clearly demonstrated during our inquiry.
10. In particular, we acknowledged the contribution of WRAP in sharing its knowledge and expertise. WRAP is supported by funding from DEFRA, the Department of Trade and Industry and the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its role in relation to the design of recycling systems is to help practitioners by gathering and sharing knowledge and understanding about the relevant operational principles.
11. At the time of our inquiry, we acknowledged that a Recycling Improvement Plan was in the process of being developed by Environmental Services to provide an approach to expanding the provision of recycling collections to deliver equality of access to recycling for all residents. This Plan is to be incorporated into the governance of the Waste Solution Programme.
12. Based on a set of guiding principles, this Plan aims to:
- Give all residents access to kerbside recycling,
  - Improve the flexibility of the current service and provide a recycling solution of which kerbside SORT wheeled bin is just one possible approach,
  - Maximise performance, delivering best value solutions within available funding, and
  - Ensure compliance with the Household Waste Recycling Act.
13. In welcoming the Recycling Improvement Plan, we hope that the findings and recommendations arising from our own inquiry will complement and help inform the proposed plan of improvements set out within the Plan to help achieve its objectives.
14. During our inquiry, we also acknowledged that the Leeds Integrated Waste Strategy Action Plan was in the process of being updated. We therefore considered and provided comment on the draft Action Plan at our meeting in March 2010.



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## Delivering equality of access to recycling for all residents

15. The Household Waste Recycling Act 2003 states that “where English Waste Collection Authorities have a general duty to collect household waste from premises they shall ensure, except in some circumstances, that by the end of 2010 they collect at least two types of recyclable wastes separate from the remainder of the waste”. These categories being: paper/card, glass, metal, plastics and composting. The exceptions to collect from premises include: where cost of provision is excessive and where alternative comparable services are to be provided.
16. To comply with the Act, Environmental Services currently provides kerbside garden waste collections and a single stream co-mingled kerbside collection of four dry recyclable materials – paper, cardboard, some plastics and cans (the SORT scheme). A single stream co-mingled system involves the collection of materials in a single compartment vehicle with the sorting of these materials occurring at a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF).
17. By the end of 2008/09, we noted that 93.4% of the households in Leeds had access to the SORT scheme, leaving a service gap of around 22,000 properties.
18. It was highlighted that most properties that have access to the SORT scheme have their dry recyclables collected every four weeks using wheeled bins (collections are made fortnightly in some pilot areas).
19. However, the Council also offers a door step green bag dry recycling scheme in areas where wheeled bins cannot be accommodated either due to a lack of bin storage space or restricted vehicle access (this is delivered to approximately 6,300 properties). This scheme also mirrors the monthly frequency of the wheeled bin service.
20. A fortnightly wheeled bin collection of garden waste has also now been introduced in approximately 182,000 properties, equating to 55% of the City, although collections are four weekly between December and February. It is estimated that there are 33,000 more properties that would be suitable for a kerbside garden waste collection service, which could add an estimated 1.9% to the domestic recycling and composting target in a full year. However, it was acknowledged that the cost of extending garden waste roll out would require additional funding to be allocated.
21. In areas where there is no kerbside SORT recycling route, other initiatives have been used by Environmental Services. These include a weekly high rise collection scheme and also communal collections which uses the Defra collection round to service Community Recycling Sites (this provides a recycling service to approximately 26,000 properties at 273 sites).
22. In addition, there are also a number of Household Waste Sorting Sites and Bring Sites located across the City which offer an additional range of recycling facilities.



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23. However, despite already having in place such a wide range of recycling facilities, we acknowledge that there are still gaps in current service provision and varying success rates in terms of the quantity and quality of recyclable materials collected.

24. As part of our inquiry, we set out to explore where improvements can be made in terms of access to the collection of recyclable waste and also addressing areas where the current recycling service is not delivering the required performance/ benefit. In doing so, this required an understanding of the areas involved and the challenges presented in terms of housing type and resident engagement. To ensure the best uptake in recycling, it was clear that one uniform approach cannot be applied city wide.

25. WRAP also reinforces the view that there is no simple answer, and certainly no one-size-fits-all solution. Local authorities have to make choices that are right for their local circumstances. In doing so, it was noted that provision for recycling needs to be considered alongside requirements for refuse, garden and increasingly food waste and taking into account of factors such as the physical characteristics of collection areas and property types.

## Addressing the challenges presented by different property types

26. Leeds has a unique collection of properties and situations that present a

challenge in the delivery of recycling services. By focusing on each of the different property types, we discussed possible opportunities to help overcome such challenges. In summary, our findings were as follows:

### High rise dwellings

27. 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 privately owned flats, run by managing agents or owned by Leeds City Council.

28. It was reported that the infrastructure for waste storage and collection is often unsuitable for the collection service provided, even in new-build premises. We 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.

29. We learned 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.

30. 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





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for recycling. These are provided for the collection of mixed recyclables similar to the kerbside SORT collections (including cardboard, mixed paper, cans, plastic bottles) and in a separate container, mixed glass. The location of the communal facilities is determined by the layout of the building and requires the landlord's permission.

31. It was highlighted that the landlord or managing agent is also required to purchase the communal bins. However, we learned 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.
32. In acknowledging that efforts continue to be made by the Council in working with such landlords to find an appropriate solution for the provision of recycling, we learned that similar challenges continue to arise in newly constructed "executive city living" city centre developments. We therefore recognised the need to explore how the Council can encourage future developers to make adequate provision for recycling within their planning proposals. This issue is considered in more detail in paragraphs 76 to 87 within our report.

## Hard-to-access properties, including back-to-back terraced houses and high-density housing developments

33. It was reported that there are 50,000 properties across the city that are classed as being 'hard to access' in terms of providing a wheeled bin SORT collection service. This includes hilly areas where slopes prevent the use of wheeled bins and particular property types such as back-to-back terraced

houses and high density housing developments.

34. We learned that there are 19,500 back-to-back terraced houses in the Leeds district which tend to be in inner city areas, for example, 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.
35. 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.
36. We also 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



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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 also highlighted that there are limited opportunities for introducing new communal recycling areas due to a lack of space.

37. In view of the access problems facing these particular property types, we discussed the potential benefits of the green bag SORT collection scheme and communal collection scheme in addressing these problems. We noted that such schemes have already been adopted in some areas which do include these property types. Whilst acknowledging that these may not always fit the needs of other areas with similar property types, we would advise that these are considered in the first instance as potential solutions.

**Recommendation 1**  
**In recognising the benefits of the green bag SORT collection scheme and communal collection scheme in addressing the challenges presented by hard-to-access properties, we recommend that these schemes are given priority consideration for those areas across the city with similar property types that do not have access to a kerbside SORT collection service.**

## Student houses of multiple-occupancy

38. We acknowledged that the large transient population of students resident in Leeds is mainly concentrated into the areas of Headingley, Hyde Park and Woodhouse.
39. We also 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.
40. We 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 also reported that there are high levels of contamination of the SORT recyclables collected in this area. We learned 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.
41. We therefore 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. In view of this, we invited representatives from the local Student Unions and Unipol to contribute to our



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inquiry to discuss how students and landlords could be engaged further to improve recycling. This is addressed in more detail in paragraphs 92 and 94 of our report.

42. In discussing the challenges presented by different property types, particular emphasis was again placed upon the principle of finding a solution that best meets the needs of a particular area and to engage local communities in finding this solution.

## Engaging local communities in identifying recycling solutions

43. WRAP highlighted that engaging the public in their local recycling scheme has been shown to be essential to the success of a scheme. Whichever scheme is chosen, it is important that it is designed to fit the needs of the local population and the houses they live in. The type and sizes of containers can be central to this.
44. During our inquiry, 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.
45. In welcoming this approach, we would recommend that Area Committees are

regularly kept informed of progress with such consultations in relation to their particular areas.

### **Recommendation 2**

**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that, where consultations are being conducted with Ward Members and local residents around appropriate recycling service options, that the relevant Area Committees are regularly kept informed of progress.**

## Maximising the use of existing Household Waste Sorting Sites and Bring Sites

46. Leeds currently has the largest local authority network of what is termed 'Bring Sites' in the UK with over 440 sites. Small sites may for example have one bank for mixed glass with larger supermarket based sites having facilities for numerous recycling materials.
47. Bring Sites contributed 2.7% points to the overall recycling rate in 2008/09. Significantly we acknowledged that these sites provide a network for the collection of glass which is not currently accepted through the Council's existing kerbside recycling scheme.
48. Whilst there are no current proposals to make separate collections of glass from the kerbside, we learned that Environmental Services are undertaking an options appraisal around the collection and recycling of glass across





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the city, with particular attention given to those areas where the proportion of glass is greater than the average. In welcoming this, we would like the findings of this options appraisal to be reported back to Scrutiny for consideration as soon as possible.

**Recommendation 3**  
**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that the findings of the options appraisal around the collection and recycling of glass across the city is reported back to Scrutiny for consideration as soon as possible.**

49. Information obtained from the Leeds 2008 Compositional Analysis Survey, indicates that the average proportion of glass in the residual waste from residents is as high as 7%. The existing bring banks captured over 8000 tonnes of glass in 2008/09 but there is obviously a significant proportion still being placed in black residual bins by residents.

50. We acknowledge that bring sites are often situated on private land and therefore finding new sites can be challenging, involving lengthy discussions and agreement with the landowner, liaison with local residents and Area Management Teams and Ward Councillors.

51. We learned that work to expand the network further is being developed through the Recycling Improvement Plan. As part of this work, we would recommend that particular attention is given to those areas where the proportion of glass is greater than the

average, thereby having the potential to overwhelm a bring infrastructure (this was a particular issue raised by the Student Unions during our inquiry).

52. Where there is the potential to situate bring sites within residential areas, we also recognise the need for Environmental Services to ensure that potential noise nuisance resulting from glass recycling containers is minimised as much as possible.

**Recommendation 4**  
**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that, as part of the Recycling Improvement Plan, future plans to expand the bring site network further in Leeds take into account the following factors:**

- **those areas where the proportion of glass is greater than the average, thereby having the potential to overwhelm a bring infrastructure;**
- **that potential noise nuisance resulting from glass recycling containers is minimised as much as possible where sites are proposed within residential areas.**

53. During our inquiry, particular attention was also given the Household Waste Sorting Sites in Leeds.

54. We learned that Leeds City Council currently operates with ten Household Waste Sort Sites (HWSS) and one smaller “zero waste” site for the receipt of a limited number of recyclable items.



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55. Located on sites with long standing waste disposal use, seven sites have been significantly redeveloped. We noted that the East Leeds HWSS is to be developed during 2010, and the Gamblethorpe HWSS is programmed to close upon the expiry of a temporary planning extension.
56. The HWSS infrastructure provides a significant contribution, (13.8% points) to the overall recycling rate of the city, (30.4%, 2008/09). However, whilst acknowledging that the current sites provide a broad spatial infrastructure and the accessibility for Leeds residents to recycle, it was acknowledged that generally they are neither working to capacity or consistently maximising recycling performance and diversion of waste from landfill.
57. In view of this, we learned that Environmental Services were planning to conduct a separate strategic review of the city's Household Waste Sorting Sites and Bring Sites.
58. We noted that Leeds' cost per tonne for HWSS operations (£46 per tonne) compare favourably with other local authorities operating similar sites operated both by in-house and outsourced arrangements. Well utilised sites, for example Meanwood Road, Holmewell Road and Pudsey, have the lowest costs per tonne, on average £29 per tonne. Sites such as Thorp Arch which has an excellent recycling rate, but not the level of throughput which urban sites have, in comparison costs £54 per tonne. This again demonstrates the need to ensure site capacity is maximised.
59. We noted that East Leeds HWSS is currently programmed for redevelopment. Demolition of the former transfer station, which jointly occupied the site, has already been completed. It was highlighted that a planning application has been submitted and, subject to consent, it is expected that the site will close late October 2010 and reopen at the latest August 2011.
60. It was also highlighted that Gamblethorpe HWSS has been the subject of three temporary extensions on the basis of special circumstances and is currently programmed to close on the expiry of the current temporary planning extension.
61. The initial findings of the strategic review conducted by Environmental Services was reported to the Executive Board in June 2010, with a number of proposals put forward and agreed by the Executive Board. In particular, we noted the following actions to be taken:
- That Calverley Bridge zero waste site is to be closed permanently. In doing so, efforts will be made through the Recycling Improvement Plan to ensure that residents have access to kerbside recycling prior to its closure.
  - That closure of Gamblethorpe is delayed until the East Leeds site has been fully refurbished, in order to ensure that the residents in the East and South East of the city are not disadvantaged. The redeveloped East Leeds site has significant space capacity and lies within a twenty minute drive time of the majority of people who currently use Gamblethorpe.



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- In order to provide further alternatives for residents in the South East of the city, the Council will work in the intervening period to secure free access to sites in neighbouring North Yorkshire and Wakefield.

62. In comparison to other local authorities Leeds currently has a large number of HWSS. It was therefore considered that, even following the closure of Calverley Bridge and Gamblethorpe, the nine remaining sites would give provision, currently, for 84K customers per site. It was also reported that by taking account of population growth up to 2026, these existing sites would give provision for 104,000 customers per site.

63. However, it was acknowledged that in order to continue to maximise performance and deliver a consistently high performance across all sites, the operational practices of these sites still need to be reviewed further. This was endorsed by the Executive Board and in welcoming this review, we would also like the findings to be reported back to Scrutiny for consideration.

**Recommendation 5**  
**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that the findings arising from the future planned review into the operational practices of Household Waste Sorting Sites and Bring Sites be reported back to Scrutiny for consideration.**

## Opportunities for extending the range of recyclable materials and collection methods

64. The Council's current recycling rate is around 34%, with the aim of reaching a target of 50% by 2020. In view of this, we questioned whether there would be a capping point as a result of it not being viable economically to separate materials from the residual waste collections for recycling any further. In view of the existing market streams, it was highlighted that the capping point for recyclable collections would be between 50-60%.

65. Whilst acknowledging that the Council already collects a wide range of reusable and recyclable materials, we discussed the potential benefits and opportunities available to extend this range further.

66. During our inquiry, it was highlighted that food waste takes up a large proportion of the residual waste collected. In view of this, we acknowledged that a kitchen waste pilot scheme in Rothwell involving 8,000 properties had commenced in February 2010. This scheme aims to evaluate, over a six month period, a collection service redesign that allows for the collection of SORT fortnightly collections combined with a weekly collection of kitchen waste. In welcoming this pilot scheme, we recommend that the findings of this evaluation be reported back to the Scrutiny Board for further consideration.



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## **Recommendation 6**

**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that the findings from the kitchen waste pilot scheme in Rothwell be reported back to the Scrutiny Board for consideration.**

67. Apart from food waste, we learned that textiles also make up a large proportion of the residual waste collected. In view of this, we discussed the opportunities available for separating out textiles to help improve recycling rates.
68. It was highlighted that many charities, and other businesses, already provide a collection service within residential areas for reusable textiles which would need to be taken into consideration. However, we believe there would be merit in the Council exploring opportunities to work more closely with charities to coordinate services for the collection of textiles in a better way.
69. We also recommend that when the contract for the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) expires and is thereby subject to a competitive tendering process, that potential bidders be asked to give an indication of costs for adding textiles to the contract to enable the Council to evaluate the cost benefits of this approach before making any decisions.

## **Recommendation 7**

**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods explores opportunities available to work more closely with charities to coordinate services for the collection of textiles in a better way.**

## **Recommendation 8**

**That when the contract for the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) expires and is thereby subject to a competitive tendering process, that potential bidders be asked to give an indication of costs for adding textiles to the contract to enable the Council to evaluate the cost benefits of this approach.**

70. During our inquiry, we identified plastics as a material which causes much confusion for the public in terms of the different types used and which ones can be recycled. We learned that the following plastics are not recycled at the local Household Waste Sorting Sites; Plastic types 3 (PVC); 5 (polypropylene PP); 6 (polystyrene PS) and 7 (others).
71. It was noted that these include the plastic types used for yogurt pots, food trays and margarine tubs. Whilst these waste streams can be recycled, subject to value for money justification, it was highlighted that this is likely to need further investment at the Household Waste Sorting Sites. As an example, it was highlighted that recycling of polystyrene may require the waste stream to be bulked up and then baled to produce sufficient weight to gain income from sale for recycling.
72. Particular reference was made to the collection of Tetrapaks at particular Household Waste Sorting Sites and we questioned whether this material could be included in the new MRF contract. Whilst acknowledging that this would be possible, it was highlighted that the quality of materials collected via the co-mingled method would not be of the





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same standard as that collected at source. This would therefore need to be taken into account in terms of market demands.

73. We acknowledged that the range of plastics recycled is largely dictated by market forces and until there is a demand for these materials it is not cost effective to separate them from the residual waste. In view of this, we recognise the need for a national approach towards the use of plastic packaging with a view to restricting the range of plastics used. We therefore recommend that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and the Executive Member for Environmental Services lead on lobbying the Environments Secretary of State for this to be developed.

**Recommendation 9**  
**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Executive Member for Environmental Services lead on lobbying the Environments Secretary of State to develop a national approach for the use of plastic packaging with a view to restricting the range of plastics used.**

74. In consideration of the materials currently collected at the Household Waste Sorting Sites, particular reference was made to the collection of small electrical goods and also batteries. We recognised that in addition to the HWSS service, local supermarkets could prove to be valuable collection points as customers should be encouraged to exchange their damaged electrical goods and batteries when purchasing new goods. It was noted that a similar

approach could also be adopted for low energy bulbs. We therefore believe that such innovative partnership working needs to be explored further by the Council.

**Recommendation 10**  
**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods encourages innovative partnership working arrangements with local supermarkets to help provide additional collection points for a range of recyclable materials.**

75. During our inquiry, we considered different types of recycling methods adopted outside of Leeds and explored the potential benefits of adopting them locally. In doing so, particular reference was made to the Envac system, which is a pneumatic waste collection system. Separate recyclable wastes are put into different containers which are connected to a pneumatic collection system. The waste materials are sucked through an underground pipeline system to a central collection point up to 2km away. The waste is compacted prior to transfer to a container that is then loaded onto a vehicle for removal.

76. It was noted that this system has been installed in the Wembley City residential complex next to the new Wembley Stadium where it is used to collect household waste, although similar systems can be used to collect waste from street collection bins. In acknowledging the benefits of this system in terms of low carbon emissions due to the lack of collection vehicles and being able to address capacity issues within densely populated areas, we





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believe that there would be merits in exploring this method further for Leeds.

**Recommendation 11**  
**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods explores the potential benefits of adopting pneumatic waste collection systems, such as the Envac system currently installed in the new Wembley City residential complex, and also other individual subterranean systems within Leeds.**

## Recycling provision within planning developments

77. As part of our inquiry, we were keen to discuss the relationship between Environment and Neighbourhoods and City Development in ensuring that future recycling service proposals are reflected in planning policy and guidance. We also discussed the role of the Council in ensuring that developers are making adequate provision for recycling within their planning proposals.
78. In terms of written material, we noted that the main document that will be used to guide developers to ensuring that they make sufficient provision for recycling within their developments will be the (currently draft) Sustainable Design & Construction SPD which replaces the Sustainable Development Design Guide (Leeds City Council 1998). We learned that this document is still in its consultation phase and will not be adopted until 2010/11.
79. The structure and content of the SPD is based on the categories and environmental issues covered by the Code for Sustainable Homes and includes guidance to developers on Energy & CO2 emissions, Surface water run-off, Health & wellbeing, Water, Waste Management, Materials, Pollution and Ecology.
80. In the Code for Sustainable Homes, credits are assigned to each of these nine categories with minimum standards applying in some categories. The rating a home receives depends on how it measures up in each category. The policy in the SPD will encourage major developments to reach Code Level 3 in 2010, level 4 in 2013 and level 6 in 2016.
81. We noted that provision of adequate storage for recyclable and non-recyclable waste is one of the minimum requirements within the Code.
82. By following the guidance in the SPD, developers are encouraged to consider waste management issues at an early stage in the design of a development. The adoption of the SPD will mean that sustainable design and construction are material considerations to be given weight in considering development proposals. However, we noted that the measures recommended in the guidance do not guarantee compliance with the Code for Sustainable Homes (nor with BREEAM – the non residential equivalent), but are a menu of good practice options that can be considered and used to drive up the sustainability performance of new development.
83. We learned that the final version of the SPD will be consulted on both internally



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and externally and will be fully illustrated, incorporating local examples and case studies of good practice to inspire future developments. In view of this, we recommend that the City Development Scrutiny Board be involved in this consultation process and undertake to ensure that appropriate weight is given to the role of waste management as part of the SPD.

**Recommendation 12**  
**That the City Development Scrutiny Board be involved in the consultation process to consider the draft Sustainable Design & Construction Supplementary Planning Document and undertakes to ensure that appropriate weight is given to the role of waste management as part of the SPD.**

84. During our inquiry, we were pleased to note that the Head of Waste Management has now been invited to attend the Regeneration officer meetings regularly to put forward issues around waste management. However, we would particularly emphasise the importance of ensuring that representatives from waste management have an input into future major planning developments, with the new Leeds Arena being cited as a particular example, to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to waste management as part of the proposed infrastructure.

**Recommendation 13**  
**That the Directors of Environment and Neighbourhoods and City Development ensure that representatives from waste management have an active input into future major planning developments to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to waste management as part of the proposed infrastructure.**

85. During our inquiry, we learned that regionally, Yorkshire and Humber has a well-supported Regional Technical Advisory Body whose membership includes all of the region's Local Planning Authorities, plus the Environment Agency, Government Office and Yorkshire Forward.

86. It was highlighted that one of the key roles of the Regional Technical Advisory Body (RTAB) is to provide advice to regional planning bodies on the implications of waste management for the development and implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy

87. However, in June 2010 we acknowledged the Government's plans to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and to give responsibility for strategic planning directly to local authorities. In doing so, particular emphasis was made on local authorities themselves deciding on how best to work together on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries. In view of this, we would like the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to report back to the Scrutiny Board on the implications of the Government's plans to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies in relation to waste management.



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## **Recommendation 14**

**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reports back to the Scrutiny Board within the next 3 months on the implications of the Government's plans to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies in relation to waste management.**

88. In acknowledging that the Yorkshire and Humber Waste Regional Advisory Group (WRAG) and RTAB also have members in common to share information and run joint projects, such as Defra-funded piece of work to improve capacity of local authority planners to understand waste issues, we recognise the benefits of ensuring that the Council continues to link into such work in the future.

## **Recommendation 15**

**That the Directors of Environment and Neighbourhoods and City Development ensure that Environmental Services and Planning officers continue to link into the work of the Yorkshire and Humber Waste Regional Advisory Group and Regional Technical Advisory Group**

## **Effective targeting of education campaigns around recycling**

89. Whilst acknowledging that in 2008/09, 93.4% of the households in Leeds had access to the SORT scheme, we learned that there are approximately 6,100 properties identified where the SORT recycling scheme is currently not

working well, evidenced by high contamination and low participation.

90. In view of this, we are pleased to note that the Recycling Improvement Plan recognises that targeted awareness raising and monitoring will be required across these 6,100 properties to understand and then address the high contamination and low participation currently seen.

91. However, during our inquiry we also questioned whether there would be merits in developing an incentive scheme as a way to engage more people to recycle, such as a points system which could be redeemable within local supermarkets and other retailers. Whilst it was noted that such a scheme would need to be on an individual and temporary basis, it was felt that this approach could be piloted in order to evaluate its impact.

## **Recommendation 16**

**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods explores the feasibility and potential benefits of developing and piloting an incentive scheme as a way of engaging more people to recycle.**

92. During our inquiry particular attention was given to the need to effectively target students to help raise their awareness of the recycling facilities currently available within Leeds and help reduce levels of contamination of the SORT recyclables collected within areas where there is a large student population. We therefore sought the advice of Student Union representatives at the local universities, as well as Unipol in terms of working with landlords



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too. In summary, the key messages arising from our discussions were as follows:

- That some students felt that the provision of SORT wheeled bins allocated to properties of multiple-occupancy was insufficient.
- That some students would prefer to use green bags or containers rather than wheeled bins due to storage problems.
- That glass was considered the main material that students would like to see collected more effectively.
- There was a need to improve communication methods used by the Council to target students about recycling facilities and collection dates (it was noted that flyers were often ineffective, particularly during freshers week, and that students would often respond better to messages delivered via the Student Union than from a corporate body such as the Council).
- That students living within Halls of Residence are required to adhere to the University's recycling scheme and therefore become conditioned to this method of recycling. However, compared to the Council's recycling system, the Universities offer a wider range of recyclable materials, more frequent collections and require pre-sorting of materials into separate containers. Students are therefore often confused by the Council's recycling system once they move into private sector housing, which can lead to them becoming disengaged.

- That landlords within the private sector also need to understand their own responsibilities better and be encouraged to promote recycling amongst their tenants.
- That there would be benefits in ensuring that the landlord accreditation schemes adopted by the Council and Unipol share similar standards in terms of waste management responsibilities placed upon landlords.

93. In acknowledging the role of the Student Unions in providing a valuable insight into the views shared by students across the city, we were pleased to learn that the Council is working more closely with the Student Unions to help target this particular population group more effectively. As part of such work, we would hope to see the Council working to address the above issues raised during our own inquiry by the Student Unions and Unipol.

## **Recommendation 17**

**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that the issues raised with the Scrutiny Board by Student Unions and Unipol are addressed as part of the wider piece of work being undertaken jointly between Environmental Services and the Student Unions in providing appropriate recycling provision for students.**

94. We also learned that the Council had commissioned an independent market research company to conduct qualitative research, such as structured interviews, involving students from the universities, streetscene staff and other permanent





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residents living within these particular areas. We would therefore like the findings from this research to be reported back to Scrutiny for consideration.

**Recommendation 18**  
**That the findings from the independent market research project into the recycling patterns of residents living within areas of the city with a high student occupancy, be brought back to Scrutiny as soon as possible for consideration.**

## Providing support to businesses

95. We learned from WRAG that one particular element of its work is around business waste and providing businesses with better information on a range of resource efficiency measures, including recycling. We were pleased to note that Leeds City Council is already supporting this work by sharing its handbook on business waste with other local authorities as part of the programme. However, we recognised the need to disseminate this handbook more widely amongst local businesses across the city. One particular suggestion put forward was to publish a link to an electronic version of the handbook as part of the distribution process for business rates notifications.

**Recommendation 19**  
**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that the Council's handbook on business waste is disseminated widely amongst local businesses across the city.**

## Sharing best practice with other local authorities

96. During our inquiry, it was highlighted that WRAG were keen to gain a better understanding of existing and future waste management infrastructures and how we might try to comprehend our capacity for waste management better across the region in the short, medium and long-term. To that end, the Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber and the Environment Agency had put together a short questionnaire. We noted that the results of the infrastructure and capacity survey will be analysed by the Environment Agency, with a view to creating a GIS map of facilities in our region. We were pleased to note that the results will be made available to local authorities and partners to use.

## Integrated Waste Strategy (2005 – 2035)

97. The Integrated Waste Strategy for Leeds, adopted in 2006, sets out the Council's strategic vision and key objectives for the management of waste over the next thirty years. An action plan sits within the Strategy and details the specific activities that will be undertaken and reviewed annually to measure progress.

98. During our inquiry, we learned that the action plan was being revised to take the Strategy through the period from 2009 to 2012. We therefore took the





# Conclusions and Recommendations

opportunity to consider the draft action plan in March 2010.

99. In consideration of this, we welcomed the proposed actions set out within the action plan, acknowledging that many of these aimed to address some of the issues that have been raised throughout our inquiry.
100. We noted that it is envisaged that the Integrated Waste Strategy itself will be reviewed with full stakeholder consultation in 2012. In view of this, we recommend that Scrutiny be recognised as a key stakeholder during this consultation process.

**Recommendation 20**  
**That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that Scrutiny is recognised as a key stakeholder as part of the consultation process when reviewing the Leeds Integrated Waste Strategy.**



## Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.

Following this the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

## Reports and Publications Submitted

- Briefing paper from the Head of Waste Management on the challenges presented by different property types (October 2009);
- Briefing paper from the Head of Waste Management on the existing collection and disposal methods (October 2009);
- 5 maps (for each wedge of the city) highlighting those areas without kerbside collection of dry recyclables (SORT). October 2009.
- Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods on Existing Collection and Disposal Methods. 9<sup>th</sup> November 2009
- Briefing paper from the Head of Waste Management on the range of recyclable materials collected in Leeds. December 2009.
- Choosing the right recycling collection system. WRAP. June 2009;
- Good Practice Guide to Bring Recycling. Eco Alternatives Limited. February 2006;
- Improving waste diversion from civic amenity sites. M.E.L Research / Defra. 2004/05
- Report from the Director of City Development on recycling (this included an extract from the (currently draft) Sustainable Design & Construction Supplementary Planning Document). 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010.
- Briefing paper from WRAG on Waste Planning, Recycling and Regional Structures
- A copy of a national guidance document 'Towards Zero Waste: Reuse Guide for Halls of Residence' was circulated as background information.



### **Reports and Publications Submitted.....continued**

- Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to the Executive Board on the Recycling Improvement Plan. December 2009.
- Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to the Executive Board on the Strategic Review of Household Waste Sorting Sites and Bring Sites. June 2010.

### **Witnesses Heard**

- Susan Upton, Head of Waste Management
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Councillor James Monaghan, Executive Member for Environmental Services
- Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer
- Tom Smith, Head of Performance Management, Environmental Services
- Rachel Gray, The Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP)
- Andy Hartley, CO2Sense
- Samantha Veitch, Leeds Friends of the Earth
- David Feeney, Head of Forward Planning & Implementation
- Martin Sellens, Head of Planning Services
- Tim Godson, Team Leader - Climate Change, Government Office for Yorkshire & The Humber and representing WRAG
- Liam Challenger, Associate President Community Wellbeing, Leeds Metropolitan University Student Union and Trustee at UNIPOL
- Hannah Greenslade, Community Officer, Leeds University Student Union
- Amanda Jackson, Leeds University

### **Dates of Scrutiny**

- 14<sup>th</sup> September 2009 – Scrutiny Board Meeting (agreed terms of reference)
- 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009 – Working Group Meeting
- 9<sup>th</sup> November 2009 – Scrutiny Board Meeting
- 1st December 2009 – Working Group Meeting
- 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010 – Scrutiny Board Meeting
- 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010 – Scrutiny Board Meeting
- 11<sup>th</sup> February 2010 – Working Group Meeting
- 8<sup>th</sup> March 2010 – Scrutiny Board Meeting

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**Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)  
Inquiry into Recycling  
September 2010  
Report author: Angela Brogden**