

**REPORT BY THE SCRUTINY PANEL
ON
PROGRESS TOWARDS ZERO WASTE**



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny and Audit Committee agreed on 13 June 2013 to establish a Scrutiny Panel to consider progress towards zero waste. This area of activity was considered to be a priority given the ambitious recycling targets that have been set by the Scottish Government. The Panel was established by Committee Report No 441/13 and comprised the following members:-

Councillor Brian Boyd (Chair)
Councillor Lynne Devine
Councillor Rob Murray
Councillor Jeanette Gaul
Councillor Ronnie Proctor
Councillor David May
Les Hutchinson (Lead Officer)

1.2 The Remit of the Panel

The Panel agreed that the objectives for the review were to:

- 1 ensure Angus is fulfilling requirements of Scotland's Zero Waste strategy, with specific focus on recycling
- 2 consider cost efficiency of recycling arrangements
- 3 assess future plans – targets and endeavours to educate/change habits for citizens and businesses (waste prevention and increased reuse/recycling)
- 4 consider the implications of recycling arrangements in both town and rural settings
- 5 evaluate information provided to the public
- 6 agree targets and objectives for the Scrutiny and Audit Committee to monitor

2. CARRYING OUT THE REVIEW

The Panel carried out a range of different activities to enable it to carry out its review.

2.1 Documentation

The Panel considered the following material to set the context for the review:

- Policy publications from the Scottish Government, including the summary of the Zero Waste Plan for Scotland
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/314181/0099750.pdf>
- Comparative performance information for Scottish local authorities
- Angus Council committee reports relating to waste strategy.

2.2 Interviews

The main source of information for the review was gathered through interviews with Angus Council officers. Over the course of the review, we interviewed:

- Morag Grant, Waste Strategy Officer
- Ricki Goodwin, Waste Disposal Manager
- Graeme Dailly, Service Manager: Environmental Management - Waste
- Andy Nicholson, Service Manager: Environments - Strategic
- Stewart Ball, Service Manager: Regulatory and Protective Services

In addition, there were some informal conversations with front line staff to obtain their perspective. Issues raised during these conversations have been summarised and included in this report for management consideration.

2.3 Site Visits

The Panel carried out site visits to the following facilities to gain an appreciation of the service and the issues that require to be addressed:

- Angus Community Recycling Opportunities Partnership (ACROP) depot
- Restenneth Landfill site
- Dundee Energy Recycling Limited (DERL)
- Binn Eco Park – anaerobic digestion plant

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Scottish Government published 'Scotland's Zero Waste Plan' in June 2012. This plan indicates that by 2025 70% of all of Scotland's waste should be recycled with only 5% of remaining waste ending in landfill. Amongst other targets, an intermediate target of recycling/composting 50% of household waste should be achieved by 2013.

3.1 Angus context

In October 2009, Angus Council concluded phase 2 of a Best Value Review of Waste Management Services. In November 2010 the Director of Neighbourhood Services provided an update on the Best Value review action plan (Report 822/10), stating that:

Members are asked to note, however, that in respect of the development of the overall Waste Management Strategy to incorporate the Zero Waste Strategy, there will be significant financial implications for the Council in respect of both revenue and capital budgets. Implementation of the strategy can, therefore, only take place once more detailed work is undertaken to establish the full operational implications and the precise cost and funding arrangements which would apply. These will be subject of future reports incorporating any financial implications to appropriate Committees of the Council.

3.1.2 Subsequently, report 154/12 was approved extending recycling collection services, and in May 2013, a report (341/13) outlining the results of a trial kerbside recycling scheme was presented to the Neighbourhood Services Committee, and it was agreed that this scheme would be rolled out across Angus. This is currently being implemented.

3.2 **Current performance**

Audit Scotland gathers information about waste management as part of the suite of Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for local government. The data for Angus (% waste recycled and rank against other Scottish local authorities) over the last three years is:

| 2010/11 | | 2011/12 | | 2012/13 | |
|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank |
| 36.73 | 22 | 43.68 | 16 | 39.81 | 21 |

3.2.1 The national average for 2012/13 is 41.70%, so the Angus performance is close to this level.

3.2.2 The Angus performance declined from 2011/12 to 2012/13. This was due to the DERL facility being unavailable for a large part of the year following a fire at the facility.

3.2.3 Information from the trial kerbside recycling scheme indicated that the recycling rate had increased from 18% pre-trial to 55% during the trial (excluding garden waste collections).

4. **ARRANGEMENTS FOR WASTE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING**

4.1 For household waste, the Council is in the process of rolling out new arrangements for kerbside collection. This reflects the findings from a pilot scheme and it is anticipated that this will increase the level of recycling activity.

4.2 Co-mingled material that is collected through the recycling scheme is taken to Wales for processing. The material is then sorted and recycled in the surrounding area.

4.3 General waste that is uplifted is taken to Restenneth landfill site or DERL. Waste taken to DERL contributes towards the Council's recycling targets as the material is either recovered for reuse or is used to generate energy.

4.4 The Council also operates 7 recycling centres, where larger items, or items not suitable for kerbside collection can be dealt with.

5. PANEL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel conclusions and recommendations are described below. The recommendations have been gathered to form an action plan (Appendix 1), which has been agreed with the Executive Management Team. This action plan will be monitored by the Scrutiny and Audit Committee.

5.1 Ensure Angus is fulfilling requirements of Scotland's Zero Waste strategy, with specific focus on recycling

5.1.1 In terms of recycling activity, the Panel recognised that Angus Council was a high-performing Council at one time, then we plateaued and other authorities developed their services at a faster pace.

5.1.2 Officers provided clear, honest information. It was clear that all options had been considered, and the Council is now committed to a specific course of action.

5.1.3 Despite some difficulties to date, progress is being maintained, with good prospects for improvement with roll-out of kerbside collection. When the roll-out has been completed, officers are confident that we will achieve a recycling rate of over 60%. However, achieving the Scottish Government's target of 70% by 2025 will be challenging.

5.1.4 The development of the Dundee and Angus Residual Waste Management Procurement Project clearly takes account of all of the current requirements, and will place Angus in a strong position to make further progress.

5.1.5 The Panel is confident that Angus will fulfil the immediate requirements of Scotland's Zero Waste strategy for the following reasons:

- the current recycling rate is close to the national average;
- the circumstances that led to a reduction in performance were one-off in nature;
- the plans to roll-out kerbside recycling are well developed, based on learning from the pilot scheme.

| |
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| <p>Recommendation 1- Progress against recycling targets will need to be monitored regularly by management and reported at least twice per year to concurrently to the Communities and Scrutiny and Audit committees.</p> |
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5.2 Consider cost efficiency of recycling arrangements

5.2.1 In the Panel's view, it is too early to assess the cost efficiency aspect. Evidence of recycling rates after the roll-out has been completed will be necessary to undertake meaningful evaluation.

5.2.2 However, two aspects relating to cost emerged from the review.

5.2.3 It is clear from our interviews with officers that they are fully aware of the cost implications of decisions relating to recycling. There is a complex interplay between a number of factors:

- the cost of investing in plant and equipment that would facilitate separation of waste and generate income from its sale;
- the income that can be generated from selling unsorted waste;
- the cost implications of continuing to use landfill; and
- the changing nature of the market in this area.

5.2.4 The Panel was confident that officers are making valid decisions.

5.2.5 A recurring issue during the review was the future of recycling centres. Although this aspect was not core to the Panel's remit, we did hear that there are issues around the suitability, range of materials being recycled and cost of the Council's recycling centres.

Recommendation 2 – Following the completion of the roll-out of kerbside recycling, a cost efficiency exercise should be completed. This exercise should address the cost of collection compared to the income generated from selling material for recycling and the cost avoidance related to the reduced use of landfill.

The report from this exercise should be submitted to the Communities and Scrutiny and Audit Committees.

Recommendation 3 – A service review of recycling centres should be undertaken.

This review should be timed to allow the kerbside roll-out to be completed and embedded. It should consider the need for the current number of recycling centres; assess the fitness for purpose of each centre; look at options for extending the range of materials that can be recycled at the centres; and highlight investment needed to create an appropriate number of centres to complement the kerbside recycling service.

The report from this service review should be submitted to the Communities and Scrutiny and Audit Committees.

5.3 **Assess future plans – targets and endeavours to educate/change habits for citizens and businesses (waste prevention and increased reuse/recycling)**

5.3.1 As noted above the Council has a set of plans in place, notably in connection with the kerbside roll-out and the Residual Waste Management Procurement Project.

5.3.2 Officers were able to explain how they are reacting to changes in regulations and keeping an overview of the emerging position at a national level.

5.3.3 The Panel was advised that there is an intention to prepare an overarching strategic plan for waste management. However, no timescale has been set for this.

Recommendation 4 – An overall strategy for waste management and recycling should be prepared, which can be updated as regulations change. This strategy will require committee approval.

5.4 Consider the implications of recycling arrangements in both town and rural settings

5.4.1 The Panel was assured that arrangements for the kerbside roll-out are taking account of the needs of citizens (balanced with cost of collection), including different approaches for flatted and terraced properties.

5.4.2 Plans for rural, road-end collections are being developed with input from householders, and compromise arrangements are being agreed where possible. To date, there has not been any significant volume of complaints, although it is the Panel's view that the adequacy of the arrangements will only be evident when the roll-out has been completed.

Recommendation 5 - Recycling levels should be monitored by route to indicate effectiveness and identify any variances that arise.

Recommendation 6 - Observations made by citizens about kerbside collection arrangements should be monitored and included in performance reports presented to Communities and Scrutiny and Audit committees.

5.5 Evaluate information provided to the public

5.5.1 The letters and leaflets associated with roll-out are very clear. Information is being provided in supermarkets etc, where it is easier to reach the public.

5.5.2 Bins are being re-marked to clarify their purpose (what can be recycled).

Recommendation 7 – An ongoing communications and media plan should be developed to highlight the arrangements for, and benefits of, recycling. It is recommended that this includes factors that will resonate with citizens. – e.g. the cost of landfill, the cumulative impact of recycling to date. There needs to be a particular emphasis on food waste, as the pilot study discovered a reluctance to use this facility. It is further recommended that this aspect be addressed by the Pride in Place MOG.

5.6 Agree targets and objectives for the Scrutiny and Audit Committee to monitor

See recommendations above.

5.7 Issues raised in informal conversations

Street Cleaning

- 5.7.1 What are responsibilities of business owners? Is there a role for community wardens to drop in to premises to remind them of responsibilities?
- 5.7.2 Business owners could simply sweep litter off the pavement and the road sweeper will collect it.
- 5.7.3 A way to save money on the street sweepers is to buy metal and not plastic brushes (they are more cost effective).

Dog fouling

- 5.7.4 People don't understand that all bins can be used for dog waste.
- 5.7.5 It would be good to have supply of appropriate dog bags to issue – red bags currently available are not easy to use.

Waste collection

- 5.7.6 Why does the big waste disposal truck sit in the Carnoustie yard all day on Monday - has management worked out the best utilisation of the equipment we have?
- 5.7.7 Why do Carnoustie operatives have to collect 5000 bins where in Arbroath they only have to collect 3000 bins?

Recommendation 8 – Management should consider and address the operational matters raised by frontline staff.

Recommendation 9 – A mechanism should be established to enable frontline staff to submit suggested improvements to encourage higher levels of recycling.

ACTION PLAN

| <u>Rec No</u> | <u>Action</u> | <u>Level</u> | <u>Responsible Officer</u> | <u>Agreed Y/N</u> | <u>Comments</u> | <u>Agreed Completion Date</u> |
|---------------|--|--------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Progress against recycling targets will need to be monitored regularly by management and reported at least twice per year to concurrently to the Communities and Scrutiny and Audit committees. | 1 | | | | |
| 2 | Following the completion of the roll-out of kerbside recycling, a cost efficiency exercise should be completed. This exercise should address the cost of collection compared to the income generated from selling material for recycling and the cost avoidance related to the reduced use of landfill. The report from this exercise should be submitted to the Communities and Scrutiny and Audit Committees. | 1 | | | | |
| 3 | A service review of recycling centres should be undertaken. This review should be timed to allow the kerbside roll-out to be completed and embedded. It should consider the need for the current number of recycling centres; assess the fitness for purpose of each | 2 | | | | |

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|----------------------|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | <p>centre; look at options for extending the range of materials that can be recycled at the centres; and highlight investment needed to create an appropriate number of centres to complement the kerbside recycling service.</p> <p>The report from this service review should be submitted to the Communities and Scrutiny and Audit Committees.</p> | | | | | |
| 4 | An overall strategy for waste management and recycling should be prepared, which can be updated as regulations change. | 1 | | | | |
| 5 | Recycling levels should be monitored by route to indicate effectiveness and identify any variances that arise. | 1 | | | | |
| 6 | Observations made by citizens about kerbside collection arrangements should be monitored and included in performance reports presented to Communities and Scrutiny and Audit committees. | 3 | | | | |
| 7 | An ongoing communications and media plan should be developed to highlight the arrangements for, and benefits of, recycling. It is recommended that this includes factors that will resonate with citizens. – e.g. the cost of landfill, the cumulative impact of | 2 | | | | |

| <u>Rec No</u> | <u>Action</u> | <u>Level</u> | <u>Responsible Officer</u> | <u>Agreed Y/N</u> | <u>Comments</u> | <u>Agreed Completion Date</u> |
|---------------|---|--------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| | recycling to date. There needs to be a particular emphasis on food waste, as the pilot study discovered a reluctance to use this facility. It is further recommended that this aspect be addressed by the Pride in Place MOG. | | | | | |
| 8 | Management should consider and address the operational matters raised by frontline staff. | 3 | | | | |
| 9 | A mechanism should be established to enable frontline staff to submit suggested improvements to encourage higher levels of recycling. | 2 | | | | |