

**Report to:** Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

**Date:** 16 September 2021

**Title:** Update on the Waste Service

**Report of:** Tim Whelan, Director of Service Delivery

**Ward(s):** All

**Purpose of report:** To provide information on waste, recycling and associated services including the methodology behind recycling statistics and data on waste tonnages

**Officer recommendation(s):** That the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee:

(1) Considers the report and agrees any recommendations that members may wish to make to the Cabinet

(2) Notes the approach to waste recycling and street cleansing communications and engagement activity

**Reasons for recommendations:** This information was requested by councillors at the PPAC meeting in June 2021

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Environment Bill, reintroduced to Parliament on 30 January 2020, includes ambitions for higher recycling rates and increased resource efficiency.
- The national recycling target for household waste is currently 50%, increasing to 65% of waste recycled by 2035, at a time when rates across the country have plateaued.
- 1.2 The quality of the environment is of the utmost importance to our residents and has several dimensions, from reducing our carbon footprint to receiving a quality waste collection service.
- 1.3 Throughout lockdown over a third of local authorities had to cease garden waste collections entirely, nearly three quarters of local authorities had moderate to severe disruptions to household recycling collections and around two thirds of authorities had to suspend bulky waste collections. The only change to LDC collection services has been the brief suspension of bulky waste collections,

once in 2020 and again more recently; all other collection services have continued with no disruption during these unprecedented times.

## **2 Purpose**

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to set out recent data and information on LDC's operational services relating to waste. For key statistics and the methodology used, see Appendix 1 – LDC waste data report.
- 2.2 Resident education and engagement is dynamic and far-reaching. The communication and engagement strategy aligned to this service area is outlined in section 6 below and detailed at Appendix 2.

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 Lewes District Council (LDC) provides waste and recycling collections and street cleansing services via the in-house team based at Robinson Road, Newhaven. Refuse and food waste is collected weekly and dry mixed recycling, fortnightly. There is also a charged-for fortnightly garden waste collection service.
- 3.2 Neighbourhood First provides support to the community in engagement, education, monitoring and enforcement in relation to littering, fly tipping, dog fouling and other environmental services.
- 3.3 Operational services are supported by an approach to communication and engagement agreed with Councillor Carr, Cabinet member for recycling, waste and open spaces.
- 3.4 East Sussex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority provides services and infrastructure for the disposal of materials for the five local collection authorities in East Sussex. For LDC:
- Residual waste goes to the Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) (please note, not landfill).
  - Dry mixed recycling is taken to Light Brothers, Lewes for onward transportation to Viridor's Material Recycling Facility in Crayford.
  - Food waste is taken to the Newhaven ERF for onward transportation to the Woodlands In-Vessel Composting Facility.
- 3.5 Garden waste collected in Lewes district is currently delivered to KPS Composting Services, Isfield under a separate agreement.

## **4 Waste and recycling performance**

- 4.1 In terms of the waste hierarchy, 'reduce, reuse, recycle', low overall waste is the top priority. Lewes district outperforms many English LAs in terms of waste collected per household. Please see Appendix 1 for detailed performance information.

Kgs of residual waste per household for Quarter 1 2021/22 are estimated to be 115kgs\*.

*\*East Sussex County Council (ESCC) (as the waste disposal authority) provides the closing data for this calculation which is not yet available. In the meantime, raw data taken from vehicle weighbridge tickets has been used (d-n ÷ number of dwellings) and is subject to change, for example it does not include rejects from the DMR.*

As expected, the trend for kgs of residual household waste has fluctuated over the past three years. 2021/20 sees a decrease on 2018/19 which is consistent with the introduction of the single bin co-mingled recycling service and residents recycling more. 2020/21 sees an increase in residual waste which again is consistent with behaviours created by Covid-19 and residents having household clear outs and working and schooling from home.

- 4.2 Unfortunately, there is a significant time lag to getting up-to-date and verified recycling data. The percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting for Quarter 1 2021/22 is estimated to be 41.57%\*.

*\* ESCC (as the waste disposal authority) provides the closing data for this calculation which is not yet available. In the meantime, raw data taken from vehicle weighbridge tickets has been used but does not allow for any adjustments / recycling rejects and is subject to change.*

- 4.3 Contamination rates in Lewes district are low and this is important.

Highly contaminated loads of recycling will be rejected at either the transfer station or at Crayford Material Recovery Facility (and the rejected load is deducted from the recycling tonnage figure). This entails additional cost and transportation, to have the rejected material incinerated, and means the loss of clean recycling mixed in with the contaminated material.

Typical contaminants are food waste, clothes & shoes, wood/lumber and nappies. Recycling contamination is regularly monitored, and common contaminants are specifically targeted in educational campaigns and through social media.

The quality of material collected in Lewes district remains consistently around 2% - 2.5% whereas contamination rates of 10%+ are not uncommon elsewhere in the country.

- 4.4 LDC has been particularly successful at increasing the amount of dry mixed materials (e.g. plastics, cans, paper) collected for recycling. The move to current co-mingled collections saw a dramatic increase in LDC's recycling rate. Dry mixed recycling (excluding food and composting) in the quarter preceding the roll-out of the new system was just 19.3% against 29.6% in the quarter immediately following the complete roll-out (representing an increase of 10.3 percentage points).

Including food and garden waste, the estimated recycling rate for 2020/21 stands at 39.8%.

## **5 Litter and fly tipping enforcement**

- 5.1 The Neighbourhood First team covers three separate zones across the district. Advisers get to know their zone and the hotspots within them. With a focus on local issues, they respond to complaints and enquiries, investigate fly tips as appropriate and take robust enforcement action where evidence is obtained. A

prosecution will be considered for significant transgressions in liaison with the legal team. However, without identifiable evidence (e.g. name and address) it is almost impossible to begin enforcement action in most circumstances

5.2 In Quarter 1 2020/21 there were 64 incidents of fly tipping (April - 26, May - 16, June - 22). There were no Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued in Q1.

5.3 Neighbourhood First undertakes structured street inspections quarterly to monitor the street scene, as well as continuous monitoring by virtue of being based in the community.

## **6 Communication and engagement**

6.1 Critical to our success is continuing communications and engagement using a range of media. The communications strategy at Appendix 2 supports the council in its commitment to the environment and in meeting its operational objectives and targets through a clear, strategic and coordinated programme of communications activity throughout the year.

6.2 A principal means of communicating these messages is through the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Bulletin launched in March 2021. This is emailed to over 13,000 residents every month. There are also regular updates to the website, on social media, printed publications, leaflets and via the external media through the issuing of press releases.

6.3 Communications have been well received by residents and councillors alike, with many elected members of all parties contacting us with positive comments. Examples include:

- 'These updates are great and as I said, you guys are totally rocking it with the A27' Cllr Emily O'Brien
- 'This is really excellent Neil' Cllr Christine Robinson
- 'Thanks Neil. Excellent as always' Maria Caulfield MP

6.4 We have experienced higher levels of engagement on social media for waste and recycling-related posts than any other service area. For example, a post to raise awareness of our work to clear litter from the A27 received just under 200 likes on Facebook and over 2,500 engagements (clicks, likes and shares), helping us reach over 15,000 people with a single post.

## **7 Financial appraisal**

7.1 The report is for information only and as such there are no direct financial implications *AC 01/09/21*

## **8 Legal implications**

8.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this information-only report.

## **9 Risk management implications**

9.1 This report is for information purposes. There are reputational risks in not communicating and achieving objectives and targets for waste reduction and increased recycling.

## **10 Equality analysis**

10.1 No implications for equalities generated through this update report.

## **11 Environmental sustainability implications**

11.1 Waste reduction is a key priority for Lewes District Council. The council aims to minimise waste and to recycle or reuse as part of a circular economy approach to tackle the climate and nature emergency.

## **12 Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – LDC waste data report
- Appendix 2 – LDC waste recycling and street cleansing comms strategy

## **13 Background papers**

- None