

CABINET – 17 JULY 2018

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING DEEP DIVE

Report by Assistant Chief Executive

Introduction

1. This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations resulting from the Performance Scrutiny Committee's deep dive into falling household recycling rates in Oxfordshire.
2. The deep dive report and recommendations were considered and endorsed by the Performance Scrutiny Committee on 24 May 2018 with some minor amendments and additions.
3. Cabinet is asked to consider and respond to the recommendations outlined below.

Background

4. Between January and April 2018 Cllr Liz Leffman, as a member of the Performance Scrutiny Committee, led a deep dive into Oxfordshire's falling recycling rates and its deteriorating performance outlook.
5. The objectives of the deep dive were to investigate:
 - the key issues affecting the performance downturn,
 - the impact of District / City Council waste collection strategies, and
 - how the County Council and District / City Councils jointly plan to improve performance.
6. Cllr Leffman gathered evidence through meeting lead officers and by reviewing further information and data supplied by the Waste team.

Outcomes of the deep dive

7. The key findings of the deep dive were:
 - A number of national issues are affecting local recycling rates, including the impact of recent legislative changes regarding certain waste products and China's decision to restrict the quality of waste material it imports – this has led to greater stock piling and pressure to seek new markets. There is now a national move towards enabling a circular economy: keeping resources in use for much longer, extracting the maximum value

from them, and ensuring they can be recovered/recycled at the end of their life.

- Oxfordshire residents are confused about what can be recycled and they require more information to better engage with their current kerbside services. Each district/city council has a slightly different waste collection policy, particularly for plastics, which contributes to this confusion.
- A recent countywide waste analysis indicates that around 48% of waste in people's general rubbish bin could be recycled using current kerbside services. The largest portion of this recyclable material is food waste. If all of this material was put in the correct bin, the County Council could save c.£3 million annually and the countywide recycling rate could rise to around 80% (it is currently 58%).
- Between 2005/06 and 2011/12 recycling rates in Oxfordshire increased from 33% to over 60% through the collective communications and education work of the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (OWP). In 2014 the Partnership was dissolved and this communications work reduced.
- The Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy is being reviewed and will include a renewed focus on communications and public awareness raising, as well as consideration of operational changes that could help increase recycling rates. The Oxfordshire Environment Partnership (established after the OWP) has agreed in principle to reinstate a joint communications resource.
- Community Action Groups have been particularly effective in tackling waste and recycling issues – the County Council supports around 60 groups to take local action – but the biggest challenge is reaching less engaged residents.

8. The full deep dive report and recommendations considered by Performance Scrutiny Committee is attached at Annex B.

Performance Scrutiny recommendations from the deep dive

9. The recommendations the Cabinet is specifically asked to consider are:
- a) The Council should consider re-establishing the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership, with a commitment to increasing recycling rates from 60% to 75% by 2025.
 - b) The Council should focus on communicating the cost advantages of recycling to residents.
 - c) The Council should improve support for “re-use, recycle” to avoid materials getting into the waste chain in the first place.
 - d) The Council should work with local collection authorities to create greater synergy in waste collection services.
 - e) The Council should create a strategy for effectively communicating with residents and manufacturers about what they can recycle and how, particularly food waste.

- f) The Council should work towards recycling items that are currently going to incineration, including laminated pouches, plastic film, etc.
- g) The Cabinet should instruct officers to make a comparative study of other councils' waste services, including in relation to new technologies.
- h) The Council should work with manufacturers and retailers to ensure the adoption of consistent packing policies which mean all household materials are recyclable.

Monitoring Progress

- 10. The Cabinet's response to these recommendations will be reported to the next available Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting.
- 11. It is anticipated that the deep dive lead member and scrutiny officer will ensure that a review of progress against accepted recommendations is scheduled into the future work programme of the Committee. Usually, a progress report will be requested by the Committee within 6-12 months after actions have been agreed by Cabinet.

Financial and Staff Implications

- 12. The financial or staffing impacts arising from this deep dive are dependent on whether and how each recommendation is progressed. To aid Cabinet's discussion and decision, officers in the Waste team have provided an initial feasibility assessment for each recommendation and outlined how these align with current or planned work (Annex).
- 13. The Cabinet may wish to ask for more detailed work to be undertaken by the Waste team before considering its response to each of the recommendations set out in this report.

Equalities Implications

- 14. It is expected that any equalities implications will be considered when Cabinet responds to the recommendations and implements those that are accepted.

RECOMMENDATION

- 15. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to:
 - (a) Consider the recommendations of the Performance Scrutiny Committee for the Council,
 - (b) Agree which recommendations the Cabinet will accept, and
 - (c) Ask the Director for Planning and Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to prepare a response for the next meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee.

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Assistant Chief Executive

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July 2018

Officer comments on the deep dive recommendations

Recommendation	Officer comments
<p>a) The Council should consider re-establishing the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership, with a commitment to increasing recycling rates from 60% to 75% by 2025.</p>	<p>The decision-making responsibilities of the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (OWP) were taken on by the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership (OEP) in 2014. The OEP are currently reviewing the joint waste strategy (expected to be agreed in Summer 2018) which will consider what targets are appropriate. 75% by 2025 is very ambitious and would require significant organisational and operational change which itself will require considerable investment and contractual changes.</p> <p>The targets in the JMWMS will be agreed by all partners at OEP on 13th July.</p> <p>The OEP is fully committed to working together to drive the behaviour change needed to reach the ambitious targets. In April 2018 the OEP agreed to a joint resource to improve information to residents, addressing confusion about recyclable materials and increase recycling rates. It is likely that this will need to be extended, and increased in future years if the 75% target is to be reached.</p> <p>Resourcing to OEP is currently shared amongst all partner authorities. If the level of work overseen by this committee was to increase, resourcing would need to be reviewed.</p> <p>As well as a commitment to keeping waste growth to zero, and increasing recycling rates, the strategy will advocate a move by all authorities to the circular economy – an economic model that aims to keep resources in use for as long as possible, extracting the maximum values from them while in use and then recycling products and materials at the end of their service life. This model is increasingly being adopted all over the world as a way of managing growth sustainably, reducing risk associated with resource scarcity, and maintaining a competitive and thriving economy that protects the environment.</p>
<p>b) The Council should focus on communicating the cost advantages of recycling to residents.</p>	<p>The joint strategy communications and action plan for the next year is currently in development for agreement with all districts. The cost advantages of recycling can be incorporated within this.</p>
<p>c) The Council should</p>	<p>Oxfordshire County Council currently supports the Community Action Group (CAG) network and Waste</p>

<p>improve support for “re-use, recycle” to avoid materials getting into the waste chain in the first place.</p>	<p>Advisors project both working to help residents reduce the amount of waste that they produce in the first place. Continuing and extending this support would be in line with the councils ‘Fit for the Future’ programme at the ‘pre-front door’ level. Success in this area is traditionally difficult to measure, but there are areas we could increase our focus on with budget and officer time, including the sharing economy, increasing bulky waste reuse, and reducing food and packaging waste.</p> <p>This work supports the move to the circular economy model, working with residents to find local, sustainable, solutions to environmental issues, increasing reuse and reducing the amount thrown away.</p>
<p>d) The Council should work with local collection authorities to create greater synergy in waste collection services.</p>	<p>Councils currently work together under OEP, while there are differences, there is also commonality, and officers carry out many countywide communication activities promoting areas where there is synergy.</p> <p>Each authority has separately established contracts and collection arrangements, developed at different times, and subject to different political and market forces. Greater operational synergy will require support and commitment from all councils and take time as existing contracts will need to expire before changes can be made.</p>
<p>e) The Council should create a strategy for effectively communicating with residents and manufacturers about what they can recycle and how, particularly food waste.</p>	<p>The focus of the joint communications resource agreed by the OEP in April is currently in discussion with waste and communications officers across the county. Food waste, plastics, additional recycling and waste reduction (reuse, love food hate waste, refill etc) are all included as part of these discussions.</p>
<p>f) The Council should work towards recycling items that are currently going to incineration, including laminated pouches, plastic film, etc.</p>	<p>OCC and the collection authorities are limited by the local and international market for these materials. Without sufficient demand, segregation and reprocessing is prohibitively expensive.</p> <p>There are several ways in which OCC could help to stimulate market development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifying that items OCC procure are made of recycled material, and can themselves be recycled • Working with the county councils innovation hub, the universities and other local innovative businesses to find new products that materials can be made into, or new technologies to easily and cheaply segregate

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	<p>and reprocess currently unrecyclable materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for, and support, national efforts to increase extended producer responsibility (ensuring that manufactures take responsibility for their products throughout their lifetime, including recycling and disposal)
<p>g) The Cabinet should instruct officers to make a comparative study of other councils' waste services, including in relation to new technologies.</p>	<p>OCC is currently amongst the best at recycling and composting in the country, with one of the lowest waste arisings per head. As part of the review of the joint waste strategy officers have looked at several other authorities to see what we are able to learn from them, and are watching those currently making changes with interest. We have set ourselves ambitious targets and may need to embrace change and new technologies to see these realised.</p>
<p>h) The Council should work with manufacturers and retailers to ensure the adoption of consistent packing policies which mean all household materials are recyclable.</p>	<p>OCC is limited in its ability to directly influence manufactures and retailers, but through membership of groups such as NAWDO (National Association of Disposal Authorities), WRAP (Waste and Resource Action Programme) and CIWM (Chartered Institution of Wastes Management), and involvement with LARAC (Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee) and LGA (Local Government Association) we can support national efforts and campaigns to enact change.</p>

Officer comments have been provided by Rachel Burns, Waste Strategy Officer
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