

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL
WASTE MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP
COMMITTEE ROOM 4, WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN

8 MAY 2019

Present: Councillors Peter Argyle (Chair), Stephen Calder, Marion Ewenson, Paul Johnston, Anouk Kloppert, Ron McKail, Ian Mollison and Michael Roy

Officers: Ros Baxter, Waste Manager
Matt Davis, Team Manager – Processing & Disposal
Andrew Sheridan, Team Manager – Collections & Cleansing
Kat Laakso, Strategic Development Officer
Yvonne D’Ambruoso, Waste Support Leader (Service Support & Dev)
Claire Loney, Waste Support Leader (Collections & Cleansing North)
Lesley Forrest, Waste Support Leader (Collections & Cleansing South)
Sallie Antill, Waste Support Leader (Collections & Cleansing Central)
Ian Milne, Waste Support Leader (Processing & Disposal)
Darren Fryer, Waste Management Facilities Officer
Susan Donald, Service Manager (Finance)
Philip McKay, Head of Roads, Landscape Services & Waste (via Skype)
Gordon Lyon, Marketing & Communications Officer
Rebecca Duncan, Communications Assistant

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS

The Chair asked Members if they had any interests to declare in terms of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct and the following interests were intimated:-

Councillor Paul Johnston, as Chair of CRNS.

2. RESOLUTION – PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In making decisions on the following items of business, the Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- (2) where an Equality Impact Assessment is provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching a decision

**3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE WASTE MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP OF
13 FEBRUARY 2019**

All agreed the minutes from 13 February 2019 were an accurate record.

4. WASTE STRATEGY FUNDING UPDATE – KAT LAAKSO

Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS) are unable to provide funding for Councils to comply with the Scottish Household Recycling Charter. There are concerns around how the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) will affect kerbside collections. Further meetings are to be held to find out why it took so long for ZWS to provide an explanation.

If drinks containers are removed there will be less recyclables to collect. A waste analysis to this level of detail still has to be done therefore we don't know the scope of this as yet. Around 15,000 tonnes of mixed recycling including 10,000 tonnes of paper and card are collected. If every drinks container were removed it would amount to 2,000 tonnes, around 14% of mixed recycling. If DRS is successful and there will be less materials in the blue-lidded recycling bin, other materials could be added to the kerbside recycling service.

The three options available to the Council were outlined. Option 1 allows our options to remain open and won't exclude us from potential funding. However this would cause a significant delay and comes with significant cost. There is a risk of reputational damage if the publicised changes do not go ahead.

Option 2 uses existing bins in a 3 weekly cycle with week 1 being non-recyclable and week 2 and 3 recyclables. This allows us to make progress in the interim without risking compliance with future recycling charter. Implementation costs are minimal at £100k. This allows us to keep the existing bins with the same items being collected, it is only the frequency that is changing. There would also be less reputational damage. The disadvantage is the projections show limited impact on recycling rates and no income from paper and card. There are also some operational challenges with the recycling bin in the second recycling week being emptier.

Option 3 would mean limited reputational damage however the cost is significant and it would take 10 years to pay this back. It would also exclude us from future external funding.

The recommendation is to choose Option 2 which allows us to make changes.

Cllr Johnston asked if waste could be separated after delivery. This was looked into but separating paper and card is complicated, the paper quality poor and it isn't cost effective. It is a lot of investment for little return. There would be a high contamination rate which the market does not want. There could be potential for this in the future and it wouldn't be ruled out by going with Option 2.

Cllr Johnston asked if paper and card could be separated either by having a bag on top of the bin or a separate section within the bin. It was noted the City Council used to do this but they didn't get the same volume and capacity so they had to introduce a separate collection system.

Cllr Johnston suggested a separate section in the RCVs however this would mean changing the fleet. The low cost option would be to keep the fleet and bins and change the collection. Originally 10 different options were looked at however these options all required funding so this is an interim measure.

Cllr Johnston asked if a bag could be placed within the blue bin to make material easier to remove and to prevent contamination. This would still have to be sorted and there would be no advantage unless this could be done in-house. It would also add more plastic into the system.

Cllr Kloppert asked why recycling points were removed. These were removed as a saving as everyone has the facility at the kerbside and more people recycle when it's on their doorstep.

Cllr Argyle noted that Option 2 allows us to move things a bit further forward. Cllr Ewenson commented that Option 2 could be confusing as many people don't know what they're doing at the moment. Communicating any change is difficult but all that needs to be communicated is the change in frequency. This is a good opportunity to get the message out again about what is to be recycled. Cllr Johnston noted that Option 2 is the more flexible option and it means we can still apply for funding however we should revisit vehicle and kerbside sorts.

A thorough assessment was undertaken with the main element being the actual costing. Sorting waste at the kerbside is more expensive with more vehicles required. It is something that could be looked at again but it would be going back over old ground. Cllr Johnston commented that we need to speak to those who operate these systems **Action – RB/KL to look at this.**

Councillors agreed Option 2 is the preferred option.

The strategy is not just about kerbside, the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) now have new opening hours and will stop accepting tyres and asbestos in June.

There are more staff on site to help customers and trade waste is to be removed from recycling centres. This will be implemented in January 2020 although we are hoping to bring this forward.

The Communications Team are focusing on press coverage and have put leaflets and posters in recycling centres.

Cllr Roy asked if wheelbarrow tyres are banned from recycling centres. The ban is on vehicle tyres including those from JCB's, tractors etc. Bicycle and wheelbarrow tyres can go in the landfill skip. Cllr Johnston asked if this is in the A-Z **Action – KL to add to A-Z.**

5. WASTE STRATEGY COMMUNICATION PLAN – GORDON LYON

The recent post regarding the change in kerbside collections was discussed. This post reached 40,000 people. It was highlighted that some Facebook comments have been helpful and whilst we will never fully convince everyone there has been a change of opinion in general. The benefit of social media is statistics can be recorded. Over 15,800 people have viewed the A-Z that was recently published.

The Communications Team have been busy with the new Waste Strategy consultation which has faced a change in timescales and a lack of funding.

Becca is leaving the team at the end of the week therefore we are looking to recruit as quickly as possible. Analysis is a significant part of our job.

Information from Facebook can influence content and although messages are fairly repetitive we need to help people understand why the Council are doing this. This is a complex area of communication and whilst many people are accepting and understanding there are people we may never reach.

There has been a lot of publicity through social media, local newspapers and through addressing our own staff. A roll out on fly tipping has begun with more information to be issued on contamination.

Our corporate page on Facebook has seen 20% growth in one year with over 20,000 followers. Content requires to be written in a way that is upfront and catches people's attention.

Facebook allows us to answer questions in real time. We will continue to build on this and monitor the number of visitors and how long they stay on our site. There has been good coverage across local papers, STV and seasonal campaigns. We realise recycling waste is one of the biggest priorities of the council and society in general.

There have only been 14 complaints in a year which speaks volumes about the information we put out. The press have been much less challenging, there has been less negativity and journalists and the media understand the issues and accept where we want to go.

There will be challenges surrounding the change in procedure for accepting trade waste but the council can't continue to subsidise private business.

The Litter Prevention Action Plan/Street Cleansing requires more work as there are challenges around developing material that the public can understand.

We need to support the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) on a local basis.

Cllr Ewenson noticed on social media that people are making positive changes including ideas the Council haven't thought of. We need to build on that momentum.

Cllr Ewenson asked about the scheme where you pay £27 for the Council to collect 6 bags of garden waste. It was noted the Council do not offer this service. Cllr McKail asked if something could be written to say we don't offer this service. Cllr Roy confirmed information went out to that effect. **Action – Cllr Mollison to pass a copy of the email to AS.**

Cllr Kloppert asked about the recent social media post regarding the recycling bins. This post received a lot of feedback in a short space of time which presented some challenges. This is not a new procedure as we have always checked the content of bins, this is a new campaign. The papers have stated we will take away bins but there would be many steps to go through before this is done therefore we haven't done this and are unlikely to.

Cllr Johnston commented that we need to prevent negative comments gaining traction. We have seen a huge growth in our audience and we will continue to build on that. Cllr Johnston asked if we can advertise what other organisations are doing. Our Communication Strategy states we can only deal with our own business but we can share other organisation's content. Cllr Johnston felt the threat to take away bins could've been phrased softer.

Cllr Mollison felt if we opted to go with Option 2 it would be an easier if everyone in Aberdeenshire was on the same bin collection schedule. However this can't be done as it wouldn't be efficient to have all items coming into the transfer stations at once.

6. HWRC POLICY AND PROCEDURES AND OPTIONS TO BAN TRADE WASTE FROM HWRC'S – MATT DAVIS

The Waste Strategy was approved by ISC in January.

The difference between a recycling centre and transfer station was highlighted with recycling centres open to the public, with no weighbridges, no charges and large skips. Waste transfer stations are not open to the public but are used for bulking up waste and

mixed recycling. We are seeking to formalise arrangements but it requires a behaviour change as it is a recycling centre not a dump.

Funding has been provided for 15 full time equivalent staff who will help customers at recycling centres and encourage them to recycle.

Business waste is currently based on vehicle weight which is not a particularly effective system. It is hard to put a figure on illegal waste but an estimate would be 20%, potentially worth half a million. It's not easy to monitor as it's over such a large geographical area and customers lie about the origins of their waste. If control measures are put in one centre they need to be put in all 15 recycling centres and there is still a possibility of misuse. Our current measures were looked at along with other options including height barriers and automatic number plate recognition. We also spoke with other councils.

We currently help customers complete disclaimer forms, however the disclaimer forms are time-consuming and potentially in breach of GDPR regulations. An online permit system is proposed. A household can apply for a permit at any time. One permit book containing 12 permits will be issued per household. Permits can be used as often as required, it does not have to be spread out the year as one permit per month.

Business waste is a major problem with many customers abusing the system. The proposal is that those that can't use our collection service can use our Waste Transfer Stations on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings.

The majority of customers won't be affected as they are householders. Cars, people carriers and 4x4's have unlimited access. If a van is hired for a house move or clearance and identification and documents are provided they will also have unlimited access. Vehicles that are banned include commercial, those over 3.5 tonnes, trailers which measure over 6x8 feet, vehicles with twin wheels or more than 4, tippers and tractors. Vehicles which require a permit are vans, pick-ups, mini buses, camper vans and trailers. You must be an Aberdeenshire resident and have the V5 with a council tax or utility bill. Trailers must be lawful with matching number plates.

Cllr Roy asked when the permit system comes into effect. This is to go for a consultation with area committees in June and if approved by ISC in August, it will be implemented in January 2020. The Council want to help local businesses with their trade waste. Cllr Roy asked if this would put more pressure on staff at recycling centres. It was noted this should reduce pressure as there will be less confrontations and any permit issues should be dealt with before households arrive on site.

Cllr Roy asked if it would be up to staff to determine if pick-ups and trailers are the approved size. Cllr Argyle advised the new system should make it a lot simpler. Cllr Roy commented this would require significant publicity. Our webpage will explain the procedure and there will be an online form. Many local authorities require pre-booking but we want to make it as easy as possible.

Cllr McKail queried if gypsy travellers were given more flexibility previously. Historically they were as there was a problem with fly tipping so it was better they used our sites but they will now be treated as any other business.

Cllr Mollison cited the queues at Westhill as an example and asked if traffic congestion is an issue. Queues should reduce as the permit system will be easier as staff won't need to complete disclaimer forms with the customer.

Cllr Johnston queried if the permit system will present possibilities for bad publicity. Some people only have certain sized trailers therefore people might perceive this as unhelpful however it was noted a special collection service is on offer.

Cllr Johnston asked if a de minimis has been set for small businesses. This was considered but they can still use the centres providing their vehicle type is permitted. A loophole has been left in the system which means that some traders could still get a permit book in they lie in the application form, however their visits would be reduced from potentially weekly to 12 per year. Cllr Ewenson queried those using their business vehicle for personal waste. If they can provide a letter from the company they can get a permit book. If a joinery van came in with grass for example we would allow this as it's clearly not business waste.

Cllr Ewenson noted there is not much difference between a 4x4 and a pick-up. The majority of pick-ups are for business use and they are taxed as such. Cllr Johnston requested the wording be changed on this **Action – MD to look into and provide an update.**

Cllr Johnston noted there are residents without a vehicle that may ask a neighbour to recycle on their behalf. If this isn't being done as a business its fine. Technically in law you are meant to dispose of your own waste but no one would know if you were taking in your neighbour's waste.

Cllr Kloppert asked if native non-invasive species will get collected. Some invasive species can go to landfill but some can't, for example Japanese knotweed which has to go to a specialist landfill. Cllr Kloppert raised the issue of fly tipping on someone's land. Technically this is trade waste but we have in the past had a degree of flexibility. It has been known for some landowners to remove waste from their land and to put it on Council land. This will be looked at on a case by case basis. We will work with landowners to put in preventative measures.

Cllr Roy asked if rhododendrons are banned. These are banned from garden waste but not residual. Cllr Roy noted this is not on the list in Procedure 1 **Action – MD to look at.**

7. LPAP AND STREET CLEANSING POLICY AND PROCEDURES – ANDY SHERIDAN

The Council have a duty to keep the land and roads clean. A code of practice was developed in 2018. Part of the strategy was the Litter Prevention Action Plan which went to ISC. A Working Group was created with staff from Roads, Landscape, Planning, Education and Waste. The Street Cleansing Policy & Procedure is to go to Area Committee in August and then ISC in November.

Cllr Johnston asked who is responsible for waste in lay-bys etc. The Council are responsible for litter whether it is on trunk roads or A roads however we are not responsible for the AWPR. Cllr Johnston asked if this could be made explicit in any documentation **Action – AS to note.**

Cllr Kloppert asked why no women were part of the LPAP working group. Each service was asked to nominate a member of staff so there was no control over this. Cllr Argyle added that getting the right people was more important.

8. DATE OF NEXT WASTE MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP MEETING

Wednesday 28 August 2019 at 10.00 in Committee Room 4, Woodhill House, Aberdeen