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Crawley Borough Council

Waste & Recycling Scrutiny Panel



Agenda for the **Waste & Recycling Scrutiny Panel** which will be held in **Committee Rooms A & B - Town Hall**, on **Monday, 29 July 2024** at **7.30 pm**

Nightline Telephone No. 07881 500 227

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J Russell'.

Chief Executive

Membership:

Councillors

J Russell (Chair), S Bushnell, J Charatan,
K L Jaggard, R A Lanzer and B Yianni

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The order of business may change at the Chair's discretion

Part A Business (Open to the Public)

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Disclosures of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, Councillors of the Council are reminded that it is a requirement to declare interests where appropriate.

3. Minutes (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel held on 12 June 2024.

4. Local Interventions, Crawley Implementation and Incentivisation (Pages 9 - 14)

It was important for the Panel to establish similar activities councils were undertaking, particularly in the recycling output in flats. The Panel noted the importance to learn from other authorities together with the barriers and subsequent incentivisation to recycling.

Report HPS/042 documents research and analysis undertaken by officers in relation to other authorities and lessons learned.

5. Recommendations

To agree any recommendations from this meeting to be included into the draft report.

6. General Update and Actions for Next Meeting

To receive any relevant updates/information from officers and Panel Members, including additional information required to advance the forthcoming meetings. To include:

- a) Date of next meeting is 17 September. Confirm actions and work for final meeting of the Panel.
- b) Decide what additional information the Panel requires to complete the Review

7. Supplemental Agenda

Any urgent item(s) complying with Section 100(B) of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Waste & Recycling Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 12 June 2024 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

J Russell (Chair)

S Bushnell, J Charatan, K L Jaggard, R A Lanzer and B Yianni

Also in Attendance:

Councillor B Noyce

Abbie Cosslett – Ricardo

Shoira Masharipova – Ricardo

Abby Mason - Ricardo

Officers Present:

Paul Baker

Partnership Services Manager

Heather Girling

Democratic Services Officer

Nigel Sheehan

Head of Projects and Commercial Services

1. Disclosures of Interest

The following disclosures were made:

Councillor	Item and Minute	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor R A Lanzer	Witness and Evidence Gathering Session (Minute 3)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC (as WSCC is the waste disposal authority).

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel held on 28 February 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PART B BUSINESS (CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC)

3. Witness and Evidence Gathering Session

Exempt Paragraph 3

Information relating to financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)

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Waste & Recycling Scrutiny Panel (14)

12 June 2024

3 Minutes

The Panel had invited witnesses to help inform their investigation. Representatives from Consultants Ricardo (Abbie Cosslett, Shoira Masharipova and Abby Mason) had been invited to assist the Panel by providing an analysis of the council's current recycling performance compared to other collection regimes, along with any barriers to recycling that may have been determined through the research. An update was also provided on the National Waste Strategy: Simpler Recycling - Local Delivery and Projection Impacts (recycling, carbon, operational). The Panel was aware of the impending implementation and was keen to understand the preparation for the changes.

Councillor Noyce, as the Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change had also been invited.

The Panel received an introduction and presentation from Ricardo, along with Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services and the Partnership Services Manager. During the discussion the following points were expressed:

- It was important to consider the relevant recycling rates in Crawley and opportunities to improve those rates. This coincided with work underway to introduce the separate food waste collection, resulting from government legislation (Simpler Recycling) whereby the majority of local authorities would move to a standardised recycling and waste collections across the country from April 2026.
- Ricardo had included options for the collection of waste but amendments in regulations resulted in further changes being considered and proposed. The Chair thanked them for the work undertaken.
- As discussed at the last Panel meeting, whilst this was still to be confirmed, in summary changes for the Council could potentially see:
 - Residual (general, non-recyclable) waste collections to be collected (at least) fortnightly.
 - Co-mingled recycling will continue to be collected on a fortnightly basis.
 - A separate weekly food waste and absorbent hygiene products collection will be mandated.
 - Garden waste will remain a subscription based fee-paying service.
- It was recognised that where an authority had moved from a residual waste collection to one which was less frequent (fortnightly) together with a food waste collection had resulted in higher recycling rates.
- Clarification provided on the different options/collection regimes available together with the performance and attributing factors such as resources, vehicles, carbon outcomes and costs. Other schemes currently underway at other councils were noted.
- It was acknowledged that the packaging extended producer responsibility (EPR) was due to be implemented from January 2025, making organisations significantly more responsible for the recovery and recycling costs of their packaging. Variable fees would also aim to encourage the use of more easily recycled materials. Furthermore, it was anticipated that separate flexible/soft plastics collections would be a requirement by March 2027.
- It was noted that the Panel's scope acknowledged customer and resident engagement, and this was especially important with regards to recycling in flats. Communal collection was a complex area and known for having lower participation and higher contamination levels. Engagement would be key especially with food waste collection as a requirement.
- The Panel supported regular resident engagement and ways to incentivise recycling. Research with other local authorities would be beneficial to ascertain actions and lessons learned.

RESOLVED

That Panel Members thanked the witnesses for their attendance and contribution, all of which had been most interesting and informative. The discussion would aid the Panel in forming its recommendations.

4. Recommendations

The Panel felt further information gathering from other sources would be important prior to establishing recommendations.

5. General Update and Actions for Next Meeting

It would be key to maximise the recycling rates within the town within the confines of relevant cost. It was important for the Panel to establish similar activities councils were undertaking, particularly in the recycling output in flats. The Panel noted the importance to learn from other authorities and requested further research be undertaken with regards to their collection regimes, together with the barriers and subsequent incentivisation to recycling. **(ACTION)**

The Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services updated that it was envisaged that a report would now be heading to the 6 November Cabinet (2 October Cabinet Briefing). With that in mind, future sessions were agreed as follows:

Session 3 – Monday 29 July @ 7.30pm

- Recycling - Local Interventions and incentivisation
- Simpler Recycling – Crawley Implementation

Session 4 – Tuesday 17 September @ 7.30pm

- Conclusions and Recommendations

RESOLVED

1. That further research be undertaken by officers and Panel members with other authorities with regards to their collection regimes and the barriers and subsequent incentivisation to recycling.
2. Future meetings were agreed as Monday 29 July and Tuesday 17 September, both at 7.30pm.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Waste & Recycling Scrutiny Panel concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.49 pm.

J Russell (Chair)

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Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel (29 July 2024)

HPS/042

Recycling and Alternate Weekly Collections

Introduction

Alternate weekly collections of residual waste and dry / organics were first introduced in the mid-1990s when councils first started kerbside collections of recyclables to supplement the old traditional bottle banks. It also provided a more convenient service to residents, with the aim of increasing recycling rates. Since then, the number of authorities moving to alternate weekly collection of residual waste has grown significantly as councils see the benefits with increased recycling, reduced residual waste, lower carbon footprint and cost savings for both collection and disposal.

Investment in infrastructure at the Materials Recycling Facility has enabled increases in the amount of household packaging that can now be recycled. This has resulted in substantially more household waste being able to be segregated for recycling with the percentage of non-recyclable material steadily decreasing.

National context

To date out of 295 councils in England approximately:

- 239 collect recycling and rubbish fortnightly on alternating weeks.
- 13 collect recycling fortnightly and rubbish every three weeks.

This means just under 15% of local authorities have maintained a weekly residual waste collection. This figure is increasing all the time and will continue to do so in light of DEFRA's Simpler Recycling which will mandate a separate food waste collection.

West Sussex and other local authorities

The table below shows the collection regimes within West Sussex, neighbouring authorities and some who share a similar rurality group as Crawley:

Table 1

Council	Frequency of residual waste collection	Food waste	Standard size residual waste bin
Crawley Borough Council	Analyse various options which would include moving from weekly to alternate weekly when food waste introduced	No	140 litre
Chichester District Council	Alternate weekly	No	240 litre
Horsham District Council	Alternate weekly	No	140 litre
Arun District Council	Moving from weekly to alternate weekly when food waste introduced	No	Introducing 180 litre from sack service
Adur and Worthing District Council	Alternate weekly	No	140 litre
Mid Sussex District Council	Moving from alternate to three weekly	Rolling out now	240 litre
Reigate and Banstead District Council	Alternate weekly	Yes	140 litre
Mole Valley District Council	Alternate weekly	Yes	140 litre
Tandridge District Council	Alternate weekly	Yes	180 litre
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Borough Council	Alternate weekly	Yes	180 litre

4 Local Interventions,

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Ealing London Borough	Alternate weekly	Yes	180 litre
Harrow London Borough	Alternate weekly	Yes	240 litre
Croydon London Borough	Alternate weekly	Yes	180 litre
Merton London Borough	Alternate weekly	Yes	180 litre
Portsmouth City Council	Alternate weekly	Yes	140 litre

Waste composition

Since 2005 Crawley Borough Council has provided a co-mingled kerbside recycling collection service. The number of different materials which can be placed into recycling bins has increased over the years with cartons, glass and plastic pots, tubs and trays all now since introduced.

In addition, textiles, small electricals and batteries are now collected as part of the service provided to Crawley residents.

A subscription-based garden waste collection service has over 11,500 households signed up to it, which equates to 32% of those who have a garden.

Diagram 1 below shows the waste composition of a typical Crawley rubbish bin (Oct 2021). 44% of household waste is food waste with a further 17.5% able to be recycled through the other services the council offers. With nearly 62% of normal rubbish able to be recycled with a separate food waste collection service a move to separate food waste and less frequent residual waste collections has significant potential to increase recycling rates.

Further analysis from neighbouring authorities has found that potentially remaining with weekly residual waste collections may not encourage residents to use the new food waste collection service or try to squeeze the 17.5% of recycling from their residual waste bins to recycle.

The average amount of food waste in residual waste bins across West Sussex is broadly comparable to Crawley (40% across West Sussex compared with 44% for Crawley). The average co-mingled dry recycling in residual waste bins across West Sussex is 12.9%, compared to 12% for Crawley.

Diagram 1



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Bin Size

Wheeled bins for household waste were introduced in Crawley in 2014 as part of the service improvements implemented when the collection contract was awarded to Biffa. A 140 litre residual waste bin is provided as standard and the council operates a no side waste policy, except when collections are delayed.

A larger 240 litre wheeled bin is available to households of five or more or to those with special circumstances such as children in nappies, pets and those who have a lot of waste created due to a medical condition, which does not fit the definition of the Council's separate clinical waste collection service. The latter is reviewed on an individual basis. In all circumstances the Council request a commitment to fully recycle and those who still have one of the old small or medium sized recycling bins will be swapped over for our standard 240 litre recycling bin.

The Council does not limit the number of recycling bins householders can have, although three tends to be the maximum.

From table 1, it is evident that bin size does vary across local authorities. Interestingly, both Horsham and Adur and Worthing councils operate a fortnightly residual waste collection (with no separate food waste collection) and have retained a 140 litre bin. Given the significant amount of food waste currently in the residual waste bin in Crawley, it is recommended that retaining the 140 litre bin for an alternate weekly collection will suffice, providing households are using the food waste and dry recycling services provided correctly. This view is supported by Ricardo, the Council's Waste consultant and who has undertaken modelling work for many local authorities who have switched alternate weekly collections.

It must also be noted that residual waste bins are for general household waste only and should a householder have a significant amount of waste in a given week (eg clearing out their loft or similar) and have more waste than usual, then following standard practice this waste should be taken to the Recycling Centre for disposal.

The addition of mandated flexible plastic kerbside recycling collections from 2027 will further reduce the amount of waste being placed into residual waste bins. Further details on these arrangements are to be published by DEFRA.

Addressing concerns over food waste and alternate weekly collections

As with all changes to major services, some residents will have concerns and may feel anxious about the possibility of alternate weekly residual waste collections.

With over 85% of waste collection authorities having previously moved to alternate weekly residual waste collections, there is considerable industry knowledge and experience which can be drawn on.

The Council anticipates working with other districts and boroughs in West Sussex and with the County Council to co-ordinate information and publicity to help to allay concerns residents may have.

Some of the key areas that residents tend to have concerns with when introducing a food waste collection service and alternate weekly collections are covered below:

- Smells
If food waste is placed into the normal rubbish bin, then it might start to smell before it's collected, particularly in the warmer months. This is why it's so important for residents to use their food waste collection service, which will remain weekly. Food waste is the main reason why bins tend to smell.

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- **Nappies and incontinence waste**
Nappies and other hygiene waste should be placed in securely tied nappy bags before being placed in a rubbish bag, to reduce the risk of odours. Households who produce a bag or more of incontinence waste a week should be having this waste collected via our clinical waste collection service. Those households who have two or more in nappies will be entitled to apply for a larger rubbish bin even though there may be less than five within their household.
- **Flies and maggots**
As long as good practice measures are taken, which includes not leaving wasted food uncovered and open to attract flies, keeping waste containers closed to keep out flies, bagging all waste and using food waste liners, placing containers outdoors and out of direct sunlight, if possible and occasionally washing out bins and containers if feasible, then residents should experience very few if any issues with flies and maggots.
- **Vermin and health problems**
There is an occasional perception that alternate weekly collections of refuse leads to an increase in vermin or health problems. They have however been successfully operating in the UK for years now and it's just not been proven to be the case. There have been studies conducted by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management which found no documented evidence of a direct link between the frequency of waste collection and any actual health impacts on householders or waste collectors.
- **Volume of residual waste and bin size**
This is largely covered in the section above and as noted, if residents are using the recycling bins, the 140ltr residual waste bin will be sufficient for the majority of households. It is also noted that the National Waste Strategy proposes a levy on materials packaging as a means of encouraging producers to reduce the quantity of packaging being used. As this takes effect, it is anticipated that this will reduce the amount of packaging and the volume demand in the residual waste bin. As with any change it will take a little while for residents to adapt to the new service and see the benefits if they fully recycle and separate out all of their food waste. Residents will be encouraged to give the service a go before applying for a larger rubbish bin if eligible. A small review of the larger bin policy will form part of the preparation work over the next 12 – 18 months.

In summary, what a lot of councils have discovered is that a weekly collection of food waste removes most other concerns to alternate weekly refuse. Putrescible materials are kept out of the refuse bin and taken away every week, which then alleviates the concerns and issues over smells, flies, maggots and similar.

Flats – Recycling

The Council currently provides the same waste and recycling collection service to the majority of the communal flats and HMO's within the borough.

Within Crawley there are 10,970 flats across 989 blocks. 3,769 flats (505 blocks) are managed by Crawley Homes. There are around another 135 managing agents and private landlords who are responsible for the remaining flats.

The Council's Waste and Recycling Team has carried out a number of improvement projects at flats over the last few years in conjunction with the West Sussex Waste Partnership, in order to try to improve recycling rates and reduce contamination.

The initial pilot project won the Best Communications Campaign of the Year 2017 Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee Award for the work that was done to improve recycling at flats.

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West Sussex authorities were amongst the first to implement substantial improvements to flats recycling provision.

Improvements implemented at flats were phased in following the pilot in 2016 and included the following:

- Bespoke large 1100 litre recycling bins at larger blocks of flats with special locked and reversed lids with some having see-through sides, to help to keep contamination to a minimum.
- At smaller blocks, new 240 litre two wheeled recycling bins were replaced with new ones and additional ones delivered where necessary.
- All recycling bins had new recycling labels stuck on them informing residents what can be placed into them.
- New signage boards were placed up within bin areas next to recycling bins indicating what can be recycled.
- Reusable bags and an information pack were issued out to each flat. The bags are for residents to store recycling in within their flats and take down to the bin store to empty when full.
- The initial phases had the West Sussex team of door steppers visit each flat to deliver the bags and information pack and speak to residents about recycling.
- In later phases battery caddies were delivered along with information on the new service

The above improvements are now also implemented at all new blocks of flats.

Recycling at flats presents a number of barriers and challenges including storage space constraints within homes, the state and location of communal bin areas and confusion over what can and cannot be recycled. Blocks of flats can vary considerably from the refuse disposal methods used to the communication opportunities available, meaning different approaches may be appropriate depending upon circumstance.

Engagement and support are not only required at a household level, but also with managing agents, landlords and caretakers. Fly tipping, excess waste and contamination are a daily part of managing the service and some managing agents are more responsive than others, which can prove a barrier when trying to improve services for residents.

Resource London, a partnership between London Waste and Recycling Board (LWARB) and the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) undertook research in 2018 which revealed that the three factors – motivation, ease and knowledge - are all necessary conditions for improving recycling rates. The report showed that while many people living in flats are keen to recycle, they don't always feel that it's easy enough or that they have the right knowledge to recycle effectively.

The improvement projects the council first piloted in 2016 were designed to try to address some of the above barriers.

Since Crawley Council piloted and rolled out improvements at flats, ReLondon (the operating name for LWARB), which is a partnership of the Mayor of London and the London boroughs to improve waste and resource management also did a similar project in 2018. They have since developed these improvements, which include food waste collections and taken them further, which are now recognised as best practice.

The West Sussex Waste Partnership researched into these further improvements last year, which included further signage within bin areas and communal notice boards, particularly focusing on directing residents to use bulky waste collection services instead of dumping large items within bin stores, new tenant recycling packs and working more closely with managing agents. The latter includes placing more responsibility onto managing agents and landlords, particularly when it comes to fly tipping within bin areas and contaminated recycling bins. We would also like to trial putting in bespoke bins for small electricals and textiles.

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Although a rough project plan was produced, the work of the partnership has had to be redirected due to mandated food waste collections. There is a commitment however to put together a new tenants' information pack with the onus put on the managing agent to issue out as they are the ones who know when new tenants are moving in. All managing agents will have to be contacted with regards to food waste collections in any case so this piece of work will be incorporated into this.

Flats – Food Waste Collections

The new Simpler Recycling regulations stipulate that food waste collections must be provided to all households including flats.

From data gathered by WRAP, authorities can expect food waste yields at flats to be between one-third and one-half of that collected from kerbside properties. There generally tends to be a low participation rate in food waste recycling at flats.

WRAP has produced guidance material based on best practice as to how to roll out a food waste collection service to flats and this will form the basis of how it is implemented within Crawley.