

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Waste & Recycling Scrutiny Panel

Monday, 29 July 2024 at 7.30 pm

Councillors Present:

J Russell (Chair)

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

Officers Present:

Paul Baker Partnership Services Manager
Heather Girling Democratic Services Officer

1. Disclosures of Interest

The following disclosure was made:

Councillor	Item and Minute	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor R A Lanzer	Local Interventions, Crawley Implementation and Incentivisation (Minute 3)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC (as WSCC is the waste disposal authority).

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel held on 12 June 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Local Interventions, Crawley Implementation and Incentivisation

It was important for the Panel to understand any similar activities that other councils were undertaking, particularly in the recycling output from flats. The Panel noted the importance to learn from other authorities and had requested further research be undertaken with regards to their collection regimes, together with the barriers and subsequent incentivisation to recycling.

The Panel considered [HPS/042](#) which documented the research undertaken by officers in relation to other authorities. The Panel was informed of a clerical correction in the report regarding the “National Context” as follows:

The fifth line should read 'This figure is *decreasing* all the time and will continue to do so in light of DEFRA's Simpler Recycling which will mandate a separate food waste collection'.

In answering queries on the report, it was acknowledged that within Crawley there were 10,970 flats across 989 blocks. 3,769 flats (505 blocks) were managed by Crawley Homes. There were also around another 135 managing agents and private landlords who were responsible for the remaining flats. In addition it was thought it would be beneficial to contact and liaise with Residents' Associations for some of the flats.

It was recognised that recycling at flats presented 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 vary considerably from the refuse disposal methods used to the communication opportunities available, meaning different approaches may be appropriate depending upon circumstance. There was currently an audit being undertaken for each block of flats/communal area to determine the specifics, availability, options and opportunities as understanding the current environment was key.

[Bulky waste](#) was noted as a concern, and whether areas within bin stores could accommodate areas for this collection. However, it was recognised due to communal areas this may not be feasible but further data would be analysed once the audit had been completed. It was acknowledged that the Council operated a bulky waste collection service and residents who were in receipt of certain benefits may qualify for one free collection every 12 months. It was noted that private contractors to collect and dispose of unwanted items could be used but ensuring the contractor was a Registered Waste Carrier.

Given the small percentage of local authorities nationally (15%) that had maintained a weekly residual waste collection, it was noted that the documentation and research available on implementation and incentivisation would be paramount. It was recognised that Simpler Recycling was a national strategy and further information would be forthcoming. The Council worked in partnership with WSCC (as the waste disposal authority) to ensure regional communication would ensure consistency, along with that on a local level. The Panel had received background information detailing initiatives from other authorities, together with WRAP and ReLondon which documented the improvements in waste and resource management particularly around flats, and took to opportunity to thank the Democratic Services Officer for the research undertaken.

It was acknowledged that the new Simpler Recycling regulations stipulated that food waste collections must be provided to all households including flats and this would be challenging given the complex nature. Previously, improvements implemented at flats were phased in following the pilot in 2016. The Panel were informed that it was anticipated that households would receive two food caddies (small one for inside and the external bin). As with any change it would take a little while for residents to adapt to the new service and see the benefits if they fully recycled and separated out all of their food waste. The Panel welcomed that the roll-out may potentially be undertaken in two or more phases depending on the varying requirements of different property types.

Panel Members saw the benefit of using 'smart clear sacks' for recycling material, particularly for flats. These had been successfully used in other local authorities (for

example Kensington and Chelsea) for both [commercial](#) premises and [residential](#)). Accepted recyclable items were printed on the sack and clearly visible.

The Panel observed that its scope had been to improve recycling rates within the borough and whilst there was a strong link between the waste collection strategy and the level of recycling, (typically where an authority had moved from a residual waste collection to one which was less frequent this had resulted in higher recycling rates), Simpler Recycling was to be mandated in 2026. However, there were improvements that could be actioned prior (and in tandem) to the implementation of Simpler Recycling which would assist.

It was clear that a positive message regarding recycling was required in order to incentivise and encourage residents. The Panel was keen that the Council's current webpage on 'Waste and Recycling' be re-named 'Recycling and Waste', together with some rebranding (similar to other authorities). It was felt a simple title change would place recycling at the forefront but also relocate the page higher on the website and thus refocus priorities. It was important to have a simple message throughout all communications, both now and during the introduction of Simpler Recycling, that recycling makes a difference and for residents not to 'waste' their recycling. There should also be an option to signpost to tangible information for those residents that wish to receive further material.

Further communication and resident engagement would be paramount to ensure a successful rollout throughout each phase and this included ensuring any material was easy to access and understand. Islington Council had [Recycling Champions](#) and it was queried whether the Council had similar local volunteers or whether local businesses could be assist in a similar process through advertising. It was noted that there were programmes and schemes working with local schools and colleges to address recycling, however it was hoped the message could always be improved. It was felt it would be beneficial to investigate whether the Junior Citizen event which covered 'waste and the environment' could be expanded further to cover 'waste and recycling'.

The Panel queried whether new planning developments had the opportunity to ensure that recycling and waste disposal was established and future proofed with regards to Simpler Recycling and ease of access. It was confirmed that major planning applications were commented upon by the Council's Refuse and Recycling Team and subsequently documented in the application to be considered by the Planning Committee.

Query was sought as to the recycling reserve credits and it was confirmed that discussions were ongoing, but it was noted that WSCC would have increased costs with regards to food waste in terms of plant reconfiguration.

RESOLVED

That the Panel noted the report, with the views expressed being acknowledged by the officers for inclusion in the draft recommendations.

4. Recommendations

Proposed and potential draft recommendations to be noted for future discussion in September included:

- a) Authorise officers to further explore the use of different collection methods for flats, including the use of reusable bags and/or “smart clear sacks” for collecting recycling which should have printed on information about what to recycle.
- b) Request that the Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change investigate the Junior Citizen event which covers ‘waste and the environment’ to consider expanding this further to cover ‘waste and recycling’.
- c) Re-name the current Council’s website link to ‘Recycling and Waste’.
- d) Approve that any future communications should be easy to understand and include the message about the cost, importance of recycling to incentivise and engage residents along with a contact details for bulky waste collection and fly tipping. This should particularly target flats:
 - Wrap around signs on vehicles (as per standard approach)
 - Standard information bins (“bin hangers” as per standard approach)
 - myCrawley
 - Crawley Live
 - Early promotion with Christmas collections
 - Council Tax billing
 - All social media to feature notification of any changes
- e) Recognise that a rollout of two or more phases may be required to take into account varying requirements of different property types throughout the town during the implementation of Simpler Recycling .
- f) Approve that the waste and recycling service ensures that residents are fully involved from the start of the roll out of Simpler Recycling, particularly when deciding where bins are sited and how best to provide information.
- g) The Scrutiny Panel supports moving to an alternate weekly collection alongside the introduction of food waste collection services if this would assist in the reduction of residual waste and improve recycling across the borough, despite the challenges within the urban area. It subsequently requests that Cabinet consider further investigation and analysis of the following options in conjunction with Simpler Recycling:
 - Separate weekly food waste collections
 - Fortnightly residual collections

5. General Update and Actions for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Panel was scheduled for Tuesday 17 September at 7.30pm. It was envisaged that any views and thoughts would be discussed and recommendations from previous meetings would be drawn together and agreed. It was then usual for the draft report to be circulated by email to Panel Members with a deadline for any comments. The report would be presented at both the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Cabinet by the Panel Chair.

It was confirmed that report [HPS/042](#) was a report for the Panel's meeting and included detailed research undertaken by the Waste and Recycling Team following the Panel's last meeting in June. The Panel's work was to look at options to improve recycling rates across the borough and the final report would include recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Cabinet. The Waste and Recycling Contract report was a separate policy report to Cabinet covering the options of the waste and recycling service and would seek approval to introduce the Simpler Recycling Policy mandated by Government.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Waste & Recycling Scrutiny Panel concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.44 pm.

J Russell (Chair)