

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL (BMBC)

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan.

Report of the Executive Director
Core Services

SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP (TFG) REPORT ON RECYCLING

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To report to Cabinet the findings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) from the investigation undertaken on its behalf by the Recycling Task and Finish Group (TFG). This involved considering the current picture in relation to recycling in Barnsley; how well we perform as a local area and how we compare with others; what are local businesses doing in terms of recycling; and what are the future plans in terms of this agenda. The TFG met with several local agencies and undertook site visits to learn more. A number of recommendations have been made by the TFG in support of further improvement.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet considers the conclusions and recommendations set out in section 6 as a result of the TFG's review of Recycling.

3. Introduction/Background

- 3.1 As part of its work programme the OSC agreed to undertake a TFG investigation into recycling in Barnsley. Given the heightened awareness of climate change and protecting the planet, Members were keen to consider Barnsley's waste disposal processes, especially our performance in relation to recycling. The investigation sought to better understand waste disposal processes and recycling in Barnsley, especially as it was felt there is a lot of confusion amongst residents. The TFG also sought to hear from local businesses and their view of the recycling agenda as well as the local community.

- 3.2 The members of the TFG who undertook this investigation included the following: Councillor Peter Fielding (TFG Lead Member), Councillor Jeff Ennis, Councillor Steve Green, Councillor Paul Hand-Davis, Councillor Wayne Johnson, Councillor Kath Mitchell, Councillor Pauline Phillips, Councillor John Wilson and Councillor Charles Wraith.

4. What the Task & Finish Group (TFG) looked at

- 4.1 Initially, the TFG met to consider the scope of the investigation. This included discussing their key concerns such as what happens to waste generated in Barnsley and how much of it is sent to landfill, the confusion over which items to put in the recycling bins - especially when it comes to plastics. Members were keen to be championing the recycling agenda and also wondered to what extent the Council works with businesses to encourage them to think about their practices and impact on the environment.
- 4.2 The group were keen to find out how Barnsley compares with neighbouring areas, as well as best practice around the country. Similarly, the group were interested in what key standards and influences nationally and internationally that the Council has to be cognisant of in terms of this agenda and any upcoming changes.
- 4.3 In the early stages of the TFG's investigation, the Council declared a 'Climate Emergency' and set out a number of plans to support the transition to a zero carbon Council and Borough. This was a

timely announcement given the TFG's investigation and their hopes to make some recommendations in support of these plans.

4.4 The TFG undertook a number of 'check and challenge' sessions with officers regarding the work being carried out and future plans. This involved asking questions of them regarding their work, their involvement and partnership working with other agencies including the impact of this on Barnsley residents. The TFG were also able to consider and learn from a local business and resident group. Specific meetings included:

- Visiting the Council's Smithies Depot where the waste collection service is operated from amongst other services;
- Undertaking a site visit to the Barnsley, Doncaster & Rotherham (BDR) Waste Treatment Facility at Manvers to understand how residual waste is processed once collected;
- A session with the Council's Service Director for Environment & Transport and Head of Waste, Recycling and Neighbourhood Services to consider the operational management of waste services;
- Undertaking a site visit to the Morrisons Store in Barnsley Town Centre to meet their Community Champion to consider their in-store environmental initiatives;
- Visiting Morrisons Distribution Centre in Wakefield to learn of their different environmental considerations;
- A session with members from the local Plastic Free Penistone Community Group whose aim is to reduce unnecessary plastics, look at alternative lifestyles and materials, and recycling;
- A plenary session with the Cabinet Member for Place - Environment & Transport and the Executive Director – Place to understand the strategic perspective in relation to waste management in Barnsley.

5. What the Task & Finish Group found

5.1 Initially, TFG members undertook a visit to the Council's Smithies Depot where Waste Services amongst others are operated from. Members learned of the new in-cab technology due to be installed in vehicles which will automate the round collection information and enable better reporting in terms of missed bins and those not put out for collection. It will also enable improved reporting on recycling contamination and usage so that messages can be targeted to increase both the amount and quality of recycling. The TFG welcomed this and were keen to be involved in driving the messages in their communities once it is installed.

5.2 Members raised the confusion amongst residents regarding recycling and which items could and couldn't go in which bin. This was complicated by labelling on packaging, especially in terms of plastics, which identified the item as recyclable; however, it was not an item that was listed as accepted by Barnsley's brown bin collection. The service acknowledged the confusion for residents and advised that it is important residents go by the instructions for their local waste collection, as the items accepted will depend on the individual contracts their local Council has in place. Within these, tolerances are allowed for a small amount of contamination; however, should there be too much, the waste could end up in landfill and will be costly to dispose of. Members were encouraged to hear that 97.1% of waste from Barnsley had been diverted from landfill; however, would ideally like this figure to be closer to 100% given the negative environmental impact of landfill. Members also felt that it would be beneficial for a wider range of plastic items to be collected to increase our recycling rates and avoid contamination.

5.3 Having undertaken a tour of the site, Members were also encouraged by the development of the Trade Waste collection/recycling site and the potential this had to not only reduce fly-tipping but to ensure that trade waste is disposed of appropriately. Overall, Members were impressed by the officers they met on-site and their enthusiasm to develop and improve services.

5.4 On visiting the BDR Waste Treatment Facility at Manvers, the TFG were given a presentation to explain how the facility works and clarify the difference between this and the neighbouring solution in Sheffield. The BDR Facility is unique in that it includes a Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) plant (a series of processes with machinery that separates the waste) and a dry Anaerobic

Digestion (AD) Plant. The Anaerobic Plant at the very end of the process generates electricity to help power the on-site Waste Treatment Facility and also produces a fine compost-like output which is used in land restoration. The fuel produced (less than 60% of the incoming waste) is then taken to MultiFuel's energy from waste facility at Ferrybridge in West Yorkshire, where it is used to generate low carbon electricity which is supplied to the National Grid. The facility is enabling the large percentage of waste to be diverted from landfill and is also making a significant carbon dioxide equivalent saving.

- 5.5 On taking a tour of the facility, the TFG were impressed by the technology involved in the process and how it was further avoiding waste being sent to landfill. However, the TFG saw the costs incurred to process waste in this way when householders should have put certain items into their recycling bins which could be much cheaper to dispose of. Depending on global markets, the Council can in some cases generate income from its collection which can be re-invested in the service. It is therefore imperative that we continue to encourage residents to recycle and ensure that messages about which items can go in which bins is clear.
- 5.6 Members were made aware that the BDR Waste Treatment Facility is able to accommodate tours and has information available which can be taken out to schools explaining both the facility as well as good practice in terms of recycling. Also, that the website contains some online resources which schools can download and use for themselves.
- 5.7 At the following TFG, the group met with the Council's Service Director for Environment & Transport and Head of Waste, Recycling and Neighbourhood Services to understand the operational side to the Council's Waste Services. This included an overview of the volatile nature of the global value of recyclables and how this impacted on managing service budgets. For example, China's reclassification of some recycling materials as waste triggered a global change in the recycling markets. Since 2017 the value of plastic has reduced by 42% and the value of paper has dropped by around 74%. The group discussed the financial costs incurred by the Council to be environmentally friendly; however, agreed that this was the right thing to do.
- 5.8 The group considered the Council's current recycling rate being 47% which it was felt we could do better. There was an appreciation that for some households they have more pressing concerns than recycling due to their circumstances; however, it was felt that we could do much better by targeting messages in certain areas and also help to reduce confusion amongst residents in terms of recycling. The group also discussed the challenges of properties having adequate bin storage space, especially at older properties which means that some householders don't have all of the recycling bins, resulting in their waste being extremely expensive to process as it is not separated. The TFG were keen to ensure that new developments do however account for this. The group also examined the difficulties of using shared bins in blocks of flats and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).
- 5.9 As part of the investigation the group were keen to hear the perspective of businesses. Morrisons supermarket had recently been identified in a national report as performing well in terms of their policies and action on reducing plastics. The Community Champion in the local store kindly agreed to meet the group to talk about the initiatives. Some of the initiatives discussed were:
- all the waste was sorted in store and sent back to the regional distribution centre for disposal;
 - single use plastic cups had been removed from the canteen;
 - plastic trays for meat had been changed to make them easier to recycle and customers could bring in their own reusable containers to take it home;
 - discount was given to customers who brought their own reusable cup to buy a tea/coffee in the café;
 - customers were able to request the used ground coffee to take it home for composting;
 - to encourage customers to bring their own reusable carriers the number of plastic bags available to customers has been reduced, including specific ones to put bunches of flowers in and there is an increased charge for purchasing bags;
 - the jacket part of staff uniform is made from recycled material;
 - bedding plant trays are now made out of recycled plastic bottles;
 - customers can remove any excess packaging in store, and they will dispose of it.

- 5.10 It was noted that the packaging on a number of items stated it was 'widely recyclable'; however, as there is no legislation in relation to waste and common requirements, a number of these items could not be recycled as part of the recycling collection in Barnsley. It was highlighted that this makes it confusing for customers to know what can and can't be recycled at home and it also creates challenges for retailers who operate nationally as they are unable to helpfully and consistently label their products.
- 5.11 In addition to the store visit, the TFG were invited to visit Morrisons' regional distribution centre in Wakefield. This gave the group opportunity to learn of how the business works hard to reduce their waste and recycle what is produced. This is cleverly considered so that they work in partnership with disposal companies so that this can be done at low or no cost or in some cases for profit. Where possible, products which have been unsold in stores are redistributed to charities; thereby minimising any waste. It was also noted that in terms of logistics, they ensured lorries were not carrying empty loads and doing unnecessary journeys, so that once stock was delivered, the lorry returned with the waste from the stores ready for it to be recycled via the regional distribution centre.
- 5.12 Anecdotally, TFG Members highlighted that there are a number of retailers both locally and nationally who have in-store schemes in relation to recycling. Some of these are promoted on websites, however noted it can sometimes be difficult for customers to find these facilities in stores. The TFG would welcome all retailers ensuring that their recycling schemes are available in all their retail outlets and promoting their use to customers in store. Equally, the TFG would encourage the public to find out what should be on offer in the retail outlets they visit and speak to staff if they are unable to find or access those services.
- 5.13 The penultimate meeting of the TFG was with community members of the 'Plastic Free Penistone' group. They are linked in with the national body 'Plastic Free Communities: Surfers Against Sewage'. This is a community network across the UK that's tackling single-use plastic from the beach, all the way back to the brands and businesses who create it. Importantly, one of the key messages was to reduce waste in the first place, using the phrase 'reduce, reuse, recycle' rather than the focus being just on recycling, which they felt the Council should be pushing more as an agenda/campaign. The Plastic Free Penistone group have taken lots of local action including a Christmas event looking at selling reusable items, they have been in contact with local businesses who have made changes to their practise, such as moving away from single use plastics. They are also planning to do more awareness raising at the Penistone Show.
- 5.14 The TFG admired the work of the community group and they discussed issues such as the confusion over which items should go in which bins in Barnsley. The community group were keen that messages were done pictorially so that they were easy to follow, and they felt that the 'Wakefield Recycles' Facebook page was a good example of how to disseminate key messages. They also highlighted the importance of consumer pressure in trying to change the practises of businesses both locally and nationally and felt that the Council was key in trying to promote some of these messages.
- 5.15 The final meeting of the TFG with the Cabinet Member for Place - Environment & Transport and the Executive Director – Place, enabled the group to consider the strategic plans and challenges in relation to waste management and recycling in Barnsley. The group discussed the National Government's recently published 'Waste and Resources Strategy' including its implications for the Council and its processes, as well as the need for there to be central government funding made available to support the government's requests.
- 5.16 The TFG welcomed the interest with regards to this agenda such as wanting to reduce single use plastics and influencing contracts where the Council was able. This was evidenced by recent contact with local schools and young people on this agenda, which had highlighted enthusiasm from young people with regards to climate change and the importance of this. It was encouraging to see that it was pupils lobbying their school to get them to improve their waste and recycling practices. The group concluded by acknowledging the good performance of Barnsley in terms of

its recycling rate as well as the high percentage of waste diverted from landfill, which should be shared and celebrated.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Throughout the investigation, the TFG members made a number of suggestions and recommendations regarding the work being undertaken. The TFG will also be writing to local Members of Parliament (MPs) to ensure they champion the messages raised in the report including better regulation over waste. In addition to this, the TFG recommends the following:

6.2 **Recommendation 1: A Communications campaign should be undertaken to reduce the confusion for residents over which items can go in which bin as well as highlight the need to adhere to the local scheme, not national messages**

A common feature of the TFG was a lack of understanding over which items go in which bin. The TFG felt it was important that information was included in the new residents' magazine which will be going out to all households. This is chance to pictorially explain what should be in each bin and direct residents to the A-Z on the website which ought to be made more visible on the landing page. Social media campaigns, household leaflets and bin stickers should be used, which could also incorporate key information as well as targeted messages at certain times such as how and when to recycle over the Christmas period. The campaign could also include requesting to work with local supermarkets to hold a stall in their local stores to show which Barnsley bin common items from their stores should go in. A number of our local stores have positive policies in relation to the environment, reducing waste and recycling which could be promoted to customers at the same time.

6.3 **Recommendation 2: The Council should encourage schools to cover waste and recycling as an essential part of the curriculum**

Across Barnsley there is variance in whether schools cover this agenda in the curriculum. Some have been very proactive and have introduced specific schemes in their schools; however, this has been down to particular staff to drive this agenda. A number of resources are available for schools to access in relation to the BDR Waste Treatment Facility at Manvers so that children and young people in the Borough can understand what happens to their residual waste. Globally, it is evident that young people are driving this agenda as it will be they that live with the consequences of not looking after the environment today and through their knowledge they will be able to influence their parents'/carers'/family's/friends' behaviour.

6.4 **Recommendation 3: The Council should be leading the way in terms of the 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' agenda and this should be incorporated into all its premises and contracting as well as encouraging partner agencies to do the same**

Members of the TFG were keen for the Council to be leading on this agenda as well as learn from the practise at other organisations such as offering a discount to those who bring their own reusable cup into Council-run/contracted cafés such as at Barnsley Premier Leisure (BPL). Single use plastics should be avoided including at places such as the new Market Kitchen. Where possible items such as uniforms which are available in recycled materials could be purchased. As the Council works closely with a number of partner agencies, they also have opportunity to influence their practises positively, as well as come together to work with contractors in terms of collection/disposal of items which is mutually beneficial.

6.5 **Recommendation 4: The Council should invest in collecting a wider range of plastics from residents and also start offering a commercial recycling collection**

The TFG appreciate that these initiatives will come at a higher cost to the Council. However, they feel that residents are increasingly wanting to 'do their bit' in terms of this agenda. Also, having declared a Climate Emergency, the TFG feel it is important for the Council to be investing in such initiatives. Linked with recommendation 1, the timing of a communications campaign needs to be mindful of any upcoming changes including information for residents on recycling bin capacity and side waste.

6.6 **Recommendation 5: Area Councils and Ward Alliances support local community groups with the 'reduce, reuse recycle' agenda, whether this is financially to undertake campaigns or to offer them space to promote these key messages at local galas**

The TFG was impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of the local community group and would hope to see this work expanded across to other communities in the Borough so we have a strong network of Plastic-Free groups and initiatives in Barnsley.

6.7 **Recommendation 6: The Council puts aside part of any income generated via waste services to invest in initiatives which encourage the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste**

In line with declaring a Climate Emergency and the global concerns regarding the environment, the TFG feel the Council should ring-fence monies to demonstrate to residents its action on this agenda, including invest to save initiatives. Income generated from the new trade waste facility for example, could be used to employ a recycling officer to promote the agenda in schools, on social media etc.

6.8 **Recommendation 7: When developers bring forward planning applications, adequate storage for recycling bins should be incorporated and identified on the plans**

The TFG acknowledge the complexities involved in planning applications; however, feel that it is imperative that the requirements of the new Housing Development Supplementary Planning Document in relation to bin storage are consistently enforced on all relevant planning applications and that we are encouraging both residents and businesses to dispose of their waste appropriately to minimise damage on the environment by recycling.

The TFG would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who provided information, attended meetings and assisted with the TFG's investigation; it is much appreciated.

7. **Implications for local people / service users**

7.1 The investigation undertaken by the TFG as well as the recommendations made are in support of the principle of 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle'. The TFG is keen for communities to be well-informed in terms of waste and the impact that we are all having on the environment. It is also noted that in terms of delivering services which are preferable to customers, such as being able to place more items in the brown recycling bin, may incur higher costs to the Council.

8. **Financial implications**

8.1 There are no specific financial implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the financial implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding.

9. **Employee implications**

9.1 There are no specific employee implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the employee implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding.

10. **Communications implications**

10.1 A key part of the TFG's investigation and resulting recommendations is to ensure key messages around Barnsley's recycling collection scheme are disseminated to provide clarity and avoid confusion with national messages. It is felt the newly published residents' magazine would be a prime place to do this as well as online, including making the link to the A-Z more visible.

11. **Consultations**

11.1 Consultations have taken place with: the Recycling TFG Members; the OSC; Councillor Chris Lamb; Council Officers from the Place Directorate; Officers from the BDR Waste Treatment

Facility; Staff from Morrisons Supermarket and Regional Distribution Centre; Plastic Free Penistone Community Group; and the Council's Senior Management Team.

12. The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework

12.1 As outlined in the Corporate Plan, the three priorities for Barnsley are: a thriving and vibrant economy, citizens achieving their potential and strong & resilient communities. To enable achievement of these priorities, it is essential that we look after our local area and the environment to protect it both now and for future generations. Key performance indicators are identified in the Council's quarterly performance report in relation to the collection and disposal of waste which helps to maintain oversight of this agenda.

13. Promoting equality & diversity and social inclusion

13.1 The TFG is keen to ensure that all Council services and activities are accessible to all its communities. Throughout the TFG's involvement in this work they have specifically referred to making sure that messages are clear to all our residents, for example where English is an additional language and to assist those who are new to the Borough.

14. Tackling the impact of poverty

14.1 Encouraging people to reduce and reuse items helps with tackling poverty to avoid unnecessary costs, whilst also looking after the environment. It is important we encourage all communities to do this and highlight the benefits of this.

15. Risk management issues

15.1 The Council's Strategic Risk Register (SRR) is currently under review; therefore, the reference to specific risks is likely to change. However, it is likely the recommended activities detailed in this report will contribute further to the effective mitigation of risks associated with the environmental impact of waste management and ensuring delivery of effective recycling services in Barnsley. It would therefore be appropriate for any follow-up report to be cognisant of these risks.

16. Glossary

BDR	Barnsley Doncaster Rotherham (Waste Treatment Facility)
BMBC	Barnsley Metropolitan borough Council
BPL	Barnsley Premier Leisure
HMO	Houses in Multiple Occupation
OSC	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
TFG	Task and Finish Group

17. Background papers and useful links

- Developing a Zero Carbon Strategy for the Council and the Borough and Declaration of Climate Emergency (Cab.18.9.2019/9) (Full Council.26.09.2019/5):
<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57816/ZERO%2040.pdf>
- South Yorkshire Municipal Waste Strategy 2016-2021:
<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s26230/Appendix%202.pdf>
- BDR Waste Treatment Facility Website (including resources for schools):
<http://www.bdronline.co.uk/>
- Checking Out on Plastics II: Report by Environmental Investigation Agency & Greenpeace:
<https://eia-international.org/wp-content/uploads/Checking-Out-on-Plastics-2-report.pdf>
- Plastic Free Communities: Surfers Against Sewage:
<https://www.sas.org.uk/plastic-free-communities/>
- HM Government: Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765914/resources-waste-strategy-dec-2018.pdf

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