

Bolsover District Council

Meeting of the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee on 1st July 2024

Review of Effectiveness of Council's Waste Collection and Disposal Education

Report of the Chair of Customer Services Scrutiny Committee

Classification	This report is Public
Contact Officer	Thomas Dunne-Wragg, Scrutiny Officer

PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

To present to Scrutiny the completed report for the recent review of effectiveness of Council's waste collection and disposal education

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 The Customer Services Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of effectiveness of the Council's waste collection and disposal education as part of the 2024-25 Work Programme.
- 1.2 The issue was initially raised due to concerns of contamination rates within recycling waste collections, creating additional costs to the Authority through contamination charges. Committee Members believed that the main cause of this issue was due to residents not knowing how to use their bins correctly and effectively.
- 1.3 Under Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018, the Council has a duty to ensure its website is 'perceivable, operable, understandable and robust'. The UK accessibility legislation states public sector bodies must comply with the accessibility requirements; councils must include and update an accessibility statement on their website.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

2.1 The aim of the review was:

- To ensure that the Council's approach to waste disposal advice and education is reaching all target audiences to reduce current contamination rates and improve recycling rates by way of increased resident participation.

2.2 The objectives agreed were:

- Assess the current approach of the Council to waste disposal advice and education and the channels used.
- Examine the accessibility and reach of current communications on waste disposal/education
- Assess current levels of performance and action taken to ensure this is controlled within expected limits.

2.3 The key issues identified for investigation were as follows:

- Impact of current contamination rates on recycling targets, additional costs to the Council.
- Usage of Household Waste Recycling Centre in Bolsover and whether there is clear messaging as to what can and can't be taken to the site.
- Reduction in size of black residual waste bins. Costs associated with recycling by way of burgundy bin, with second available on request.
- Potential use of skip collections in problem wards or Freighter Days – this does not always encourage correct recycling and results in bulky type waste collection. This further increases residual waste which may normally be taken to a household waste recycling centre and therefore increases the amount of residual waste collected by the Council. This then lowers the overall combined recycling rates due to the amount recycled being calculated as the percentage diverted from the residual waste stream and not increasing as skip collections do.

2.4 The Committee met on seven occasions in total and sought evidence by way of:

- Internal enquiries to assess the Council's existing policies and approach to waste disposal advice and education and the Council's existing waste collection procedures
- An analysis of the current educational material and channels used by the Communications Team
- An evaluation of the current accessibility and reach of the Council's communication services
- An audit of participation statistics and data regarding public engagement with the communication channels used by the Council
- A public survey through the Citizens' Panel to assess service users' thoughts and opinions on the accessibility of waste disposal education and information provided by the Council. This survey assessed resident's knowledge of waste disposal and recycling, examined how residents access information on waste disposal through the various communication channels that are available, and gave opportunity for feedback on the Council's approach to waste disposal education.
- An analysis of current levels of performance and the methods of action taken by the Council to ensure this is controlled within expected limits.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The Committee have put together 11 recommendations which will hopefully assist the Council in improving recycling rates and reducing rates of waste contamination by improving the effectiveness of the Council's waste collection and disposal education.

3.2 The key findings arising from the review are:

- That there is most confusion over the burgundy bin and which items are supposed to be recycled and which items cannot be recycled.
- That since the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Council has struggled to regenerate school programmes and has not yet returned to the pre-COVID standards of recycling education for young people.
- That the Council acknowledges the introduction of separate weekly food waste collections from 1st April 2026 will influence the next major stepped change in Bolsover's combined recycling performance, by breaking the 50% barrier to head towards the 2035 target of 65%.
- That it is crucial that the Council considers accessibility of communication services and the statutory requirements with regards to education on Council services that affect all residents so that every service user can benefit from the waste collection services that the Council provides.
- That the Council should look towards the future of Bolsover by considering innovative modern methods of communication to consider ways to engage young people and the future residents of the District.
- That some of the Council's communication services are not being fully utilised due to a lack of educational content being received from the relevant specialist officers.
- That the Council must effectively utilise their current methods of communication to the highest standard with efficiency and coherence to frequently remind residents on the importance of recycling, the correct methods of recycling, and the best practice of how to engage with the Council's waste collection services.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 Executive could choose not to endorse the recommendations of the review where they feel the course of action recommended is beyond the delivery capacity of the Authority.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Council feature recycling information in its quarterly magazine, 'InTouch', at a minimum of twice per year, considering a double page spread devoted entirely to waste disposal and education.
2. That the Council feature more waste disposal education/information and recycling themed news stories on Bolsover TV, which will be shared through social media, on a regular basis.

3. That the Council increase the frequency of recycling champions attending schools across the District on a regular basis to promote recycling education.
4. That the Council promotes the educational waste disposal video by resending it to schools, after school clubs and community youth groups, to be shown to young people.
5. That the Council holds a youth competition across the District to design and create recycling posters that encourage and promote the correct ways to recycle. The posters can be posted across the District in public spaces as well as through parish council communication channels (i.e., parish notice boards and magazines).
6. That the Council uploads an accessible image of the burgundy bin diagram (as featured in the October 2023 Issue 62 of InTouch) to the Council's website and makes better use of the diagram in public spaces and across the Council's channels of communication as well as through parish council communication channels (i.e., parish notice boards and magazines).
7. That the Council publishes educational recycling information, e.g., the accessible burgundy bin poster, across the District on the electronic bulletin boards in the four main market towns.
8. That the Council publishes regular waste disposal education through the weekly E-Newsletter service for residents.
9. That the Council redesigns the bin calendar/recycling guide booklet and uploads an accessible PDF of the calendar on the Council's website.
10. That the Council considers the development of an 'app' as a long-term investment, modelled on systems used by the top performing waste authorities (detailed in Appendix 3 of the report) through benchmarking and comparing business processes and performance metrics.
11. That the Council reinforces the established policy on refusing the collection of bins as detailed in section 3.17 of the Council's Waste Collection Policy, and undertakes doorstep education to influence the reduction of contamination in burgundy bins.

Approved by Councillor Anne Clarke, Portfolio Holder for Environment

IMPLICATIONS.

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

None from this report. Suggested action for the service can be contained within existing budgets.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details:

In carrying out scrutiny reviews the Council is exercising its scrutiny powers as laid out in s.21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation which added/amended these powers

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Environment: Yes No

Details:

The review supports the Corporate Ambition of 'Environment' and the Priority of 'Reducing our carbon footprint whilst supporting and encouraging residents and businesses to do the same by increasing rates of recycling across the District'. The review indirectly supports the Corporate Target ENV03: Achieve a combined recycling and composting rate of 65% by 2035, as well as the Corporate Target SS05: To reduce the amount of residual household waste disposed of by way of landfill annually.

Staffing: Yes No

Details:

There are no staffing implications from this report.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:</p> <p>Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p>	No
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p>	No

District Wards Significantly Affected	None
Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Executive <input type="checkbox"/> SLT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Details: Yes Details: Relevant Service Managers and Portfolio Holder engaged during the review process, and public survey carried out via the Citizens Panel.

Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy, and Environment.
The review supports the Corporate Ambition of 'Environment'

DOCUMENT INFORMATION	
Appendix No	Title
3.1	Review of Effectiveness of Council's Waste Collection and Disposal Education

Background Papers
<i>(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Executive, you must provide copies of the background papers).</i>
Please contact Scrutiny Officer where further information is required.