



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

**PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY,
COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

17th February 2022

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR OF
PROSPERITY, DEVELOPMENT AND
FRONTLINE SERVICES.**

Agenda Item No: 5

**REPORT ON GREEN WASTE
COLLECTIONS**

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on green waste collections following the implementation of sack collections and the 'RCT's Got A Brand New Bag' campaign. Please note all figures quoted are as of 3rd February 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report:
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any further matters.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This Council as have all Councils in Wales has statutory targets set by Welsh Government. This year the target is again 64%, failure to meet these targets will

result in the Council receiving a substantial fine. The fine is based on performance with every tonne we miss the target by, will result in a minimum fine of £200 per tonne. Welsh Government has set all Councils a recycling target of 70% by 2024/2025.

- 3.2 However looking forward and to support the Council’s commitment to becoming a carbon neutral Council by 2030, Waste has been set a recycling target of 80% by 2024/25. As well as launching various campaigns and awareness/education initiatives to increase quality participation, Waste will also commit to reducing single-use plastic bags.
- 3.3 In November 2020, Waste launched the new re-usable sack that replaced the standard recycling bag for the disposal of green waste (both domestic and trade). It is estimated that the Council will save 3 million recycling bags by switching to a re-usable sack. Waste also required residents and trade waste customers to register their sacks to ensure our collection rounds are as efficient as possible and our carbon footprint is kept to a minimum.

4. UPDATE /ISSUES ENCOUNTERED/ CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 We have 36,256 households and 59 businesses who have registered with 96% just registering two sacks (first two sacks are free with additional sacks at £3 each). This has equated to approximately 26% of RCT properties who have registered for green sacks with high numbers in the Taff area as follows:

Location	Sign Ups
Beddau	1824
Tonyrefail	1650
Church Village	1417
Llantwit Fadre	1379
Rhydfelin	1284

- 4.2 The ‘RCT’s Got A Brand-New Bag’ campaign was launched initially online on 13th September 2021 with an unexpected overwhelming response. For example, we successfully received 6,517 online registrations in the first 24 hours. Waste then followed with delivering 50,000 leaflets to areas of high participation and to residents who regularly put out green waste in areas where green waste collections are lighter. All leaflets were delivered by the switch over date of 1st November. The communications strategy was also supported by banner board notices across RCT, a vehicle livery campaign and also town centre events. It was hoped that ‘word of mouth’ would reach most residents regardless of their chosen method of communications by the switchover date. However, following the initial communications campaign, it is noted that 97% of registrations so far have been done online.

- 4.3 On the 1st November (date that we also transferred to fortnightly Winter collections) Waste stopped collecting green waste in recycling bags. It was decided that there would be no 'grace period' however we would use awareness tactics as opposed to enforcement tactics. This is to reflect that despite a large advertising campaign, there will still be some residents who, through no fault of their own, did not know about the changes. Residents who place out green waste in recycling bags will have the following sticker placed on the bag by the recycling crews. The sticker provides information on what a resident needs to do and how they can order green waste sacks. There will be no end date to this informative procedure and the service will continue to raise awareness as opposed to enforcement with residents who put out green waste in a recycling bag for the first time.

Dydy'r Cyngor bellach ddim yn casglu gwastraff gwyrdd o fagiau ailgylchu clir.

Dim ond mewn bagiau gwyrdd pwrpasol y byddwn ni'n casglu gwastraff gwyrdd. Rhaid i chi gofrestru i gael y bagiau yma. Mae modd i chi gofrestru ac archebu'r bagiau ar y wefan neu drwy ffonio'r rhif isod.

The Council no longer collects green waste from clear recycling bags.

We will only collect green waste in green waste sacks from households who have registered. Registration and the ordering of the sacks can be done via the website or telephone number below.

 www.rctcbc.gov.uk/ailgylchu 
www.rctcbc.gov.uk/recycling
01443 425001

- 4.4 The unexpected high number of sign-ups at the outset did create some unplanned challenges in terms of delivering sacks within the 10 days. Streetcare had to move Enforcement staff over to delivering duties and additional vehicles had to be hired as well as Waste working overtime on weekend to meet the demand at the time. The numbers reduced to manageable levels (approximately 550 a week) mid-November and Enforcement returned to their normal duties. In addition, the service needed a lot of Customer Services assistance in closing down CRM's after sacks had been delivered.
- 4.5 The campaign has received both positive and negative responses. Some residents have commented that the change is welcomed and overdue particularly after we published that we use around 3 million single use plastic bags a year. However, some residents have expressed discontent to the changes as follows (*with response summary in italics*):
- The sacks are too heavy when full

Ask for an assisted collection or decant the waste into manageable sections.

- The sacks are dirty when being brought through the house
Resident use their own container to transfer waste into the sack.
- Disagree with the charges
The £3 only covers to price of the sack.
- The sacks do not contain loose material during inclement weather
Advised resident to criss-cross handles but may look at sacks with flap lids in the future.
- The charge for lost sacks
Advise to mark up sacks and collectors will do their best to securely return sacks i.e., front garden, gatepost, under food bin etc.
- Disagree that a property will be removed if no green waste presented over 12 consecutive collections
Advised that this is collections and not weeks (including fortnightly in the summer) and we should also be avoiding unnecessary journeys.
- RCT should have researched a bio-degradable bag
Bio-degradable bags by their nature are lightweight and could not support large amounts of green waste or sharp items.
- Unfair system as a flat will not have an equal need to a property with a large garden
Waste calculated that an average property would place out between 2 to 5 recycling bags in peak season. As a sack holds around 2.5 recycling bags, it was decided that every household should have access to two free sacks and should be treated equally.

4.6 All complaints have been answered on time, but some have been escalated to a Stage 2 complaint. These complaints are against the principle of the changes and not about service delivery.

4.7 Prior to the launch Waste worked alongside the Streetcare Communications Group and our neighbouring authorities to benchmark our services and to ensure our processes were sustainable and efficient. We established that RCT was the last authority in Wales to move to a re-usable container and offered the cheapest services in terms of green waste disposal. The below table shows a comparison of RCT's green waste services alongside our neighbouring authorities:

Bridgend	Only collect weekly March to November Issue 2 x 90 litre sacks Permit of £38.30 a year
Cardiff	Same collection season as RCT Issue sacks or wheelie bins £3 per sack or £25 per wheelie bin
Vale of Glamorgan	Only collect weekly March to November

	Issue sacks £2 per sack
Merthyr Tydfil	Only collect April to November every fortnight Issue free sacks Maximum of 6
Caerphilly	Collect weekly throughout the year Issue sacks £3.06 per sack

4.8 There were however some items that did not become apparent until we started the campaign and collections as follows:

- Some properties had to continue with recycling bags. These are properties that are 'hard to reach' and are collected with caged vans.
- Some converted farms were showing as 'trade'.
- Representation from allotments and therefore a web page and process for society run allotment has been designed.
- Whilst the suspension of green waste collections over the Christmas period remained unchanged again this year, we received a number of 'missed collections' complaints.

4.9 The collection crews are currently coping well but have not yet collected green sacks during a summer season. All crew members have been trained in how to lift green sacks and the procedures for leaving sacks that are not registered or contaminated. Crew members have also been trained in how to use in-cab devices that will show their daily schedule and allow them to report issues. This has the ability to be transferred in live time to Enforcement and Customer Services.

4.10 However despite the high in-take of registrations at the outset, crews are reporting that since 1st November, only 31% of registered customers have put out green waste. This however, for the first time, gives Waste invaluable intelligence on how we can make further efficiencies in the future e.g., we now know exactly where our collections are as opposed to driving around looking for them.

4.11 The following shows a comparison of this year (sacks) and last year (bags) in terms of tonnage collected. This table shows no notable or significant changes since the launch of the green waste sacks

Green waste collected in tonnes (week commencing)

	1 st Nov	8 th Nov	15 th Nov	22 nd Nov	29 th Nov	6 th Dec	13 th Dec	20 th Dec	27 th Dec	3 rd Jan	10 th Jan	17 th Jan	24 th Jan
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21-22 (sacks)	57.82	55.40	94.67	70.32	82.02	60.86	35.62	41.66	7.22	34.10	49.28	71	78.44
20-21 (bags)	61.72	103.20	66.56	69.52	68.96	83.00	24.10	27.78	17.06	41.49	26.19	42.38	37.65

4.12 There has also been no reported increases in fly tipping of green waste since the changes to the sacks.

4.13 There are some early concerns that some of our vehicles are not suitable for sack collections and this will be addressed as and when vehicles are due for renewal. In the meantime, crews have been trained in double handling and some vehicles have had temporary modifications in terms of removing rave rails and installing slave bins.

4.14 The Streetcare Communications Group are meeting again in February to discuss the second wave of registrations that is predicted from early Spring onwards. As we have predicted that 75% of the total number of green waste participants have already registered, we are hopeful that the majority of the work has already been completed. We will however prepare for a heavy workload in terms of deliveries and customer services support and amend our Spring communications to address the most common issues that have arisen thus far.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no Equality or Diversity implications aligned to this report

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 There are no Consultation implications aligned to this report

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 There are Financial implications in failing to achieve the statutory targets.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 There are no Legal Implications aligned to this report

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

9.1 The recycling processes we adopted align itself to the Corporate Plan and Corporate Priorities.

9.2 This clearly is linked with the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, helping to create a resilient Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 RCT Council are proud of its recycling services and how it continues to improve and support carbon neutral initiatives.