



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

**CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE
SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

4th MARCH 2024

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
HIGHWAYS, STREETCARE, AND
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

Agenda Item No: 6

**REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S
RECYCLING PERFORMANCE
2023/24**

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on the Council's Recycling performance for the year 2023/24.

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. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan, ***Making A Difference (2020 - 2024)*** sets out the Council's commitments to Keeping RCT clean through efficient street cleaning services, minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint.
- 3.2 Additionally, the Welsh Government's strategy to make the circular economy in Wales a reality, ***Beyond Recycling***, stipulates the next minimum target for the recycling of household waste is 70% by 2025, as we look to maintain our trajectory towards a zero waste nation by 2050.
- 3.3 Furthermore, the Council strategy; ***Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030***, commits the Council to ensuring it recycles or reuses 80% of all municipal waste by 2025 by supporting residents and businesses on initiatives that promote waste minimisation and reuse of materials, as well as investing in technology to increase the amount of waste we recycle and reuse locally.
- 3.4 All Welsh Local Authorities work towards recycling targets set by Welsh Government and as noted above, the next milestone target is for 2025 where 70% of waste collected must be recyclable. (Failure to reach these targets will result in the Council being issued with heavy financial penalties).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council collects recycling and waste as follows:

Type of Recycling / Waste	Collection Frequency	Container
Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR)	Weekly	Clear bag
Food Waste	Weekly	Food waste bag
Green Waste	Weekly (Summer)	Green sack
Absorbent Hygiene Products, (AHP), / Nappies	Weekly	Purple bag
Refuse	3-weekly	Black bag / wheelie bin

- 4.2 The current situation sees domestic waste in the Rhondda collected via black bags with the Cynon and Taf having collections via wheelie bins.
- 4.3 The Council's Recycling and Waste Service comprises 165 operational staff based in 3 main depots – Rhondda, (Dinas Depot, Porth), Cynon, (Ty Amgen Depot, Llwydcoed) and Taf, (Ty Glantaf, Treforest Estate), and is responsible for the collection and management of household waste and related services.
- 4.3 The Council also provides 6 Community Recycling Centres and 3 Re-Use facilities for residents to take their household items not collected as part of normal kerbside collection service for recycling, re-use or disposal.

5. **UPDATE AND CURRENT POSITION**

- 5.1 The Council continues to exceed the current Welsh Government recycling target of 64% as we work towards the next target of 70% by 2025.
- 5.2 However, after a slight drop in recycling tonnages from 2021-22 to 2022-23, the current year, 2023-24 has seen the Council's recycling rates markedly improve.
- 5.3 There were a number of reasons and mitigating factors for the previous fall in recycling rates, including: -
- Fewer awareness raising campaigns, (e.g., door knocking), to further highlight awareness of recycling services available to residents, as the Service continued to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The ongoing cost of living crisis, which impacted some specific materials that contribute to higher recycling levels – namely wood and rubble – this challenge remains.
 - Less food waste being presented for collection.
- 5.4 To help combat some of these issues and increase recycling performance, the Waste Management and Enforcement Service have implemented a number of key strategic and operational changes in the 2023-24 year to date, including: -
- The introduction of the collection of residual household waste on a 3-weekly basis for all domestic waste collections. (More information: <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Newsroom/PressReleases/2023/January/CabinethaveagreedChangestoWasteandRecycling.aspx>).
 - The implementation of a free online booking system for the collection of green waste during the winter months, (November – February): <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/RecyclingandWaste/WhatcanIrecycle/KerbsideRecycling/GreenWaste/GetaGreenWasteCollection/WinterGreenWasteCollections.aspx>.

- The introduction of revised, more efficient, AHP, collections. (Further information: (<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/RecyclingandWaste/WhatcanIrecycle/KerbsideRecycling/NappyRecycling.aspx>).
- The employment of a dedicated team of Waste Awareness Officers to work in the community raising awareness of the importance of recycling, (especially with regard to the importance of food recycling, in relation to which there has been a dedicated media campaign involving a local celebrity; more information regarding this can be found here: (<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Newsroom/PressReleases/2023/November/BOXINGChampionJoinsFIGHTAgainstWASTE.aspx>).
- The introduction of small Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment, (WEEE) recycling facilities at the seven main Leisure for Life Leisure Centres across RCT. (More information on this can be found here: <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/RecyclingandWaste/WhatcanIrecycle/OtherRecycling/SmallElectricalItemsWEEERecycling.aspx>).

5.5 The table below shows the Council’s recycling performance during the **full year 2022/23 as 64.97%**, with performance improving to **67.44% for April to December of 2023/24**.

Year / Recycling Stream	Recycling Rate	Food Waste	Absorbent Hygiene Products, (AHP)	Green Waste
2020-21	66.74%	12,957.46	2,154.82	8,449.49
2021-22	67.23%	12,306.52	1,949.88	7,163.12
2022-23	64.97%	11,483.92	1,890.30	5,655.03
Q1-Q3 2023-24	67.44%	8,884.80	1,500.53	5,115.73

5.6 The Materials Recovery Facility, (MRF), at Bryn Pica has gone a long way in helping us maintain our performance and recover high levels of recycling.

5.7 The tables below illustrate the tonnages for **food waste, AHP, and green waste**.

Food Waste	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2020-21	3,218.88	3,064.56	3,301.48	3,372.54
2021-22	3,080.86	2,970.98	3,171.60	3,083.08
2022-23	2,816.72	2,743.40	2,969.58	2,954.22
Q1-Q3 2023-24	2,742.34	2,905.34	3,237.12	-

AHP	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2020-21	522.16	511.08	534.94	586.64
2021-22	497.50	462.10	499.64	490.64
2022-23	460.16	465.98	460.34	503.82
Q1-Q3 2023-24	481.46	538.75	480.32	-

Green Waste	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2020-21	2,827.43	3,496.82	1,034.57	1,090.67
2021-22	2,685.15	2,678.68	1,076.82	722.47
2022-23	2,090.50	2,185.04	912.84	466.65
Q1-Q3 2023-24	2,141.58	2,055.66	918.49	-

6. REVISED WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – 3-WEEKLY REFUSE COLLECTIONS

6.1 Since July 2023, the collection of residual household waste has been undertaken on a on a 3-weekly basis, including strict volume controls, namely:

- (a) A maximum of 3 black bags per household, (for those properties with existing black bag waste collections),
- (b) A prohibition of “side waste” for those households with large 240L wheelie bins, (with 1 bag of side waste being permissible, for those with the standard 120L bins).

- 6.2 It was recognised early in the planning process that such a significant service change affecting all residences, (approximately 115,000), across RCT, would have implications that cut across many different Council functions. Consequently, a Project Board consisting of Senior Council Officers from across a range of different Council departments, (Frontline Services, HR, Finance, Procurement, Corporate Communications, ICT, Customer Care, etc.), and also the Cabinet Member as well for political oversight, was set-up to help deliver the change.
- 6.3 As a result, the service change was successfully delivered and included a comprehensive communications plan with the launch of our “up our recycling game” campaign.
- 6.4 A full review of the collection rounds, (recycling as well as refuse), was also carried out in order to balance the rounds and the workload between our 3 waste depots, altering routes to make them more efficient and to reduce the number of vehicles required to undertake the revised collection rounds.
- 6.5 Furthermore, the service change was greatly assisted by significant digital innovations, which make better use of all the data gathered from collection rounds via in-cab technology; this helped the Service make more informed decisions based on robust quantitative information.
- 6.6 Following the introduction of 3-weekly refuse collection, on average, each week, around 100t less residual waste tonnage is being presented for collection, with corresponding rises in dry mixed recycling, (no Council in Wales collects more than RCT does), and food waste in particular. This equates to an average weekly recycling performance increase of 4.83% since the beginning of Q2 2023/24.

7. FUTURE WASTE TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

- 7.1 Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond, the Service is now seeking, via a new Waste Transformation Board, to introduce further operational efficiencies and strategic changes to its waste management strategy, with a view to achieving further financial savings, whilst at the same time increasing the overall efficiency of the service in line with Welsh Government and the Council’s priorities.
- 7.2 Future operational efficiencies will consider initiatives and service changes to commercial cardboard collections, trade waste charges and collections as a result of new Welsh Government legislation being introduced from April 2024, green waste and refuse collections via black bags.

8. CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT

8.1 There are no requirements for consultation in respect of this report.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY)

9.1 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010, Local Authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
2. Advance equality of opportunity.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

9.2 There are no equality, diversity or socio-economic duty implications associated with this report.

10. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report. However, although the recommendations with regards to the update on the Council's recycling performance do not have any direct impact on the Welsh language, opportunities for the Service to maintain, grow or upskill Welsh speaking staff will remain a priority.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are financial implications, (heavy financial penalties), if the Council fails to achieve the Welsh Government's statutory recycling target of 70% by the end of March 2025.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

12.1 The Council, as a designated Waste Collection Authority, has a duty to collect household waste, under section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended (EPA 1990).

13. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN, NATIONAL PRIORITIES, AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015.

- 13.1 The Council has committed to minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint. This supports the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' – 2020-24.
- 13.2 This report reflects the Sustainable Development principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and its work contributes to all seven national goals.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 The Council is proud of its recycling services and how it continues to perform well in delivering services for our residents and meeting statutory targets against the backdrop of ongoing financial challenges and cost of living pressures.
- 14.2 The Council continues to exceed the current Welsh Government recycling target as we work towards the next target of 70% by 2025 and, after a drop in recycling tonnages in previous years, the Council's recycling rate has increased by almost 5% since the beginning of Q2 2023/24.
- 14.3 To help further improve recycling performance, the Waste Management and Enforcement Service have implemented a number of key strategic and operational changes in the 2023-24 year to date, with further service transformation initiatives planned for 2024-25 and beyond.