

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**IMPROVING RECYCLING PERFORMANCE**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS AND STREETCARE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, COUNCILLOR A CRIMMINGS**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval to make changes within the Refuse and Recycling Collection service in order to improve the recycling rate and improve service delivery

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve the changes to the Council's residual side waste policy from 1 April 2018 as follows: -
- The residents that have their waste collected in black bags, primarily the Rhondda – the current four black bags allowance per fortnight is reduced to two bags;
  - The residents that have a bin waste collection, primarily in the Cynon and Taf - no side waste per household per fortnight irrespective of the bin size will be permitted;
  - Over the Christmas period there would be a relaxation of the restriction, as explained in paragraph 4.10 of the report.
- 2.2 Approve that between 1<sup>st</sup> November and the 1<sup>st</sup> March the Council's green waste collection service is a fortnightly collection which reverts back to a weekly service over the remainder of the year, each year.
- 2.3 Approve that the Council by way of a notice, inform residents that they cannot place recyclable material within their residual bin/bag and if the Notice is breached, and after a warning has been given, then a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued.

- 2.4 Run an awareness campaign at least two months prior to the implementation of the changes and continue to support the awareness campaign once the changes have started.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Council, like all other Councils in Wales, has statutory targets to meet on recycling. Failure to meet these targets will result in significant fines for every percentage not achieved.
- 3.2 The Council has made various changes over the past few years in order to improve the recycling rate and these changes have been fundamental in the Council's recycling rate improving year on year to the extent that we achieved over 64% in 2016/17.
- 3.3 In order to achieve the next significant target set at 70% by 2024/2025, the Council needs to implement some further changes as the Council has seen the recycling percentage plateau in 2017/18 despite continued awareness campaigns on both food and dry recycling and no change to our collection system.
- 3.4 In 2016/17 the Council disposed of 35,636 tonnes of residual waste which meant that 36% of waste produced in the County Borough went to either landfill or Energy from Waste.
- 3.5 A WRAP compositional analysis in 2015, highlighted that over 70% of that residual waste is recyclable/compostable therefore if we could capture just 25% of that material, it would give us a recycling percentage of just over 71% whilst 50% would give us a figure of just under 80% which is Welsh Government's proposed new recycling target

### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Council at present, provides a weekly twin streamed/co-mingled recycling service, food waste service, green waste collection service, an opt in AHP (Nappy) collection service and a fortnightly residual waste collection service via either a bag system (former Rhondda) or a bin system (former Cynon & Taf).
- 4.2 This service is available to all residents and through various consultation exercises over recent years, it is clear our residents like the system and hold it in high regard due to its simplicity.
- 4.3 Despite this, there are still residents who do not take part in the scheme at all or on a very limited basis and due to this we still are disposing of over 35,000t in 2016/17 through either landfill or Energy from Waste.

- 4.4 A WRAP composition analysis in 2015 highlighted that over 70% of that waste is recyclable/compostable therefore if we could capture 25% of that material, it would give us a recycling percentage of just over 71% whilst 50% would give us a figure of just under 80% which is Welsh Government's proposed new recycling target.
- 4.5 A number of Welsh Councils have already or are looking to reduce the residual waste collection frequency to three or four weekly collections, as there is clear evidence that by reducing residual collection frequency the recycling percentage increases. There is also clear evidence that by reducing the number of bags a resident can put out or by introducing a 'no side waste' policy recycling performance also increases.
- 4.6 The Cabinet of the Council have always been clear that they will not reduce the frequency of residual collection less than fortnightly for two main reasons
- it penalises residents who are recycling fully; and
  - it is a clear reduction in service provision.
- 4.7 Due to the above, it is proposed that we change the current residual collection levels within the County Borough to:-
- Rhondda - the current **4 bag** allowance per fortnight be **reduced to 2 bags**;
  - Cynon & Taf - a '**no side waste**' policy is brought in regardless of bin size, with the provision that the bin lid has to be closed.
- 4.8 In Cynon and Taf, there are mainly two bin sizes, that is 240 litre or 120 litre bin. In lieu of removing all 240l bins and replacing with new 120l bins, it is proposed that the Council continues with its policy of when a bin is requested, to only provide a 120l bin. This policy has been in place for 30 months and we anticipate that well over 65% of bins in use are now the 120l bins and in time the amount of 240l will gradually reduce further. The Council will continue to provide support to households who for various reasons may struggle with these proposals e.g. households with ash waste and large families.
- 4.9 The reason for this approach is rather than a change in collection frequency which affects all residents, the change recommended ensures that there will be no adverse affect on our many residents who currently fully engage in the service, as this change is aimed at engaging with residents who either take no part in the recycling scheme or take part on a limited basis.
- 4.10 Over the Christmas period, there would be a relaxation of the restriction, whereby in the Rhondda there would be a **4 bag limit** whilst in Cynon and Taf, any resident with a 120l bin could have **one bag of side waste** whilst there will be no change to the policy for any resident with a 240l bin for the Christmas period.

- 4.11 In past years, the Council has had no powers to tackle residents not prepared to engage in the recycling scheme but in conjunction with Welsh Government and all Welsh Councils, we are now in a position under the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) and Clean Neighbourhoods Act (CNA) to tackle this issue.
- 4.12 The EPA Sec.46 allows a Waste Authority to specify what may/may not be placed in any specified container, by way of a notice. It is recommended that by way of a notice we inform residents that they cannot place recyclable material within their residual bin/bag.
- 4.13 If the Notice is breached, and following a warning, then a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) of £100 can be issued under Sec.47ZA of the EPA as inserted in the Clean Neighbourhoods Act.
- 4.14 The Council has since its inception always stated that enforcement is a last resort, and it would be the same in this case, with the team initially raising awareness with residents on this matter and only issuing a FPN if and when all other avenues have been exhausted
- 4.15 The Council currently collects green waste on a **weekly** basis all the year round, even in the winter months when the growing season has ended. In order to improve the efficiency of the service, it is recommended that between 1<sup>st</sup> November and the 1<sup>st</sup> March the service reverts to a **fortnightly** service and revert back to a **weekly** service thereafter, whilst there will be no real term financial saving, it will reduce wasted travelling time.
- 4.16 In order to raise awareness with our residents, if Cabinet approve the recommendations, it will be important to run an awareness campaign at least two months prior to the implementation of the changes and to continue the awareness campaign once the changes have started.
- 4.17 The awareness raising would be similar to previous successful campaigns in recycling where we look to engage with residents on the reasons behind the change and what the outcomes will be, with the use of various marketing tools such as social media, council website, town centre awareness events, cinema, information leaflets, etc.
- 4.18 It is proposed that the changes set out above will be implemented from 1st June 2018.

## **5 CONSULTATION**

5.1 No consultation is required

## **6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment scoping exercise has been undertaken that indicates that there would be no such implications. There are no equality or diversity implications aligned to the recommendations in the report.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

7.1 There will be no significant budget implications and any funding needed can come from within existing budgets

7.2 If the changes implemented produce a significant swing from residual waste to recycling there will be a cost saving although this is difficult to quantify at present.

7.3 Funding to support the awareness campaign is available from within existing budgets.

7.4 If the Council does not improve its recycling rates by 6% from the current recycling rate of 64% to 70% by 2025, Welsh Government will levy significant penalties on the Council. These penalties are significant, and if no further progress is made in terms of improving the recycling rates, the cost to the Council could be in excess of £xm.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

8.1 Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005  
Environmental Protection Act 1990

## **9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN AND FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

9.1 The proposals in this report are consistent with the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan, in particular *“Place – creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work”*:

- *Rhondda Cynon Taf's local environment will be clean and attractive...*
- *Rhondda Cynon Taf's parks and green spaces will continue to be valued by residents...*

9.2 These proposals are also consistent with the Well-being Goals under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- *A healthier Wales – a society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.*
- *A Wales of cohesive communities – attractive, viable, safe and well connected communities.*

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 The Council has to meet its statutory recycling targets to avoid financial penalties. The fines are significant, and without some change to the current service provision, it could struggle to achieve the recycling targets. Therefore doing nothing is not really an option and as in previous changes the recommendations outlined in this report look to allow the Council to achieve those targets whilst not adversely affecting the residents already fully engaged with the service.

### ***Relevant Scrutiny Committee***

Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee