

## **PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16 MARCH 2020**

### **ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO**

#### **1. Recycling and kerbside collections**

The current contract with BIFFA commenced in 2010, they provide a kerbside collection across the Borough as well as the sorting, haulage and processing of the recycled materials collected. This contract is due to end on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020. As Members will be aware, from 1 May 2020, the Council will be delivering the kerbside collection of the household recycling materials.

A procurement process was initiated to secure a contractor for the sorting, haulage and subsequent processing of the collected recycling materials. As a Waste Disposal Authority (WDA), the Council has a legal duty to arrange for disposal of municipal waste and recycling from the Borough, and hence this contract was required.

Market conditions have markedly changed since 2010 and during the soft market testing, waste management companies all expressed the same view that they are no longer able to accept market risk on commodity prices for recyclables. They also required the Council to take the risk on the disposal costs arising from non-recyclable items placed in recycling bins by residents. Reflecting this current and likely ongoing market uncertainty, the Council decided to procure a shorter three-year contract, with an option to extend the contract for up to a further three years.

The successful contractor will be required to take delivery of the kerbside collected recyclables and arrange for the subsequent haulage, sorting and end market reprocessing of the treated materials.

The soft market testing also indicated that the Council would benefit from lower contract costs if an option were included where the Council collected paper and card separately from glass, tins and plastics. The recycle processing companies are demanding cleaner paper and cardboard; our current mixed collections do not lend themselves to achieving this as our paper and cardboard are often contaminated with food and drink carton residue, as well as glass shards from broken glass; currently there is a cost to having our paper and cardboard processed, due to its poor quality.

The tender exercise for processing the recyclates collected within the Borough has seen the winning bidder offer a significant cost reduction for the separation of paper and cardboard from our current mixed collections. A capital investment of up to £1.5million for the purchase and delivery of a new bin for paper and cardboard will enable the council to deliver annual revenue savings of £0.8 million. The new contract also incentivises the Council to reduce the contamination in the recycling bin, as the cost of the service will reduce if contamination of the recycling bins is minimised.

### **Introduction of the new blue bin**

The introduction of the new blue bin for paper and cardboard was approved at Finance Council on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020. The cost of buying and delivering a blue bin for all households is £1.5m – this includes the marketing and delivery of the new calendars. The Council will realise significant savings of over £800k per year when we introduce a blue bin for paper and cardboard so the initial investment will be repaid in less than two years.

Work on the procurement and delivery of blue bins and bags and the marketing of the service change has commenced. A communications plan for the roll out is being developed with the Council's communications team. The service change could be implemented by 1 July at the earliest, this date could move, dependent upon manufacturing and delivery dates for the bins

The paper and cardboard will be much better quality if it is separated out from plastics, glass and tins and having a separate bin for paper and cardboard brings us into line with Government policy about recycling

If a household does not have the space for a 240 litre blue bin, we can provide a 140 litre blue bin or a recycling sack for paper and cardboard.

The Council will continue to provide a weekly collection for residents, i.e.

Week 1 Burgundy,

Week 2 Blue,

Week 3 Burgundy,

Week 4 Grey, and on ...

## **2. Government's strategy for waste and the affect that this would have on Council's services.**

The Environment Bill was introduced in October 2019 and had two readings, before progress was stopped, by the calling of a general election. It was re-introduced on 30 January 2020 and so far, has only had one reading in the House of Commons. It is still comprehensive and runs to 244 pages.

It covers a wide range of environmental issues including water, air pollution, biodiversity and conservation as well as resource and waste management.

The Bill sets out four priority areas:

- Air quality
- Water
- Biodiversity
- Resource efficiency and waste reduction

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP was appointed Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 13 February 2020. As Secretary of State, he is required to set a long-term target in at least one matter of each priority area and then review these at least every five years.

There are some minor changes in the current Bill from the version in October 2019:

- When introducing new legislation, a statement must be made by the SoS on whether the new legislation reduces or increase the level of environmental protection (section 19)
- SoS must publish a report every two years on changes in international environmental protection legislation that is significant (section 20)

The main areas of the Bill relating to local authorities is outlined below: -

### **Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)**

The Bill outlines the formation of an OEP that would advise government on environmental issues and hold the government to account on its progress on plans and targets, relating to the environment. It would be given powers to take enforcement action where applicable, against the UK government or in certain circumstance devolved governments. DEFRA have announced the OEP will be based in Bristol where the headquarters of the Environment Agency are located.

### **Producer Responsibility Obligations**

This section of the Bill allows any “national authority” to impose producer responsibility obligations regulations on any products or specified materials. This could mean that the devolved governments could have different producer responsibility legislation from each other.

### **Producer Responsibility for Disposal Costs**

This section of the Bill outlines the requirement of producers to cover the full net costs of their products after they have been used for their primary purpose. The disposal costs may include the costs of:-

- Collecting and transporting products or materials for disposal,  
Sorting and treating products or materials,
- Providing public information about the disposal of products or materials.
- Dealing with products or materials that have been disposed of unlawfully.

The regulations may make provision as to how the disposal costs of products or materials are to be calculated. This is likely to form part of the next set of consultations on Extended Producer Responsibility. The consultations are expected in summer 2020.

## Deposit Return Scheme

This section of the Bill gives the powers to implement a DRS. It does not mean that a DRS is certain, the Bill just enables one to be implemented, if the Government decide they wish to proceed with one. There was a commitment in the Conservative election manifesto to introduce a DRS and initial stakeholder meetings indicate that the intention is to introduce one in England, and also likely to include Wales and Northern Ireland.

## Charges for single use plastics

The section gives the Secretary of State and devolved ministers powers to implement charges on single use plastic items. The Bill outlines that charges can be made on items that:

- are single use items,
- are made wholly or partly of plastic, and
- are supplied in connection with goods or services.

This could be compared to the current carrier bag charge.

## Separation of Waste

The requirements in this section are applicable to England only. It will enable the Government to bring forward their plans outlined in the consistency consultation earlier in the year. The Bill states that food waste must be collected separately and at least weekly and also outlines the following recycling streams for separate collection: -

- glass
- metal
- plastic
- paper and card
- food waste
- garden waste

The Bill states that each recycling stream must be collected separately from other household waste and separately from each other. It does say that the TEEP test still applies and so materials can be collected together where:

- (a) it is not **technically or economically practicable** to collect recyclable household waste in those recyclable waste streams separately, or*
- (b) collecting recyclable household waste in those recyclable waste streams separately has no significant **environmental benefit** (having regard to the overall environmental impact of collecting it separately and of collecting it together).*

In BwD, we can use the TEEP test to identify the separation of paper and card from the glass, tins, cans and plastics. This section also places similar requirements for separate collections to be undertaken for business and commercial waste as well.

There is no further update as to whether garden waste collection would have to be provided free of charge or if councils could choose to make a charge, as they can at present. Approximately 65% of local authorities now make a charge for garden waste collection.

At a briefing by the then Secretary of State, Theresa Villiers, on 15 October 2019, she stated she wanted to see consistency in the set of materials collected and did not mention consistency in the way they might be collected. The details will again be part of the next round of consultations later in 2020.

### **Next Steps**

The first reading of the Environment Bill took place on 30 January and there has been no progress since. The next stage is the second reading. The second reading is the first opportunity for MPs to debate the main principles of the Bill. Once the second reading is completed, the Bill proceeds to committee stage, where each clause (part) and any amendments (proposals for change), can be debated.

DEFRA have started informal discussion and more formalised working groups ahead of the next set of consultations being released, expected for summer 2020.

### **3. Council's monitoring of the amount of waste sent to landfill**

We monitor the diversion rate of residual waste away from landfill and to waste to energy plants across the country via our contractor Suez UK.

Every month the diversion rate varies as it is subject to the available capacity at Waste to Energy sites across the UK plants to take our waste. Virtually no waste went to landfill in January 2020, with everything going to the waste to energy plants at Ferrybridge, West Yorkshire.

The diversion rate from April 2019 to December 2019 was 55% of waste to Waste to Energy plants and 45% of waste to landfill. However, after including the diversion rate achieved in January 2020, we now have a diversion rate of 59% of waste diverted from landfill. If the performance achieved in January is repeated in February and March, we will have achieved a diversion rate of 65% away from landfill in 2019/2020.

It should be noted that the Councils new waste disposal contract commences on 1 April 2020. The new contract, with Suez UK, contains a diversion rate target of 70% of our waste away from landfill to Waste to Energy plants. If Suez UK fail to meet this diversion target, they will face significant financial penalties.

#### **4. Re-introduction of the education and advice role**

The Council recruited an Environmental Education Officer who commenced employment on 2 September 2019. The officer has undertaken a significant amount of outreach work with schools and community groups. She has also worked along side and supported the Keep Blackburn Tidy and Keep Darwen Tidy volunteer groups. Further information about these activities is detailed below:

##### **Working with Schools**

- Put together several presentations for schools regarding talks on Single Use Plastic, where BwD waste and recycling goes, TerraCycle.
- Attended 8 school visits so far: Feniscowles Primary School, Crosshill Blackburn, Lower Darwen, St Edwards, Wensley Fold, Tauheedul Girls, Islamiyah Girls, Suddell Primary School.
- Introduced the idea of reducing waste in schools using TerraCycle: Lower Darwen Primary School, Tauheedul Girls.
- Developing schools plan as part of wider education project plan including a pack of learning materials for teachers.
- Organising various litter picks for schools and delivering presentations about the importance of the environment e.g Crosshill School Blackburn, Our Ladys of Perpetual Succour, St James's Lower Darwen, Tauheedul Girls.
- Attended and presented at 4 out of 5 School Improvement Groups meetings to discuss with Primary School teachers how we can best enthuse and teach children about the environment.
- Collating on a spreadsheet all 'eco teacher' contacts within schools
- Created a survey for Primary Schools to discuss what progress and gaps they have in terms of environmental education.
- Creating vital links within school giving them ideas of how best to teach about the environment, linking in with key days such as Earth Week
- Created full lesson plan and a costed plan for 'Graptor the litter picker'. Similar to the idea of taking home a classroom teddy, whereby a different child can take home the litter picking kit each weekend. Not only does it help clean up where the children live, it also creates a sense of responsibility for looking after their own environment. It was introduced as a trial in Feniscowles Primary School and was really successful. As at Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February, five schools have requested more information and a 'Graptor the litter picker' kit.
- Organised a trip for Our Ladys of Perpetual Succour to visit Suez including a presentation, game and site tour. Great feedback received from the school:

*'Year 4 enjoyed their trip to SUEZ waste transfer station to support their geography topic this term. They learnt all about recycling, the importance of it, as well as, how they can help and recycle correctly at home. The children saw (and smelt) first-hand the amount of rubbish brought from Blackburn and what happens to it. They were able to see where the rubbish they put into their bin at home goes. There was an informative presentation with engaging games and useful information before a tour of the working site. I can't thank SUEZ and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council enough for their hospitality and for creating a memorable and educational visit for the children.'*

### **Brookhouse project**

Worked closely with the Brookhouse Development Group (BHDG) to put together an eye-catching leaflet to summarise the results of the resident survey. Hand delivered the surveys to all the houses that took part. Stickered all the bins with information about what items go in which bin and still work closely with the BHDG on any issues that arise in the area.

### **Public protection / housing standards initiative in Infirmary**

Worked on Infirmary project providing all marketing materials and put together a communications plan for residents. Responded to resident queries regarding recycling. Took part in a 'flash mob' litter pick to clean up the streets and speak to residents who had accumulations in their backyard. Worked with housing standards to gain entry to properties to speak to residents about how they manage their recycling and waste.

### **Your call volunteers**

- Accepting all volunteers on the Lancashire Volunteering Portal (LVP) website, delivering all litter picking kits around the borough and making sure all community centres are stocked up with equipment/bags
- Enthusing volunteers on a daily basis via email and Facebook page to say thank you and answer any queries
- Healthy living recycling stall at Bangor Street Community Centre speaking to residents about recycling and how to become a volunteer litter picker
- Provided equipment for 15 Your Call events since September 2019
- Developing a Your Call action plan to prioritise activities (with volunteer input)
- Keeping up with volunteer comments and passing them on to relevant Council departments
- Working closely with Facebook groups to assist with any issues that arise
- Created newsletter for volunteers including important information
- Heavily promote the logging of hours on the LVP website – currently 479 hours been logged between 1 January 2020 and 28 February 2020.
- Mapped all current volunteers with an outlook to target areas with high levels of waste and low number of volunteers
- Currently recruiting volunteer recycling ambassadors, created brand and job description. Currently planning to hold a workshop to provide them with information
- Produced new handout to promote KIT volunteers

### **General publicity and marketing**

- Created various marketing information – nappies leaflet, recycling guide, litter picking leaflet, excess waste leaflet
- Put together a social media plan with key messages
- Admin to BwD Bins Facebook page, creating interesting content for residents and answering any queries

- Currently creating song and video for the volunteer litter pickers 'pick it up' to not only enthuse the volunteers and show how much we appreciate them but also to enter the Great British Spring Clean most unique clean up award
- Heavily promoting Great British Spring Clean
- Involved with comms team with the creation of the recycling and bin calendar as well as the shuttle information, constantly looking at other councils information and guidance and how we can improve
- Created a newsletter for the garden waste subscribers
- [https://twitter.com/Sally\\_booth](https://twitter.com/Sally_booth) - personal twitter account with photos of activities and school visits

### **Creating Contacts**

- Joint event with CareNetwork with a local community group to discuss recycling, second meeting with CareNetwork to discuss how best to speak to individuals – planning to do a drop in session 'Speak to a recycling officer' once a month, putting information in their monthly newsletter and do a recycling workshop for carers.
- Meeting planned with the Bureau on 4<sup>th</sup> March to discuss how we can support Mending Café and swishing events
- Met with Blackburn Rovers Community Trust to discuss how we can support their NSC programme
- Working closely with Adult Learning Blackburn with Darwen to go along to their Speak English classes (ESOL) to talk about waste management
- Working closely with Integration and Engagement to create contacts with community groups
- Been out with several councillors, door knocking to discuss bins, recycling. Passed on relevant information afterwards

### **Other programmes**

- Tools Shed – Soon there will be collection points at both our household waste recycling centres and at Davyfield Depot for used tools that are then upcycled by prisoners and given back free of charge to the community. Created all marketing information for this programme.
- Working closely with Blackburn Rovers Community Trust to plan workshops and recycling events within their youth groups

Martin Eden

Director of Environment and Operations