

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016-2017**

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

4th July 2016

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Agenda Item No. 4

**REPORT OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE
DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES &
PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE-
PARTICIPATION RATES IN RECYCLING
ACROSS RCT**

**Author: J L Nicholls – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Tel No: 01443 424098**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations agreed following the whole committee scrutiny review into the Participation Rates in Recycling Across RCT.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:-

- 2.1 Form a view on the findings and recommendations set out in the report attached at Appendix 1; and subject to agreement
- 2.2 Request that the Executive acts upon the following two recommendations formulated by the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee as follows:
- a) That all Elected Members of the Council undertake training on the recycling targets, contamination and the recycling collection system so that they can fully understand the service
- b) That the project to increase and maintain a high level of participation in both dry and food recycling is rolled out to other areas across Rhondda Cynon Taf to support the Council meet its legislative targets.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2014/15 Rhondda-Cynon-Taf failed to meet its target around waste recycling by achieving only 53.82% of its waste being recycled. In response, Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee expressed concern at the risk posed to

the Council by having to pay the financial penalties set by Welsh Government and therefore resolved to consider participation rates in recycling across the County Borough as part of their work programme.

- 3.2 Members identified a suitable target area and undertook the participation campaign in November 2015 for a period of four weeks. The aim of the campaign was to engage with local residents to encourage them to recycle more and therefore increase the overall municipal recycling rates.
- 3.3 In March 2016, following the participation campaign, members of the Scrutiny Committee met to discuss the key findings and headline results as presented by the Director, Highways and Streetcare Services.
- 3.4 The report attached as Appendix A outlines the work undertaken by the Public Service, Communities & Delivery Scrutiny Committee in respect of the participation campaign aimed at increasing recycling rates and sets out the two recommendations subsequently formulated by the Scrutiny Committee Members.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Item: Report of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity
Scrutiny Committee – ‘Participation Rates in Recycling Across RCT’.

(Officer to Contact: Julia Nicholls, Senior Democratic Services Officer –
Telephone No. 01443 424098)

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

**REPORT OF THE
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES &
PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**COMMITTEE'S REVIEW OF THE PARTICIPATION RATES
IN RECYCLING ACROSS RCT**

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Background

In 2014/15 Rhondda-Cynon-Taf failed to meet its target around waste recycling by achieving only 53.82% of its waste being recycled ; therefore improvements were needed to support the Council's priority of 'Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf Clean and Green' and also avoid financial penalties from the Welsh Government. Although the amount of waste the local authority has recycled in 2015 has made Rhondda Cynon Taf the fastest improving Council in Wales and it now sits within the top 5 for Wales, reaching the national target for 2015/2016 which is 58% still remains a risk to the Council.

Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee expressed concern at the risk posed to the Council and therefore at its meeting on the 14th September 2015 the Scrutiny Committee resolved to consider participation rates in recycling across the County Borough as part of their work programme and subsequently deliver a project aimed at increasing recycling in a targeted area. This information was based on previous targeted campaigns which have encouraged residents to waste less and recycle more with very positive results.

The Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee agreed the following terms of reference which would encompass the aims and scope of the work.

1.2 Terms of Reference

'To identify a number of the lowest participation rates (the baseline) agree a programme of work to support improvement and report back to the Scrutiny Committee'

Aim:

- **Contribute to improving the municipal recycling rate within a targeted area of Rhondda Cynon Taf (and assess whether the improvement has been maintained in 3 months);**
- **As a result of the targeted work, make a positive contribution to improving the overall municipal recycling rate within Rhondda Cynon Taf to at least meet the 2015/16 target set by Welsh Government; and**
- **Make recommendations to help further improve the municipal recycling rate within Rhondda Cynon Taf.**

Scope:-

- Identify an area of low participation for the Recycling Participation Campaign
- Engage with residents to understand why they do / do not recycle
- Identify barriers and good practice to help improve current participation, raise awareness of recycling and encourage action
- Receive training on Contamination
- Collect data to measure overall change in participation as well as in specific areas such as dry recycling participation and food waste participation
- From the information gathered, formulate recommendations for improvement to the service to better achieve the Council's aim

1.3 Methodology

The review was a whole committee review, involving all members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee. Committee who received a number of reports and presentations from the Director, Highways & Streetcare Services outlining the Council's recycling journey from one of the worst performing Local Authorities in Wales to one of the most improved.

Members of the Committee commenced its review in July 2015 with an overview of recycling in RCT. This was followed by a number of reports and discussions between Officers and Members of the Scrutiny Committee outlining how the participation work, which had been identified as the most effective way of improving recycling rates, could be carried out in conjunction with the participation teams.

Committee commenced the awareness campaign at the end of November 2015 following the Contamination training which they undertook at the beginning of the month in preparation for the project.

In March 2016 Committee received an update report from the Director of Highways & Streetcare Services which highlighted the results of the campaign.

2. Recycling in RCT

- 2.1** Since narrowly missing the recycling target for dry and green waste which stands at 53.82% of our waste recycled, it placed the Local Authority performance below the 2013/14 Wales average of 54.33%. However, the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee learnt that the Council has been proactive in addressing the issue of improved recycling within the County Borough and a number of initiatives have been undertaken to help improve the municipal recycling rate.
- 2.2** Throughout 2015/16 there have been signs of improvement in light of several campaigns to encourage residents to waste less and recycle any unavoidable food waste. The targeting and awareness raising such as targeting areas and door knocking has proven to have positive results. Other initiatives to raise awareness include the 'Green Glyncoch' initiative which commenced in 2009 with the aim of turning Glyncoch into a 'Zero Waste Area', where at least 95% of residents recycle their dry recyclables and food waste and the local environment is respected by the local residents. Another recent campaign has been the 'Too Many Black Bags, Recycle or Face a Fine' campaign. From autumn 2014 residents were asked to reduce the number of black bags they put out for collection. As a result of this campaign the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf have reduced their black bags for collection by 30%. The scheme has since been rolled out across the County Borough.
- 2.3** A number of marketing campaigns have also been undertaken and adverts on buses, billboards in the cinema and on the radio as well as regular updates on the Council website and press releases. All 495 of the Council vehicles carry advertising materials which represents an affordable way of publicising the initiatives. In order to increase the amount of waste being recycled in RCT, the Council has also committed to developing two waste treatment plants in conjunction with Merthyr Tydfil Council.
- 2.4** Committee learned that one of the most important ways of improving the recycling figure is through education which can be delivered through the purpose built education centre in Bryn Pica which includes a landfill safari and to date has been

visited by 104 out of the 110 schools within the County Borough. In April 2016 a number of educational visits were undertaken by the Recycling Teams to Comprehensive Schools within the Local Authority to further promote recycling within RCT.

- 2.5** In order to increase the amount of waste being recycled two new Community Recycling Centres have been opened in Llantrisant and in Treherbert, the former being an innovative modular split level design supplied by Modulo Beton. It is the first and only one of its kind in the UK placing RCT at the forefront of the recycling industry. Both centres will contribute to improvements within RCT's recycling targets. It is anticipated that the performance results of both Recycling Centres will be reported to Scrutiny which will include feedback from local residents and which will also gauge their effectiveness in the campaign to deliver improved targets of recycling.
- 2.6** Whilst it is evident that a number of campaigns and initiatives have been delivered which have had an impact upon the recycling rates in RCT the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee acknowledged that more needed to be done. By way of a number of reports delivered to the committee it became clear that one of the most effective ways to increase the Council's recycling rates for food waste and dry recycle is through a targeted approach. With this in mind Committee determined that future legislative targets will be difficult to achieve without a continued awareness campaign. It was felt that, although challenging, the targets could be met if all residents play their part and so Committee agreed to accompany the participation teams on the ground in their awareness campaign to understand what the teams encounter and how labour intensive the campaigns can be.

3. Contamination Training

- 3.1** Prior to the door knocking exercise Members initially undertook a training session on the targets, contamination and about the collection system within RCT in order to gain an understanding of the service. Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee together with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture and Leisure were invited to attend a session in respect of Contamination Training which was held at Ty Glantaf, Treforest Industrial Estate on the 23rd November 2015. The training had been previously provided to all refuse/recycling and cleansing staff.
- 3.2** The training was delivered by Mr James Kay, South Wales Regional Waste Coordinator, and Members of the Committee were asked to consider the following key points as well as undertaking a practical test
- Why are we here?
 - What is contamination? A practical test
 - Service changes within the Local Authority
 - Community Recycling Centres
 - Waste and recycling management
 - UK and European level
 - Wales

- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and kerbside dry recycling

➤ DVD of a modern Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)

3.3 Members found the training to be a valuable source of information in terms of understanding that contamination in recycling is an increasing problem for the local authority as recycling that is contaminated cannot be recycled and will be sent to a landfill. It is considered that in Rhondda Cynon Taf 20% of all household recycling is contaminated due to residents failing to recycle properly. This means that the waste will have to be thrown into the black bags and taken to landfill. It was recognised by Members of the Committee that in order to improve the Council's recycling figures contamination needs to be addressed and measures have been put in place to address these concerns for example the Local Authority now tackles the issue of contamination with stickers on the contaminated bags alerting residents to the fact they need to be re sorted according to the recycling guidelines.

4. Recycling Awareness Campaign

4.1 In conjunction with the Director of Highways and Streetcare members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee identified a target area in which to carry out its participation work. There were a number of low participating areas to choose from within Rhondda, Cynon and Taff. Cilfynydd had previously been identified as an area of low participation and had been the focus of a previous participation exercise which had taken place from 26th May 2014 to 20th June 2014. The results of the data analysis demonstrated that the targeted campaign had an immediate effect in the area as shown by the key results below:-

- Dry recycling participation increased from 48.4% in week 1 to 80.3% in week 4
- 87.5% of residents recycled at least once in the 4 week period
- Food Waste participation increased from 17.6% in week 1 to 46.1% in week 4
- 49.1% of residents participated in the food waste recycling scheme in the 4 week period

4.2 Based on this earlier work Committee determined that revisiting a particular area would help maintain or even surpass the previous positive recycling rates and produce sustainable outcomes. Therefore it was identified that Cilfynydd would be the most appropriate area for the trial.

4.3 The targeted campaign was undertaken the week commencing 30th November 2015 for a period of 4 weeks but prior to this a letter drop was carried out to advise residents that the Awareness teams would be working in the area over the coming weeks. This was followed by intensive door knocking by both Awareness Teams and members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

4.4 After the third week the teams were provided with a list of properties where there had been no sign of recycling and therefore more door-knocking with those residents was undertaken. At any point local residents can contact the Awareness Teams directly if they require recycling bags, food waste bins or any information in connection with the Council's recycling schemes.

4.5 At the same time as the recycling awareness campaign in Cilfynydd there were a number of awareness events and recycling road shows held at key locations throughout the County Borough with the intention of further promoting the Council's

recycling schemes. This was done by visiting a number of supermarkets, schools and town centres with the Council's recycling trailer to speak to residents about their recycling habits and encourage them to do more.

- 4.6** Members of the Public Service, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee found that on the whole the participation and door knocking phase had been a positive exercise and they had encountered many residents who were prepared to engage in discussions relating to recycling. They found that most people are aware that they should be participating in the Council's recycling scheme and therefore it was easier to influence those already engaged in the initiative as to what else they can recycle with the existing Council initiatives. Crucially, they also found that they could persuade those that do some recycling to do more. Members noted the influence they had on residents through the direct contact and engagement.
- 4.7** The following comments are from Members who reported their feedback at the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on the 15th December 2015 as follows:-

"A good opportunity to engage with members of the public"

"Encouraging that on the whole the teams received a positive response and were able to respond to many requests for new equipment"

"It may have been useful if (the teams) could have left calling cards for those residents who were unavailable on the initial visit"

"It would be interesting to meet with those residents who are not engaged with the Council's recycling initiatives"

5. Key Findings & Headline Results from the Door-Knocking Exercise

| Food Waste | | Dry Recycling | |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Week 1 | 33.2% | Week 1 | 60.6% |
| Week 2 | 34.9% | Week 2 | 61.6% |
| Week 3 | 36.1% | Week 3 | 63.6% |
| Week 4 | 37.0% | Week 4 | 69.0% |
| Wk 1 – Wk 4 | 51.6% | Wk 1 – Wk 4 | 83.7% |

5.1 On the 15th March 2016 Committee met to analyse the data which demonstrates that there is an overall rise in participation following the door knocking exercise in both food waste and dry recycling.

- Dry recycling participation increased from 60.6% in week 1 to 69.0% in week 4
- 83.7% of residents recycled at least once in the 4 week period
- Food Waste participation increased from 33.2% in week 1 to 37.0% in week 4
- 51.6% of residents participated in the food waste recycling scheme in the 4 week period

5.2 It was evident from this particular awareness campaign that residents within Cilfynydd responded well to the door knocking exercise and the direct impact can be evidenced by the improved results as early as week 2 in both food waste and dry recycling. The results demonstrate that the engagement of the campaign teams and Elected Members with local residents does work particularly with the majority of residents who already do some recycling, they can be encouraged to do more.

6. Conclusions & Recommendations

- 6.1** The Public Service Delivery acknowledged that there have been dramatic improvements over the last few years in the recycling rates across the County Borough however they also acknowledged the real need for continued support from all residents in order to meet the challenging future legislative targets.
- 6.2** Having participated in the awareness campaign, members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee felt that, although this method of engagement with the public can be resource intensive, the real risk that the Council will not achieve its target and incur a fine is ever present. Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee acknowledged the immediate effects of the campaign on increased levels of recycling by local residents which can be achieved through this method.
- 6.3** Members considered that the targeted campaign could be particularly effective for those residents who do some recycling but could be persuaded to do more resulting in a significant overall impact on the municipal recycling rates should this exercise be carried out over a longer period and rolled out across the County Borough.
- 6.4** With this in mind Committee has identified the following two recommendations. The first which they feel will improve the awareness of all Elected Members of the Council in issues such as recycling targets, contamination and about the collection system within RCT so they can showcase what is working well and set a good example. The second to ensure the awareness campaigns are rolled out across the County Borough in an effort to improve participation rates in recycling, avoid any financial penalties from Welsh Government whilst maintaining a high level of service.

Recommendations:-

1. That all Elected Members of the Council undertake training on the recycling targets, contamination and the recycling collection system so that they can fully understand the service
2. That the project to increase and maintain a high level of participation in both dry and food recycling is rolled out to other areas across Rhondda Cynon Taf to support the Council meet its legislative targets.