

Environment Select Committee

5 December 2018

Item 4: Questions and Petitions

Submitted by: Cllr Andrew Povey

The target for recycling was set at 70% in 2009. When was the target reduced and why? If the target was achieved how much would be saved (financially) and could this be an alternative to the closure of CRC's?

Response:

The Surrey Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) contains a target to recycle 70% of municipal waste by 2020. The definition of recycling within the JMWMS includes recovery of energy from wood waste at dedicated biomass processing plants and recovery of street sweepings and leaves.

In 2017/18 the overall recycling rate for Surrey, as measured against the JMWMS target, was 58.9%. Recycling at our community recycling centres (CRCs) contributes towards this target but recycling rates at our CRCs are already in excess of 70% with only small improvements possible through greater sorting of incoming residual waste. We estimate that removing the very last elements of recyclable material from residual waste delivered to our CRCs might save in the order of £100 - 200K depending on the costs associated with extracting this material. Proposals to implement this saving are already included in the transformation programme for waste.

The biggest potential for increasing recycling lies with the material collected at the kerbside, which is much greater in volume and has greater potential for separation. However it is much more difficult to increase recycling rates for this material because this relies on improving capture of materials through influencing residents' behaviour. The Surrey Waste Partnership is working hard on driving through improvements such as undertaking intensive work to improve facilities at flatted properties but there is not the same opportunity to directly control material flow as there is at our community recycling centres. Recycling rates for individual district and boroughs range from 44.1% to 61.7% as shown on the attached table.

It is also important to note that the global recycling market is currently experiencing an oversupply of materials following closure of the Chinese markets. This means that some previously recyclable materials no longer have a market and the prices paid for other materials have seen significant falls. The government are also set to release a new waste strategy in the next month or so, which we believe will advocate producers of packaging material taking much more responsibility for ensuring that it is recycled. All of this means that there will be some uncertain times ahead with regard to the recycling market.

Setting this aside, on average we anticipate that district and boroughs in Surrey will recycle just under 55% of the waste they collect at the kerbside, including collection banks and street sweepings.

Any additional recycling is likely to come from food waste and dry mixed recyclables that is displaced from residual waste. Using some very broad assumptions about the difference in the cost of dealing with food waste and recycling compared with the cost of sending material for incineration, the saving achieved could be in the order of two million pounds per annum,

depending on what additional costs might be incurred to capture greater amounts of material. This equates to just under £200K per annum saving for each percentage point increase in recycling.

Whilst this would of course be desirable, the difficulty is how this could be achieved and within what timescales. Surrey is already amongst the top performing areas for recycling nationally and any recycling gains are likely to be small and incremental. Major change is most likely to be achieved through change in legislation, for example around producer responsibility for packaging waste.

Savings need to be achieved in 2019/20 and therefore it is unrealistic to assume that these will be met through increased recycling at the kerbside.

Recycling rates for Districts and Boroughs 2017/18

District/ Borough	JMWMS Recycling rate 2017/18
Elmbridge	53.7%
Epsom and Ewell	51.0%
Guildford	59.6%
Mole Valley	59.3%
Reigate and Banstead	54.7%
Runnymede	44.1%
Spelthorne	47.4%
Surrey Heath	61.7%
Tandridge	58.4%
Waverley	56.4%
Woking	58.2%

Rachael I Lake
Chairman of the Environment Select Committee