

**Report to** Sustainable development panel  
20 June 2012  
**Report of** Head of citywide services  
**Subject** Increasing recycling rates

**Item**

**6**

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**Purpose**

To inform the panel of the progress to date of the city-wide engagement project to increase recycling rates toward the corporate target of 50%.

**Recommendation**

To note the contents of this report

**Corporate and service priorities**

The report helps to meet the corporate priority A safe and clean city and the service plan priority to deliver an efficient and effective waste service whilst increasing landfill diversion rates

**Financial implications**

The project is funded within existing budgets

Ward/s: All wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Driver – Environment and neighbourhoods

**Contact officers**

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**Background documents provided at meeting**

City-wide Engagement Project Plan

Door-knocking Phases

## Report

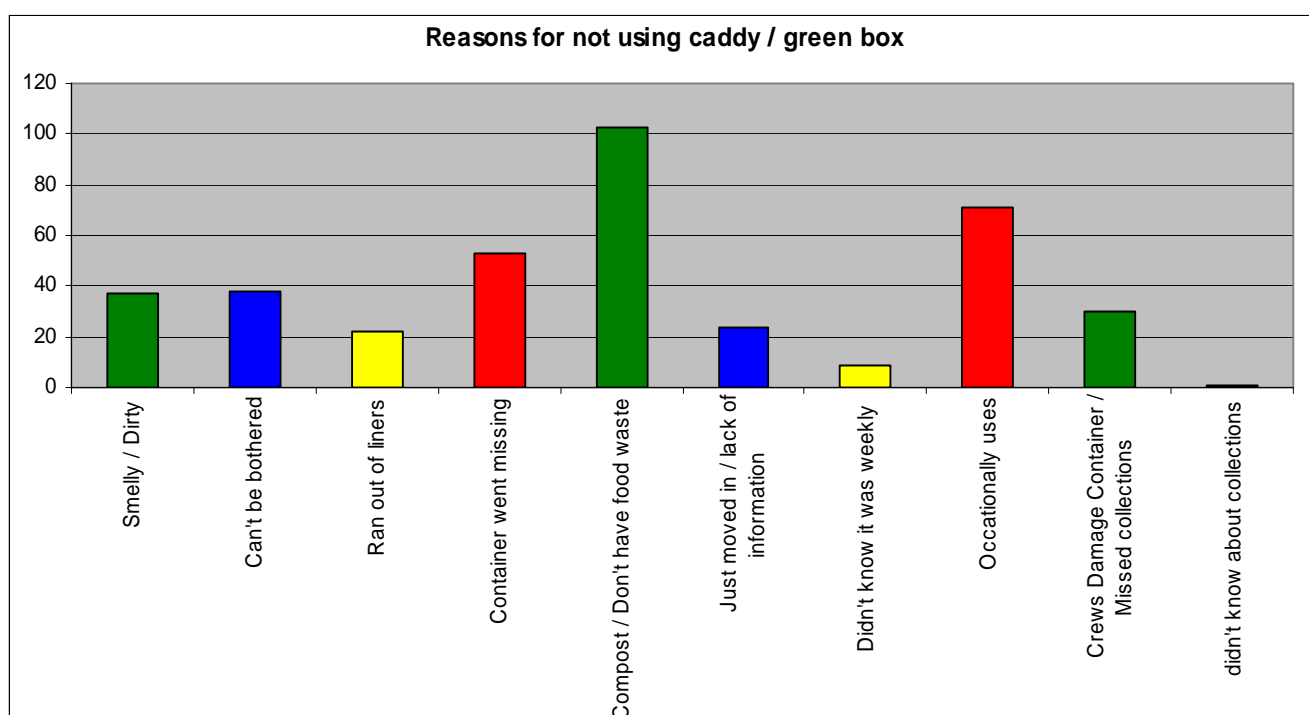
1. In October 2011 cabinet approved the appointment of two additional temporary staff dedicated to increasing participation in the council's recycling services. The aim is to increase the recycling rate to 50% as a stepping-stone toward the long-term aspirational target to reach a rate of 55% by 2014/15. These 'doorknockers' started work on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2012 in accordance with the project plan. Although the corporate target is to increase rates to 50% the primary objective is to reach 45%, at which point the cost of the two posts will be covered by the additional income gained from recycling credits and the income-share received from the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF).
2. Using information collected from participation surveys of around 4,000 properties during the early part of 2012, it appears that an average of 28% of households are putting their food caddies out for collection and 27.5% of households are using the glass collections (not all households put their food or glass out for every collection, therefore actual participation may be higher than the recorded figures).
3. Participation varies considerably across the city, with the highest participation rate for food being 64.5% and the highest participation for glass 57%. At the other-end of the scale, the lowest participation rate for food was 7% and for glass less than 6%. It is clear from these surveys that considerable effort is required on the door-step to investigate why households are not participating in the services and to encourage them to join in.
4. Three phases of door knocking have been planned, with the first two phases targeting the areas with the lowest levels of participation and the third phase (October/November 2012) targeting students who have just moved into new rented accommodation. The education for students will focus on how to use the council's recycling services and what can be done with bulky items.
5. The recycling officers always visit on collection day. If there is evidence that households are not participating in either the food or glass collection services then they will call and talk to the residents about the recycling opportunities available. Since the programme commenced we have seen a very good response to the officers on the door step. Many residents are not fully aware of how to use the recycling services and many do not have the appropriate containers. When caddies or green boxes are requested they are delivered by the officers the same day. Food caddy liners are also given out in order to encourage residents to use the service.
6. When visits are made on average 32% of households are occupied. If residents are not in when the officer calls a letter and leaflet is left explaining the reason why we visited, giving details about our services and information on how to order additional containers if required. A summary of the figures so far is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Number of doors knocked	Number of people spoken to	Hits (%)	Number of food caddies delivered	Number of green boxes delivered	Number of caddy liners delivered
3825	1129	32.21	161	148	89

7. An important aspect of the door knocking campaign is to gather feedback from residents on the reasons why they are not using the recycling services. With this information we can tailor future communications material to address some of the concerns. If there are operational issues then these can be addressed with the contractor. Table 2 provides details of the feedback received on the door step.

Table 2



8. Return visits are made to assess the impact of the initial door knocking. This data is still being gathered, however early indications suggest that there are definite improvements in participation on the roads door knocked. Levels of improvement vary, with the biggest rise in participation for food waste collections being 35.5% and for glass 50%. The average improvement in food waste caddies presented for collection is over 9% and 13% for green boxes. This monitoring will continue alongside analysis of the tonnages collected on each recycling round.
9. Table 3 illustrates the tonnages and percentages of dry recycling and compostable material collected by all the authorities in Norfolk.

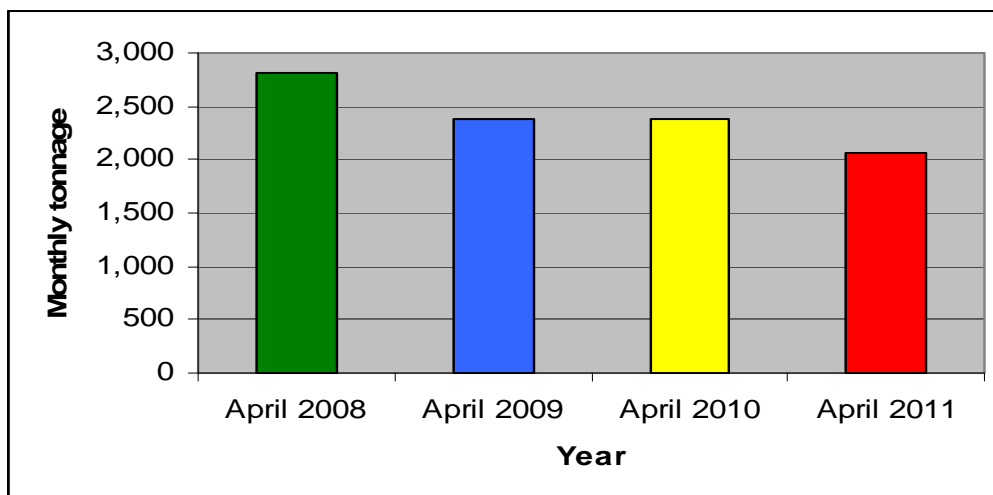
Table 3

	Total hhd tonnage	Total dry recycling	%age	Total compostable tonnage	%age	Total recycled and composted	Total recycling %age
Breckland	48,930	11,003	22.49	6,843	13.99	17,846	36.47
Broadland	47,475	13,522	28.48	10,014	21.09	23,536	49.57
Gt Yarmouth	34,401	7,826	22.75	1,303	3.79	9,129	26.54
North Norfolk	40,639	10,208	25.12	7,339	18.06	17,547	43.18
Norwich	43,671	13,133	30.07	6,109	13.99	19,242	44.06
South Norfolk	42,457	12,011	28.29	5,688	13.40	17,700	41.69
KL & West Norfolk	56,425	15,006	26.59	7,134	12.64	22,140	39.24
Recycling centres	68,054	23,005	33.80	24,198	35.56	47,203	69.36
Countywide	382,053	105,714	27.67	68,628	17.96	174,342	45.63

\* Figures based on Waste Collection Authority returns up until December 2011 plus an "estimate" for January to March 2012 inclusive. Actual audited figures from 2011/2012 will not be available until July.

10. Norwich has the highest percentage of dry recycling collected in Norfolk, which is an impressive achievement for the only entirely urban authority in the County. It is understandable that the collected tonnage of compostable material is not as high as the more rural authorities, where more substantial quantities of garden waste are collected. The collection of food waste in Norwich has enhanced the compostable tonnage.
11. There has been an overall reduction in the amount of household waste Norwich has sent to landfill over the past few years. This is mainly due to the improved recycling facilities provided to households, but as awareness of recycling has increased our hope is that there is also an element of waste reduction and composting. Table 4 illustrates the reduction in waste collected year on year.

Table 4 Waste sent to Landfill



12. There has also been an overall decline in the recycling tonnage of material which is being delivered into the MRF. There are two explanations for this decline;

As a result of the recession households are not buying as much and therefore not throwing away as much (e.g. the packaging of new products, magazines etc)

The level of raw materials which goes into products has significantly reduced. Some packaging reductions are clear to see, for example the removal of the outer box for a tube of tomato puree, but some are more subtle - the average weight of glass containers has been reduced by about 30% since 1980. Reductions have also been seen in plastic bottle manufacture and many liquids now come in a concentrated form. Some of the big supermarkets have also made significant packaging reduction:

**ASDA:** 25% reduction in own-labelling packaging

**Morrisons:** use 15% less own brand packaging

**Sainsburys:** 5% reduction in packaging

**Tesco:** 25% reduction in own-label and branded packaging

**Marks & Spencer:** 25% reduction in packaging

- 13 Despite these factors the quantity of recycling material that Norwich delivers to the MRF is increasing. This is the result of the doorstep engagement project coupled with the roll-out of new communal recycling facilities to both council and rented flats.

### **Contamination Issues**

- 14 Contamination of the recyclable material is a constant issue whenever co-mingled recycling is collected in wheeled bins. This contamination is sorted

out of the recyclable material at the MRF, but this waste product attracts a charge of over £80 per tonne for disposal. Reducing the levels of contamination will therefore have both environmental and financial benefits to the Council.

- 15 To reduce contamination rates, the team have been working very closely with the recycling collection crews to support them in dealing with contaminated bins and with households which are regularly putting incorrect items in their recycling bins. The focus has been on areas where the highest numbers of blue bins are issued with red cards (i.e. the contents are too contaminated to be emptied into the vehicle). So far work has been focussed in the Larkman and Mile Cross areas. The recycling officers have spent a number of days working with the collection crews, talking with residents and explaining which items we cannot take for recycling and why. Follow up visits have also been made where necessary and the team will continue this work in other areas as and when necessary.
- 16 As a result of this work we have identified some of the typical non-recyclable items that people are putting in their blue bins. With this information we are able to tailor our communications material, for example easy to read bin stickers that clarify which plastic items we can and cannot collect.
- 17 Education work is also ongoing with the collection crews to help them understand the importance of checking the bins for contamination and reporting this information back to their supervisors. The crews will also be touring the MRF to give them a wider understanding of the recycling service.
- 18 Over the long term these actions will help to reduce the level of material which is rejected and sent for disposal, reducing our costs, increasing the recycling rate and bringing in more income.