

LEISURE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

26 JUNE 2018

RECYCLING CONTAMINATION REDUCTION – MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide members with an overview of the Memorandum of Understanding proposed by the contamination working group and its planned implementation throughout the district.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 As members of the committee will be aware there has been an existing waste management partnership between Newark and Sherwood District Council, district and borough partners, Nottinghamshire County Council and their contractor Veolia since 2012.
- 2.2 Under the 2012 document it was agreed that the partners would exercise their waste management responsibilities jointly in order to:
- develop and implement sustainable waste management policies and practices to achieve best value for the people of Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City
 - Establish a mutually beneficial framework for changes and development of waste collection and disposal services
 - Minimise waste generation in Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City and manage waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy
 - Maximise recycling and recovery levels from waste in order to meet or exceed European Union in United Kingdom targets as far as possible consistent with each party's capacity to fund those processes
 - Maximise value and performance from waste management contracts to the mutual benefit of the parties involved and the people Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City
- 2.3 The disposal contract between Nottinghamshire County Council and Veolia is based on a specific set of materials which are delivered either directly to Veolia's Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) or moved there via a series of transfer stations which act as hubs for bulking up the material for transport.
- 2.4 The output quality of the material is vastly improved by the quality of the input i.e. if the correct materials are placed in the recycling bins presented for collection then the MRF is capable of separating the materials into individual streams (Paper, plastic etc.). If the recycling bins have items in them that cannot be recycled then they are difficult to separate and can contaminate the end product.

3.0 What is the problem?

- 3.1 The permitted contamination rate for materials entering the MRF is 5%. Across Nottinghamshire County we have seen contamination rates slowly rise in all council

areas. When the contract first started back in 2006 contamination rates were routinely below the 5% threshold; by 2017 the county average figures reached 13%.

- 3.2 Contamination is classed as any material that the MRF is not designed to process. This is due to the technical operation of the machinery and the problems that some materials can cause when mixed in with the ‘target’ materials. Information provided by Veolia illustrates the problem; Figure 1 illustrates the average contamination rate from April – December 2017 and Figure 2 provides a district breakdown.

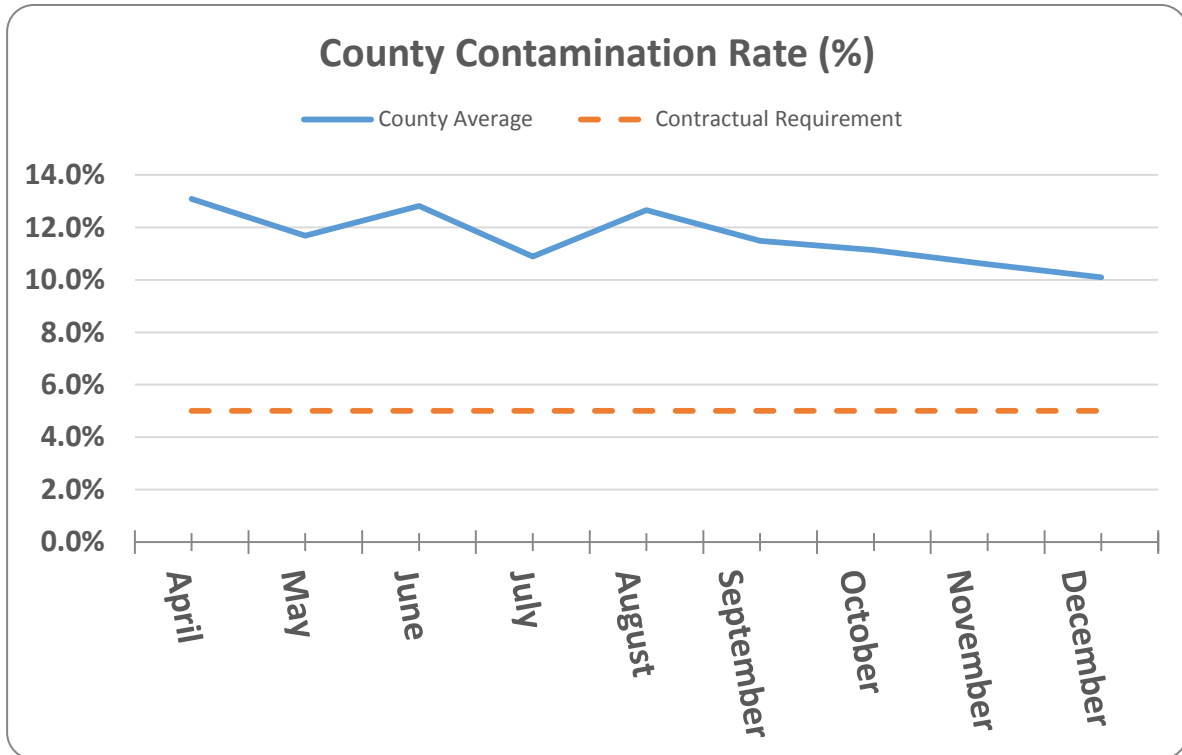


Figure 1

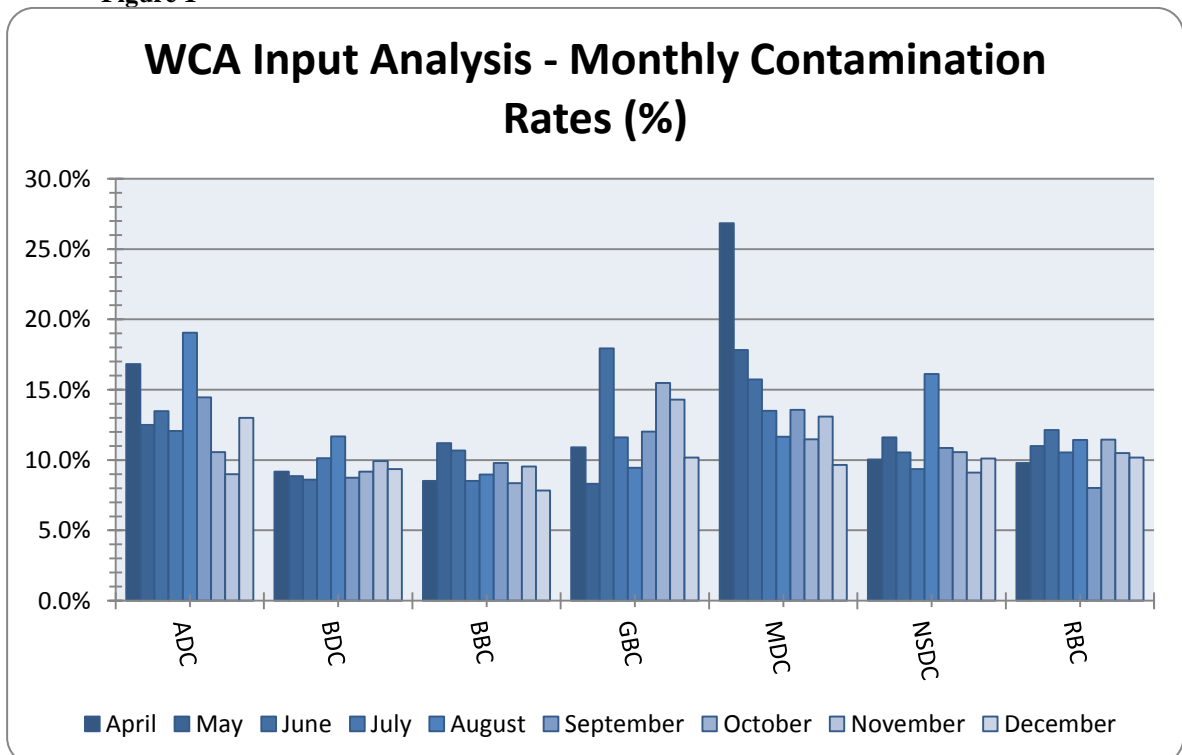


Figure 2

4.0 Refusals vs understanding

- 4.1 There is a distinction to be drawn between residents who refuse to recycle and those who endeavour to do their best but are often confused by what can and cannot be recycled. Veolia worked closely with two of the authorities experiencing the highest levels of contamination (Ashfield and Mansfield) and acted with officers and residents to work on key strategies for reducing contamination. The work they conducted has been fed back into a working group with the aim of rolling out improvements county wide.
- 4.2 Veolia has provided photographic evidence of the range of contamination issues they have identified. Food waste, glass, textiles and sanitary products are particularly problematic when they enter the MRF as they spread through the material streams and can contaminate entire loads. Shattered glass can cause particular problems for waste paper streams due to the damage it can cause in the paper milling process and sanitary and rotting food waste could ultimately end up in plastic or paper waste streams which are later intended for food use.





5.0 **Tackling the problem**

- 5.1 As a result of the rise in contamination Veolia have now begun to reject entire loads of recycling in an effort to try and improve the quality of materials. This will have an impact on recycling rates across the county.
- 5.2 In order to keep the number of rejected loads to a minimum a contamination working group was established to examine the issue and to offer solutions that can be implemented county wide.
- 5.3 The contamination working group has compiled a memorandum of understanding to provide the framework for future actions on contamination reduction and associated actions such as enforcement. Over time this should help reduce discrepancy across the county.
- 5.4 In addition to the memorandum of understanding Veolia has, with the assistance of the working group, created a suite of artwork which can be used by authorities to help tackle contamination and provide residents county-wide with accurate and easy to understand recycling information.
- 5.5 The Memorandum of understanding sets minimal obligations on each council but establishes a framework and agreed protocols that each individual council will work towards and implement as they see fit. These protocols are broadly in line with existing working practices for Newark and Sherwood.

6.0 **Implementation**

6.1 **Internal Training**

As part of our efforts to reduce contamination the waste management team will be performing some internal refresher training. Initially this will be focused within the business unit but we hope to expand this to include other interested teams such as communications and customer services.

We will be working with Veolia who have offered access to their training materials to devise the best plan. A 'drop in session' for people working in Castle House is also being considered.

Veolia have also offered further MRF tours for interested councillors and colleagues.

6.2 **Procedural changes**

The Memorandum of understanding will also lead to some procedural changes enabling us to shift our focus to serial offenders. The CRM system will be amended to ensure that all properties that contaminate their bin on more than one occasion receive a visit from an inspector. 'First time' transgressors will be sent recycling information and a covering letter offering to empty their contaminated bin alongside their residual waste collection. This will then provide them with a one off 'clean slate'.

6.3 **Communications**

As soon as the artwork is finalised the council will begin some social media promotion around the issues to help raise the recycling agenda.

A direct mail drop to every household with a recycling bin in the district (52,500 properties) is proposed containing:

- Two-sided recycling information card
- Are you bin smart sticker suitable for fixing to a recycling bin
- Covering letter from the Chairman of Leisure and Environment

7.0 **Future work**

7.1 A number of future work items are being considered by the contamination working group. These include a county wide recycling 'app' and a county wide website for residents who wish to know more about recycling.

7.2 Newark and Sherwood District council has been a long term supported of the county wide Schools Waste Action Club (SWAC). This team is provided by Nottinghamshire County Council supported by Veolia and conduct school visits around the county. We will continue to work with them and highlight areas of high contamination so that they can target local schools.

7.3 If funding for the support materials is approved all new and replacement recycling bins within the district will be issued with recycling information.

8.0 Budget implications

8.1 Signing of the Memorandum of understanding – No budget implications

- District Mail drop - £ 22,305.00
- Support materials (for new properties and contamination tags) - £6981.00

Combining printing costs will bring this to **£28,301.00**

- New contaminated bin tags - **£1,232.00**

Total: £29,533.00

8.2 If the recommendations are approved, then the cost of the proposals will be funded from in-year underspends.

9.0 Equalities Implications

9.1 The issue of issuing this material in accessible formats and alternative languages will be raised with the Contamination working group.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

- (a) the Memorandum of understanding be approved;
- (b) the Committee approve funding for the district wide mail drop and the new suite of support materials.

Reason for Recommendation(s)

**To assist residents in understanding what can and can't go in their recycling bin.
To work with our county partners to improve the quality of recycling across the district.**

Background Papers

Artwork provided by Veolia and Nottinghamshire County Council
Memorandum of Understanding – Dry recyclables collections

For further information please contact Matt Adey on Ext 5253

Matthew Finch
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