



1. Background:

Recycling rates have stagnated and, in some cases, declined over the last year, impacted by more stringent sorting as reprocessors demand increasing quality material from the MRFs. This has seen increased 'gate checks' which can result in whole loads being rejected, and increasing proportions of material being classed as non-recyclable through the sorting process. In addition, there have limited opportunities for recycling mixed plastics meaning that this is instead being sent to Energy from Waste and cannot be counted in recycling rates. This report summarises the actions being taken to address contamination in the DMR stream.

2. Working with Amey

Checks by collection crews are crucial in ensuring obviously contaminated recycling bins are not emptied. Amey crews are required to inspect the visible contents of the bin to ensure there are no incorrect items before emptying. Bins found to contain incorrect items should be reported on the in-cab device, and a hanger left on the bin explaining the reason it has been left.

To make sure that crews understand the importance of these checks, the Operations team have attended 'toolbox talks' at each of the four depots in recent weeks. All crews have been reminded of the procedure they must follow, with questions answered by both Amey and JWS staff.

Following toolbox talks, monitoring is being carried out, with spot checks on a selection of crews to verify that they are checking and rejecting bins correctly. Where clearly contaminated bins have been emptied, or there is a failure to leave the correct information for the resident, this will be raised with Amey, and remediation notices issued.

3. Working with Residents

Communications with residents are key to reducing the proportion of incorrect items found in recycling bins. Information is made available to residents through bin hangers, leaflets, annual service guides, and online information on websites including the recycling search tool.

The JWS Operations and Communications teams are currently producing a new service guide – which will go to all households in November, along with calendars for 2020 and Christmas collection information. The guides will differ slightly in content between boroughs based on input from both JWS and Amey/Council Customer Service teams.

Where specific issues are identified - for example repeated contamination at a block of flats – the Operations team will write to residents and/or managing agents explaining the issues and changes that need to be made to ensure recycling can be collected. Additional leaflets and recycling bags are made available where needed.

Recycle Week takes place later this month and provides an opportunity to use social media to promote recycling messages, and this will include targeted posts in the contract area highlighting known contaminants.

Further information on planned communication campaigns is provided in the Comms Plan update.

4. Working with the Recycling Facilities

As recycling facilities increasingly look to improve the quality of their outputs, it is important we work with them to identify the sources and types of contamination.

We already used feedback from instances where whole loads are rejected to identify round areas and material types which have resulted in the load being rejected. The reports are passed to Amey for investigation, to ensure there were no operational errors which contributed to the rejection.

Regular sampling of loads is required at all MRFs, and while the data provided to support this gives some insights in to the composition of contaminants, MRF visits to review the sampling process and gather more detailed information are being planned.

Recommendation: The Committee are asked to note the steps being taken to reduce recycling contamination levels.