
***Auditor General for Scotland
Sustainable Waste Management (September
2007)
Local follow up report***

South Lanarkshire Council

September 2011



Table of Contents

Summary of Findings.....	3
Section 1. Introduction	5
Section2. Detailed Findings.....	7

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Summary of Findings

Introduction

Our work in respect of sustainable waste management follow up was undertaken during August 2011 through discussion with appropriate officers and review of relevant documentation.

The aim of this follow-up work is to assess what steps the Council has taken to ensure that it will be able to meet future European Union and Scottish Government targets to improve waste management. This work was based on an Audit Scotland questionnaire for local auditors to complete. This checklist considered the following areas, for which detailed findings are include in Section 2.

- 1 Council plans to improve waste management and contribute to meeting future national targets?
- 2 The costs associated with plans to improve waste management to meet the 2013 and 2020 targets?
- 3 Council plans for new infrastructure/facilities to improve waste management and meet the 2013 and 2020 targets?
- 4 Sharing of waste management services or facilities with other councils?
- 5 Engagement with individuals and communities about the best way to improve waste management?

We did not undertake a detailed audit and the purpose of this report is to provide additional information to Audit Scotland only.

Detailed Findings

The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) reported Scottish councils' recycling and landfill rates for 2009/10. For South Lanarkshire Council ('the Council') the following was reported:

- 40% municipal waste recycled and composted, (national average 37%); and
- 60% municipal waste landfilled, (national average 57%).

(Source: Scottish Environment Protection Agency. The remaining 6% nationally represents incineration which is nil for South Lanarkshire Council.)

Forty percent recycling or composting of municipal waste is the national target for 2010, and was achieved by the Council in 2009/10.

The Council contributed 6.5% to the national biodegradable municipal waste; the fourth largest contribution by a local authority in Scotland.

The Council has incorporate waste management objectives within the Council Plan, *Connect*, and the Sustainable Development Strategy. These are accompanied by detailed actions and performance measures to enable continuous monitoring of performance by the Council and drive improvements.

In light of the publication of the Scottish Government's Zero Waste Plan in June 2010, the Council has acknowledged that further action is required to enable further improvements in sustainable waste management. The Council considers it necessary to procure new generation waste treatment facilities to meet Scottish Government Zero Waste targets. The Council is currently engaged in a procurement process to identify a preferred bidder in relation to their waste management solutions to help improve overall recycling and waste division targets. Subsequent to this report being drafted, the Council has now announced a preferred bidder and is in the stand still period.

Following the completion of the procurement process the Council should be better placed to fully understand the potential costs of sustainable waste management improvements and the required infrastructure and facilities. The Council has demonstrated commitment to improvements in this area and plans to develop a detailed waste management strategy following the completion of the procurement process; this is expected by March 2012.

Our detailed findings are set out in section 2.

Section 1. Introduction

Report Background

In January 2010, part of the environment overview report, 'Protecting and improving the Scottish environment', focused on waste management and councils' performance since publication of the *Sustainable Waste Management* report in September 2007.

In Scotland significant progress has been noted over the past decade, however further progress is still required to ensure European Union targets are achieved. Failure to continue to progress and achieve European targets over the next decade could result in significant fines for the Scottish Government. To ensure progress, the Scottish Government has developed a number of its own targets. In some instances these go beyond those of the European Union requirements.

South Lanarkshire Council

The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency reported in 2009/10 on individual Scottish authorities waste statistics, providing a national overview and where local authorities performed relative to national averages. The following was noted for South Lanarkshire Council '(the Council)':

- 40% municipal waste recycled and composted, (national average 37%);
- 60% municipal waste landfilled, (national average 57%).

(Source: Scottish Environment Protection Agency. The remaining 6% nationally represents incineration which is nil for South Lanarkshire Council.)

Forty percent recycling or composting of municipal waste is the national target for 2010, this was achieved by the Council in 2009/10.

The Council contributed 6.5% to the national biodegradable municipal waste; the fourth largest contribution by a local authority in Scotland.

Future Targets

The Scottish Government published its *Zero Waste Plan* in June 2010. It set out a roadmap for how Scotland should further improve its waste management efforts. The Zero Waste Plan set out revised definitions, baselines and targets for municipal waste. Scotland now needs to reduce the total amount of biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill by nearly a third by 2020 to meet the next European Union target. The latest targets are set out in the table below.

European Union targets	Scottish Government targets
The amount of municipal waste being prepared for reuse or recycled (by weight) increased to 50 per cent by 2020	The amount of municipal waste being recycled or composted increased to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 per cent by 2013 • 60 per cent by 2020 • 70 per cent by 2025
The amount of biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill reduced to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.80 million tonnes by 2013 • 1.26 million tonnes by 2020 	A maximum of 5 per cent of municipal waste to be sent to landfill by 2025

Follow Up Background

The objective of this follow up report is to assess what steps the Council has taken to ensure that it will be able to meet future European Union and Scottish Government targets to deliver sustainable waste management. The follow up work focused on areas highlighted by the questionnaire produced by Audit Scotland.

Audit Scotland has issued a standard checklist for all local auditors to complete, covering five areas:

1. Council plans to improve waste management and contribute to meeting future national targets?
2. The costs associated with plans to improve waste management to meet the 2013 and 2020 targets?
3. Council plans for new infrastructure/facilities to improve waste management and meet the 2013 and 2020 targets?
4. Sharing of waste management services or facilities with other councils?
5. Engagement with individuals and communities about the best way to improve waste management?

Our work consisted of completing the Audit Scotland questionnaire and reviewing supporting documentation where available. We did not undertake a detailed audit and the purpose of this report is to provide additional information to Audit Scotland only.

Please note our observations in respect of the Council’s sustainable waste management arrangements may contribute to the publication of a national follow up report by Audit Scotland.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all staff at the Council for the cooperation and goodwill we received during the course of our fieldwork.

Section 2. Detailed Findings

Set out below is a summary of our main observations, based on audit Scotland's checklist in this area:

1. Council plans

The Council includes waste management as a key component of its Sustainable Development Strategy. Sustainable Development is a Corporate Improvement Theme and one of the Council objectives included within *Connect*, the Council Plan to 2012. The Council objective is to, 'Ensure efficient use of material resources and to increase recycling of waste and develop more sustainable waste management'. This objective is monitored on a quarterly basis through the Council's performance monitoring system, *Improve*, and has been formally reviewed as part of the mid-term review of the Council Plan.

The Council has developed key measures to demonstrate achievement of its objectives, these include:

- To provide co-mingled recycling collections from 67% of Council premises by March 2011;
- To limit permitted biodegradable municipal waste to landfill to 73,730 tonnage by March 2011;
- To achieve a waste recycling rate of 40% for domestic waste by March 2010 and 50% by March 2013
- To maintain waste tonnage per household at 1.43 tonnes or below; and
- To maintain level of satisfaction with waste collection services, (2008: 83% very good or good).

In light of the publication of the Scottish Government's Zero Waste Plan, the Council has acknowledged it needs to take further action to enable continued improvements in sustainable waste management. The Council considers it necessary to procure new generation waste treatment facilities to meet Scottish Government Zero Waste targets. The procurement will cover overall recycling and waste division targets.

In addition, in response to the Zero Waste Plan, a Food Waste Collection Trial Scheme was carried out during April and May 2011. This trial enabled the segregation of food waste from other general household waste, as required by the Zero Waste targets. The results of the trial were deemed positive and approval has been reached to roll out the Food Waste Collection scheme to all premises of South Lanarkshire Council from April 2012. This will contribute to the Council achieving 50% composting of biodegradable waste by March 2013.

The Council's plans do not currently cover overall reduction in municipal waste as the council does not feel it has the power to control overall waste levels but the corporate plan, *Connect*, aims to limit household waste to 1.43 tonnes per household or less. Detailed plans to target 50% domestic recycling by 2013, reduce biodegradable municipal waste to 25% of 1995 levels by 2020, and to assist the Council in meeting other EU Directive and Scottish Government targets are being built into the contract for waste management services that is being procured.

2. Costs to improve waste management

The Council is currently engaged in a procurement process to identify a preferred bidder in relation to their waste management solutions to help improve overall recycling and waste diversion targets. A preferred bidder has been announced in September 2011 and is now in the stand still period. Following this, a clearer understanding of the potential costs to improve sustainable waste management should be known.

3. Infrastructure and facilities

The identification of future infrastructure needs is aligned to the procurement of the long term contract for the treatment and disposal of residual waste discussed above. The selection of a preferred bidder in September 2011 will provide further insight into required infrastructure and facilities requirements and the associated costs for the Council.

4. Sharing of waste management services and facilities

A review of opportunities to consider sharing waste management services and facilities with North Lanarkshire Council was considered, including potential benefits from approaching the improvements agenda as a shared service. The Council worked with North Lanarkshire Council to develop a joint solution and began a joint procurement process. However this had to be abandoned because the solution was no longer consistent with the new national waste policy adopted by the Scottish Government following a change of administration in 2007. The independent procurement of a long term solution to waste management has been approved by the Council.

5. Engagement with individuals and communities

The Council has included an action in the sustainable development strategy, to achieve its corporate improvement theme of sustainable development, to develop a community awareness engagement team to help raise awareness of initiatives and improve the communities understanding and use of waste and recycling services.

Waste Education is provided in schools and to community groups in the form of talks through, for example, the eco schools curriculum. The Council believes engagement initiatives are working, with the 2010 recycling and diversionary targets both met. Specifically a recycling rate of 40.2% against a target of 40% was achieved and actual diversionary tonnes were 71,475 against the maximum limit of 77,835 tonnes.

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