



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Health and Environmental Services Committee
Subject:	Review of Staffing Levels and Shift Patterns at Household Recycling Centres/Civic Amenity Sites
Date:	8th September, 2010
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Relevant Background Information

In 2001, new legislation was introduced within the UK to transpose the EU Landfill Directive (LFD). The diversion of Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) from landfill is a key objective of the LFD and a series of progressively reducing targets were set to reduce the amount of BMW sent to landfill

- to 75% of 1995 levels by 2010,
- to 50% of 1995 levels by 2013 and
- to 35% of 1995 levels by 2020

The Waste Management Service has been working with arc21 to implement a Waste Plan to meet the LFD and its challenging targets.

In 2009/2010, the household recycling and composting rate for Belfast was 26.7%. Beyond the LFD, the EU Waste Framework Directive (WFD), which is currently being transposed locally (see consultation paper response this month), is seeking to introduce further targets to aid in meeting a recycling and composting rate of 50% by 2020.

As part of the Council's corporate objectives, values and strategic themes, the Waste Management Service is developing new proposals to increase the amounts of waste which is diverted from landfill for recycling and composting. The Service is seeking to do this through (i) the provision of appropriate receptacles to every household in the city (ii) the development of improved Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) and (iii) greater engagement with householders and businesses in Belfast. The Service is taking these steps to deliver upon the Council commitments to 'taking better care of Belfast's environment', and to 'provide a cleaner, greener, healthier city now and for the future' as outlined in the corporate Value Creation Map.

Reflecting these commitments, Members may recall that at its November meeting last year approval was granted to permanently close the Clara Street civic amenity (CA) site. At this meeting, Members also granted approval to the Head of Service to commission the Council's Business Improvement Service (BIS) to undertake a review of staffing levels and shift patterns at the HRCs. BIS commenced this review in early 2010 to examine the potential for the re-

deployment of existing staff (two Recycling Supervisors and four Recycling Operatives) from Clara Street CA site on its closure to the other HRC's to avoid redundancies if possible, to review staffing levels at the HRCs and to review the shift patterns at the HRC's and CA sites.

As Members will be aware, there are four HRC's in Belfast at (i) Alexandra Park Avenue – north (ii) Blackstaff Way – west (iii) Palmerston Road – east and (iv) Ormeau (Park Road) – south. At the time of the review, there were also three CA sites operating at Clara Street – east, Agnes Street – north and Springfield Avenue – west. As planned, Clara Street ceased operating as a CA site on 31st March, 2010. There were two Recycling Supervisors and four Recycling Operatives based at the Clara Street CA site.

As part of the consideration for future options for staff, Members should also be aware that the Service is currently investigating the possibility of developing a new HRC at Springvale (see separate report this month).

In terms of managing the sites, there is a daily 'two shifts pattern' at each HRC which ensures there are staff to cover all site opening times. Shift patterns are required for the winter and summer periods as the opening hours at the HRC's and CA sites differ. Different shift patterns are also required for the different posts (i.e. the Area Recycling Officers, the Recycling Supervisors/Recycling Operatives and for the part-time Recycling Operatives). The current opening hours at the HRCs and CA sites are as follows:

Winter Period – October to March

Saturday 8.00am to 5.00pm
 Sunday 12.00pm to 5.00pm
 Monday – Friday 8.00am to 5.00pm

Summer Period – April to September

Saturday 8.00am to 5.00pm
 Sunday 12.00pm to 5.00pm
 Monday – Friday 8.00am to 8.00pm

Currently, Palmerston Road HRC and Ormeau HRC are staffed with one Recycling Supervisor and three Recycling Operatives per shift. Blackstaff Way HRC and Alexandra Park Avenue HRC are staffed with one Recycling Supervisor and two Recycling Operatives per shift. When the shifts overlap at the sites the staffing level doubles. In assessing the potential for redeploying the Clara Street CA site staff, BIS considered:

- The public usage of each site (the hourly vehicular usage)
- The total weight of recycled/composted and residual waste handled at each site and the recycling rates
- The recycling facilities provided at each HRC and
- The size of each HRC.

A summary of the total wastes, percentages recycled/composted materials, and residual wastes handled at the HRCs from October 2008 to September 2009 was:

Alexandra Park Ave HRC	Annual Tonnage
Total Recycled Waste	3235
Residual Waste	1946
Total Waste Arising	5181
% Recycled & Composted	62%
Blackstaff Way HRC	Annual Tonnage
Total Recycled Waste	2739

Residual Waste	2549
Total Waste Arising	5287
% Recycled & Composted	52%
Palmerston Road HRC	Annual Tonnage
Total Recycled Waste	3254
Residual Waste	1489
Total Waste Arising	4743
% Recycled & Composted	69%
Ormeau Park HRC	Annual Tonnage
Total Recycled Waste	1809
Total Recycled Waste	1097
Total Waste Arising	2906
% Recycled & Composted	62%

The table shows that the total wastes at Alexandra Park Avenue and Blackstaff Way HRCs are higher than the other two HRCs. Alexandra Park Avenue and Blackstaff Way HRCs are also staffed with fewer Recycling Operatives. The percentage of recycled and composted waste for Alexandra Park Avenue HRC (62%) and Blackstaff Way HRC (52%) is less than that achieved at Palmerston Road HRC (69%).

Data for these two sites also shows that the recycling rates dropped in 2007 but have slowly gained ground in Alexandra Park since then, while they have not recovered in Blackstaff Way. Over the same period, both Palmerston Road HRC and Ormeau HRC recycling rates have improved steadily to 69% and 62% respectively.

Key Issues

BIS were commissioned by the Waste Management Service in 2009 to undertake a review of staffing levels and shift patterns at the HRCs in light of the proposed closure of Clara Street CA site (see attachment). Having reviewed the operations at the HRCs, they consider that the recycling rate performance at the Palmerston Road and Ormeau sites is at least partially due to the higher staffing levels these sites have, and as such can provide better customer care and support to users. The additional staff at these sites provide the opportunity to conduct more focused education and promotion of recycling to users. Differences in the performance of these sites may also be attributed to some demographic and/or cultural differences.

Transfer of Recycling Operatives

Following an analysis of the above information BIS consider that transferring staff from Clara Street to Alexandra Park Avenue and Blackstaff Way HRCs would standardise staffing levels at all HRC's and would provide the necessary resources to ensure more efficient and effective operations. The staffing increase at Alexandra Park Avenue and Blackstaff Way HRCs would also enable the Service to make some further improvements, such as (i) to improve manual handling practices (ii) to increase the promotion and education of recycling and composting at the sites (iii) to improve control over commercial waste users (iv) to improve the supervision of contractors on site (v) to improve customer care and the delivery of the Service's standards and (vi) to reduce the risks of not complying with legislative and operational requirements.

The transfer also recognises the investment in training for staff which will assist the Service increase the percentage of recycled and composted wastes diverted from these HRCs.

Also, at present the Service covers sickness absence by bringing in staff on overtime. By increasing the number of Recycling Operatives to three per shift, it is expected that cover will not need to be provided if only one member of staff is absent, which will reduce overtime payments currently paid.

The total cost of HRC overtime from January to December 2009 was £162,340. This is substantial and cannot be sustained.

Transfer of Recycling Supervisors

Each HRC has two Recycling Supervisors; Clara Street was the only CA site which was also similarly staffed, primarily due to its size. There are eight such posts which are all currently filled. As mentioned earlier, the Service is currently investigating the development of a new HRC at Springvale which, if approved, is unlikely to be operational before 2013. At this time two Recycling Supervisors will be required.

BIS consulted widely on prospective areas of work during this interim period for the two Clara Street Recycling Supervisors. Senior management within the Service have identified a number of operational inefficiencies which must be addressed to better manage operations and increase the Council's recycling and composting performance and these could be rectified if additional staffing resources were available at the HRCs for a period of time. The work to deliver these improvements is part of the Recycling Supervisors role but, due to operational pressures, it has been difficult to complete these on a day-to-day basis. The projects identified to date are as follows:

1. To implement improvements in customer care and good practice
2. To promote better segregation of wastes to improve recycling and composting by increased education of HRC users
3. To determine opportunities to generate income at the HRCs
4. To conduct a commercial waste study
5. To conduct a bulky household waste handling study
6. To review general signage requirements at the HRCs, including those concerned with licensing and permitting requirements.

This work could be completed on a project basis and would deliver benefits to the service. It is anticipated that these projects could be completed, through expressions of interest, by releasing Recycling Supervisors from their day-to-day responsibilities. Depending on the expressions of interest, the two Clara Street CA site supervisors may be appointed to undertake projects or be transferred to provide cover for other supervisors who are undertaking projects.

The primary role of the two officers selected for project work will remain that of a supervisor, providing cover for leave, sickness absence and training. With Clara Street CA site closing, there will be savings in overtime levels of £11,500. The Service has estimated that transferring these staff to the HRCs will further reduce the overtime needed to cover leave, sickness absence and training and will generate further savings of around £29,500.

Shift Patterns employed at the HRC's

Another purpose of the BIS review was to consider the shift patterns at the HRCs/CA sites which are currently being served by a daily, two shift pattern. Staff are required to start work 15 minutes before the sites open to the public and finish 15 minutes after they close. To inform this part of the review, an analysis of public usage was conducted which showed that, during the first hour, usage was less than 30% of the average rate which indicates that there is little demand to open the sites at 8.00am in the winter and summer. It can also be seen on page 20 of the BIS report that the sites are relatively well used between 4.00pm and 5.00pm in the winter.

Following discussions with senior management, BIS recommends that the site opening time should change to 8.30am in the winter and summer; it also proposed to extend the winter closing time to 5.30pm which would allow householders use of the sites later in the evening. Therefore the proposed opening hours for the sites in winter are as follows:

Proposed Opening Hours - Winter Period

October to March

Saturday	9.00am to 5.00pm
Sunday	12.00pm to 5.00pm
Mon – Fri	8.30am to 5.30pm

In the summer, the hourly usage at the HRCs between 6.00 pm – 8.00 pm was approximately 50% of the overall average hourly rate which would indicate that keeping the sites open each week night to 8.00pm is inefficient. Following the management discussions, a number of options were examined with the one night per week “*late opening*” being the most preferred; i.e. the HRCs open to 8.00pm on Wednesday evenings only during the summer and open to 5.30pm on the other weekdays. Therefore, the proposed opening hours for the sites in summer are as follows:

Proposed Opening Hours - Summer Period

April to September

Saturday	9.00am to 5.00pm	
Sunday	12.00pm to 5.00pm	
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday		8.30am to 5.30pm
Wednesday	8.30am to 8.00pm	

New shift patterns were then developed around these proposed new opening hours. The present shift patterns do not cover late openings on Tuesday and Thursday when staff are paid overtime. Removing this overtime alone will generate savings of approximately £33,000 per annum.

Communication with stakeholders

During the course of the BIS review, staff and the trade unions were consulted regarding the proposed shift patterns and opening hours. Staff also preferred the proposed option to work one late night in the summer. BIS also consulted with Human Resources at both Departmental and Corporate levels to consider any issues from redeploying staff from Clara Street CA site: none were identified. Financial Services were also consulted with regard to the new shift patterns to examine the impact on staff from changing their starting and finishing times and reducing the number of later evenings worked in the summer. The introduction of the one late night per week shift pattern will not impact on the staffs’ current shift allowance; the only change officers will experience will be a reduction in overtime which will assist the Council’s efficiency agenda.

In line with the March 2010 Committee meeting, the Head of Service has also met with each of the Party Group leaders to brief them on the proposals and no issues have been raised during these discussions.

Resource Implications

Financial Implications

The financial implications of implementing the recommendations of the BIS report would be an estimated saving of £74,000 per annum, based on reducing overtime using the revised shift patterns, the closure of Clara Street CA site and the redeployment of staff from Clara Street CA site to the four HRCs. The savings of £74,000 per annum can be summarised as follows:

Description	Cost per annum
Savings from the removal of overtime costs to cover late night opening (gap in shift – 7 hrs per wk across 7 sites)	£33,000
Savings in overtime from the closure of Clara Street	£11,500
Savings from the redeployment of staff and reduction in absence cover	£29,500
Total savings per annum	£74,000

Human Resource Implications

This review showed that the staff from Clara Street CA site could be redeployed at the HRCs once the site closed without any redundancies. This redeployment will be conducted in line with Council policy and procedures.

The review also showed that the current shift patterns at the HRCs and CA sites could be amended which will impact on staffs' starting and finishing times. This will not constitute a change to their terms and conditions of employment.

The Trade Unions and staff are supportive of these proposals.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to approve:

- the transfer of the four officers from Clara Street CA site to Alexandra Park Avenue and Blackstaff Way HRCs
- the transfer of the two supervisors from Clara Street CA site to be used, on an interim basis, at all HRCs to provide an additional resource to undertake improvement projects
- the proposed amendment to the opening and closing times for the winter and summer periods as outlined above
- the commencement of a communications campaign to promote these changes to the operational hours to the public from October 2010 onwards in advance of Council consideration of the report and
- the proposed shift patterns for staff at the HRCs and CA sites.

Decision Tracking

Should Members approve this report, the Head of Service will oversee the implementation of this report.

Document Attached

BIS review document