

Waste and Recycling Committee Meeting

Date: 22 July 2020

Subject: Communications and Behavioural Change Action Plan Progress Update – Part A

Report of: Michelle Whitfield, Head of Communications and Behavioural Change, GMCA Waste and Resources Team

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update members on the Recycle for Greater Manchester Communications & Behavioural Change delivery plan and the joint communications plan with Suez.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members of the Committee are recommended to:

- i. Note the progress against the Communications & Behavioural Change Plan and the Joint Suez/R4GM Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

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Risk Management – see paragraph 6.1

Legal Considerations – Not applicable

Financial Consequences – Revenue – Considered in the body of the report

Financial Consequences – Capital – Considered in the body of the report

Number of attachments included in the report: 1 - Appendix A, R4GM and Media Dashboard

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

TRACKING/PROCESS		
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		Yes / No
EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?		
TfGMC	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
N/A	N/A	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report provides an update of progress against the Recycle for Greater Manchester Communications & Behavioural Change Delivery Plan 2020/21 and the Joint SUEZ/R4GM plan.

2. Household waste Recycling Centres

2.1 The main focus of the last 3 months has been producing communications for the closing and re-opening of all 20 household waste recycling centres. The recycling centres closed on 24th March following movement restrictions introduced at the start of the Covid – 19 outbreak. From Saturday 2nd May, the recycling centres were opened in a phased and managed approach to minimize traffic impacts, taking into account the availability of staff and the reprocessors who recycle the waste.

2.2 Communications were developed to support each phase which included updating the Recycle for Greater Manchester website, producing social media assets for each local council, briefings and FAQs for the council contact centre staff, traffic management officers, SUEZ staff, member Councilors and other key stakeholders. The phases are outlined below and Appendix A shows a dashboard of key analytics for the website, social media channels and offline media. From 2nd May to 30th June, the R4GM website received over a million page views.

2.3 The 5 phases were:

- Saturday 2nd May, 16 sites opened for bagged general waste only. Sites operated restricted opening hours with some sites only open at the weekends;
- Saturday 16th May, one more site opened (Chester Road, Trafford) and opening hours extended at one other site. Garden waste, cardboard and wood containers were made available;
- Saturday 30th May, one more site opened (Rose Hill, Stockport) and opening hours extended at 2 other sites. Scrap metal and rubble containers were made available;
- Saturday 13th June, one more site opened, (Ash Road, Tameside) and opening times were extended at 2 other sites. More recycling containers became available including carpets, mattresses and electrical items;
- Saturday 29th June, the final sites opened (Every St in Bury and Cobden Street in Salford) and all sites are now open 7 days a week. All recycling containers are now available except textiles, clothes and shoes; and
- From Monday 13th July, members of public will be able to use the weighbridges to dispose of asbestos and plasterboard and if they have a vehicle over 2 meters that won't fit under the height barrier at the recycling centres.

2.4 Now that all recycling centres are open, the communications will focus on promoting the access restriction policy to deter traders from illegally using the sites.

3.0 COMMUNICATIONS & BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE PLAN

3.1 The communications plan is split into 5 sections:

- Waste prevention (including Home Composting);
- Greater Manchester Wide Digital Support;
- Education;
- Reduce contamination and improve the quality of recycling; and
- Increase recycling at the HWRCs.

3.1.1 Covid-19 has impacted the entire recycling industry; newspaper circulation is down but demand for cardboard has increased as more people shop online and supermarket sales increase – most food and medical supplies are also delivered in a cardboard box. Many recycling reprocessors closed and we've seen a new type of Covid contamination with plastic gloves and face masks found in the paper and card stream. Council bin collection services are also under increased pressure due to an increase in the volume of waste and recycling due to more people having to stay at home. Therefore, it was necessary to review the R4GM Communications Plan to understand how behaviours have changes during lockdown and adapt the communications plan accordingly.

3.1.2 At a meeting with the Council's Strategic Officers Group (SOG) for waste management on 3rd June, it was agreed that tackling paper and card contamination is still the main priority. In order to reduce pressure on garden waste services, it was suggested that we should run a home composting campaign, encouraging residents to compost their garden waste at home, thereby reducing the amount they would need to put into their garden waste bin.

3.2 **Waste Prevention**

3.2.1 The food waste prevention campaign has been pushed back to later in the year. This campaign was due to launch in May at the same time as Love Food Hate Waste national campaign, but this has been delayed. A recent survey by WRAP suggests that residents are managing their food better during lockdown; many more people are planning meals, writing shopping lists and cooking more at home resulting in a reported 34% reduction in waste of potatoes, bread, chicken, and milk.*

*Source: <https://wrap.org.uk/content/citizens-learning-love-food-and-hate-waste-during-lockdown>

3.2.2 **Home Composting Campaign**

3.2.3 A home composting campaign is being delivered across Greater Manchester to encourage composting at home and reduce pressure on the garden and food waste collection service. R4GM social media platforms will be used to provide interaction with residents through interesting and informative content. Social media toolkits will also be provided for the councils and we will procure discounted compost bins for residents. In addition we will explore partnership working with the Lancashire Wildtrust who are running the 'My Wild Garden' campaign to encourage residents to explore nature in their garden and with RHS Salford. R4GM will link in to district specific environment/ garden events and national

awareness days, such as 'In Bloom'. We will also develop blogs, podcast and Ask the Expert live Q&A.

3.3 Greater Manchester Wide Digital Support

3.3.1 The contract for the R4GM Bin App ended on 30th April. Before procuring a new contract for an App, the R4GM Communications team is consulting with each council to understand its requirements; recommendations will then be taken to the SOG group.

3.3.2 When the household waste recycling centres closed, it was necessary to hide and remove many of the pages on the Recycle for Greater Manchester website. Now that all recycling centres are now open, the team is reviewing the website to make sure information can be found easily. It is interesting to note that even during the lockdown when more people were at home with access to a laptop, that 75% of users accessed the website on their mobile phone. It is important therefore that the look and feel and usability of the website is mobile friendly.

3.4 Education

3.4.1 The current situation around Covid, has meant that all R4GM education activities that normally would be delivered in person (either on site or on outreach) have been suspended. It is not practical to resume site visits or visit schools and community groups to deliver outreach sessions whilst the current social distancing rules remain in place. It is anticipated that schools will not be in a position to plan or take part in school trips for the first part of the autumn term, even if rules are eased. The education team are developing new ways to engage with the public. These include:

- Education Facebook page; a dedicated R4GM page with content specifically to appeal to teachers/ home educators / community leaders;
- Live sessions; the team are researching platforms to deliver live education sessions to individuals or groups, these would be bookable in the same way as the tour around the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) at Longley Lane in Sharston; and
- Pre-recorded films; a virtual tour of the MRF has been filmed on a Go-Pro. This is available on the R4GM website. The aim is then to add further films to include a look at the tipping hall where the paper and card is delivered to highlight the issue of contamination and a film on how to home compost.

3.4.2 The refit of the education centre at Longley Lane will go out to procurement this month. The Education Centre host visits throughout the year; the average number of sessions is 210 per year which is a foot fall of around 4600. The services main target is schools from Key stage 2, and only children over the age of seven are accepted. This is for both health and safety reasons and to ensure the audience we target understand the information presented. The classroom can accommodate up to 28 students with 2 adults in a standard session. We effectively use a variety of activities within a session and focus on a student centred approach to learning. Teaching methods have changed over the last 10 years especially with new digital interactive technology The refit will introduce a high tech approach to learning,

this approach to learning utilises different technologies (tablets, digital games) to aid students in their understanding of the subject.

3.4.3 Average class sizes have also increased since the Education service was developed in 2009 from 24.2 to 27.1. Currently we can only accommodate 28 students, this is due to the numbers of people we can safely take on the tour around the Materials Recovery Facility. We often have requests for classes with over 30 students in. Following the trend in increased class sizes we have to future proof the Education service by being able to accommodate larger classes. Historically the main target audience for the education centre was primary schools, but 51% of our users last year were adults; this includes higher education classes, professional groups, special needs education groups and open days. It is important we are able to utilise the space and target the activities to a wide audience; for example, having different levels of interactive programmes.

3.5 **Reduce Contamination and Improve the Quality of Recycling**

3.5.1 Paper and card contamination is still a significant problem for many of the councils and there was an increase in rejected loads during the lockdown period possible due to an increase in the volume of waste and recycling produced by householders and some disruptions to council bin collections. The communications will provide both a GM wide approach focussing on the correct way to dispose of Covid waste such as face masks, plastic gloves and tissues which are increasingly being found in the paper and card bins. The team will also provide bespoke communications support to each council depending on the level and type of contamination present.

3.5.2 The Communications Team are currently visiting a number of transfer loading stations to observe council vehicles tipping off the paper and card recycling to gain insight into the type of contamination present. Communications materials will then focus on key messages aimed at educating residents on what happens to other paper and card once it has been collected and why contamination means that much of it cannot be recycled. The campaign will focus on the serious contaminants such as nappies, electricals and carpets/textiles.

3.6 **Increase Recycling at the HWRCs**

3.6.1 Now that all 20 recycling centres are open and accepting most materials, our focus will now turn to encouraging correct recycling behaviour. A new video has been filmed showing how to separate waste before a visit and will be available on the R4GM website. We will also be promoting mattress recycling as the new mattress recycling facility in Bolton will be fully operational by the end of July. In addition we are promoting the trade waste access restriction policy and reminding traders about their duty of care and how to dispose of trade waste correctly.

4. **JOINT SUEZ/R4GM COMMUNICATIONS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

4.1 The joint SUEZ and R4GM communications plan identifies key priority areas as follows:

- Household waste recycling centre access restriction policy;
- Reuse shops;
- Social value plan;
- New facilities (mattress recycling plant, street sweeping recycling plant);
- Compost donation scheme;
- Major works; and
- Community liaison groups.

4.2 The R4GM Communications Team are currently working with SUEZ on promoting the new mattress recycling facility at the Salford Road site in Bolton. The facility which operated by the Furniture Group (TFR) will be fully operational by the end of July and most household waste recycling centres will have covered containers where members of the public can recycle their old mattress. A press release will be sent out at the end of July, along with supporting information on the R4GM website.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

5.1 A progress dashboards will be shared on a regular basis throughout the year to provide updates on campaigns. These are shared with the respective council officers and member Councillors. The team also attend SOG (Strategic Officers Group) and POG (Partnership Operations Group) to update the council officers on progress on the communications plan.

5.2 In addition the team track the number of rejected loads, recycling rates and tonnage collected throughout the year.

5.3 Additional analytics are monitored for the R4GM website and social media channels, these are used to improve content and develop new assets.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 Successful and effective delivery of the communications and behavioural change plan will result in increased capture of recyclable materials and assist in driving down contamination. Contamination and access to recycle markets remains a critical risk in 2020/21 given the tightening of the export market for paper and card and the additional processing costs associated with removing contamination update.