



Open briefing: Opportunities to reduce recycling contamination

28 August 2024 – 4.39pm

Attendees

Elected Members: Cr Briggs, Cr Brown (until 5.00pm), Cr Dyer, Cr Edwards (via audio-visual link), Deputy Mayor Lewis, Cr Mitchell, Cr Morgan (via audio-visual link), Cr Parkin, Cr Shaw, Cr Stallinger (via audio-visual link), E Keddell, Eastbourne Community Board (part meeting, via audio-visual link); B Spedding, Eastbourne Community Board (via audio-visual link); S Freeman, Petone Community Board (part meeting, via audio-visual link).

Staff: J Miller, Chief Executive; A Blackshaw, Director Neighbourhoods and Communities (part meeting); A Geddes, Director Environment and Sustainability; J Scherzer, Head of Climate Waste and Resource Recovery; J Hayman, Senior Advisor Waste – Planning and Strategy; C Parish, Head of Mayor’s Office; M Randall, Senior Advisor – Climate and Sustainability; S Gogo, Advisor Energy and Carbon; J Hayman, Senior Advisor Waste – Planning and Strategy; G Roberts, Waste and Resource Recovery Manager; J Clarke, Advisor Resource Recovery; J Randall, Democracy Advisor.

Apologies

Mayor Barry, Cr Barratt and Cr Tupou.

Presenters

J Hayman, Senior Advisor Waste – Planning and Strategy and J Scherzer, Head of Climate Waste and Resource Recovery

Key Objectives of the Briefing

The purpose of the briefing is to update members on Council's recycling behaviour change campaign and opportunities to further reduce contamination.

Slide 1 – (Header)

Slide 2 – Background (Header)

Slide 3 – Impacts of contamination: The impacts of contamination are penalties and an inability to divert resources

Slide 4 – Common contaminants: Soft plastics are the most common contaminant.

Slide 5 – City wide contamination levels: Contamination levels fluctuate from month to month, but Hutt City Council is tracking gradually downwards.

Slide 6 – Contamination rates in other cities: Ministry for the Environment regulations now require councils to report on contamination. Christchurch contamination is low, but trucks are diverted if they have visible contamination of more than 10%. Selwyn take a similar approach to Lower Hutt but also use Radio Frequency Identification tags. Selwyn achieved a 30% reduction in contamination over the 2022-2023 year.

Slide 7 – Measures implemented to date (Header)

Slide 8 – Measures to date.

Slide 9 – Behaviour change campaign: Implemented in 2021.

Slide 10 – Examples of campaign assets 2022/23 push.

Slide 11 – Examples of campaign assets 2023/24 push.

Slide 12 – Recycling ambassadors and bin stickers.

Slide 13: – Contamination by Ward: Contamination is determined by the number of stickers issued, not the weight of contamination. The data can help inform how Council should engage with each community.

Slide 15 – Bin removal scheme: Stickers provide feedback on good recycling as well as the types of contamination in the bin. They provide positive and negative feedback to the householder.

Slide 16 – Targeted engagement and communication: Pamphlet drops have taken place in hotspot areas. They have not resulted in measurable change.

Slide 17 – Contamination testing methodology review: Scoop testing has been found to be a suitable means of estimating contamination.

Slide 19 – Impact on contamination: Education campaigns and stickering have helped to reduce contamination.

Slide 20 – Estimated spend to date: Spend is based on invoices received.

Slide 21 – Opportunities to reduce contamination further (Header)

Slide 22 – Opportunities: Officers have looked at what councils in New Zealand and Australia are doing to reduce contamination. Options are grouped under three themes.

Slide 23 – Initial comparison criteria: An example of how the different options have been reviewed and analysed.

Slide 24 – Targeted behaviour change: Street competition – a low opportunity rating.

Slide 25 – Targeted behaviour change: Spot prizes – a medium opportunity rating.

Slide 26 – Targeted behaviour change: Underlid stickers – a medium opportunity rating.

Slide 27 – Targeted behaviour change: RFID Tags – a high opportunity rating but needs a long lead in of six-12 months minimum.

Slide 28 – Household waste systems: Increased direct involvement with residents – a medium opportunity rating.

Slide 29 – Household waste systems: Household waste assessment and advice prior to removal – a low opportunity rating.

Slide 29 – Household waste systems: Mandatory bin size increase. Policy changes would be needed for this – a high opportunity rating.

Slide 31 – Enhanced bin removal process: Earlier removals for repeat contamination – a low opportunity rating.

Slide 32 – Enhanced bin removal process: Suspension of service via RFID. RFID tags trigger the need for a check before the bin gets emptied into the hopper – a high opportunity rating.

Slide 33 – Summary

Questions and discussion points

- Lower Hutt's contamination level was higher than that of Wellington and Porirua in the 2022-2023 year but is now lower than both. This is likely to be due to Lower Hutt's education campaign
- contamination is measured by weight using a scoop test. Different councils use various methods to measure contamination, making comparisons across the country difficult. Oji Fibre Solutions conducts the scoop testing for the region's councils. Morrison Low has reviewed Oji's methodology and ensured that it aligns with other councils in the region

and accurately represents the actual contamination. Officers can be in attendance for the scoop testing if they wish

- officers have not considered imposing fines on households that contaminate recycling. It is unclear whether contamination could be considered an infringement
- reasons for contamination are likely to vary. Research on changing behaviour has found that reasons include a lack of trust that items will be recycled, residents trying to do the right thing and making mistakes, the complexity of the system, and disengagement
- direct engagement options include working with existing community groups or at local events. The Enviroschool programme in schools is an effective way to encourage household recycling.

Next steps

Non-members were invited to attend the Climate Change and Sustainability Committee meeting on 4 September 2024 to participate in the discussion on options.

Open briefing materials

Attachment 1 – Presentation: Opportunities to reduce recycling contamination

The open briefing closed at 5.18 pm