

## **Cabinet Response to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Board – Public Awareness of Recycling in Public Bins**

### **Recommendation 1:**

That the Cabinet be recommended to request SWISCo to raise awareness of recycling in public bins, to reduce the risk of contamination of the recycled waste and enable it to be processed effectively.

### **Response:**

Dual public bins offering a separate compartment for recyclable materials produce dry commingled recycling (paper/card/plastic etc.). This commingled material cannot be sorted or recycled at the SWISCo Waste Transfer Station so has to be stored and then, as a load, be transported and processed by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party facility. If the 3<sup>rd</sup> party considers that the load is overly contaminated, then it is refused for recycling and disposed of as refuse.

The sorting of dry commingled recycling is more expensive than direct disposal of residual which is sent for incineration at the MVV waste to energy plant. If the load is refused at the 3<sup>rd</sup> party facility it is then even more expensive due to there being no income and additional transport costs as the waste is first shipped to the sorting plant and then subsequently on to the waste plant

Dual public bins rely on the user of the bin making a conscious decision as to what materials to dispose of in which compartment. Along with the segregation of materials influencing the level of contamination, the quality of the recycling materials disposed of has a significant influence on the level of contamination. Recycling materials contaminated with residue food waste e.g. take away packaging with half finished food contents, will generally contaminate the whole bin, then the whole load and therefore mean there is no possibility of recycling and a significant additional cost.

In order to limit load contamination, clear plastic bags are used inside public recycling bins allowing the operative to take a view on the level of contamination when emptying the bin and deciding which disposal route is best for the contents. It is the experience of SWISCo, in line with that of Councils nationally, that the vast

majority of material collected from public recycling bins has a high level of contamination and therefore cannot be disposed of as recycling.

SWISCo have tried a number of engagement initiatives involving stickers and signs on or around the bins to educate the public about what materials should be disposed in the recycling bin and more importantly what condition they need to be in e.g. no food waste, and will continue to do so in areas where dual public bins are provided.