

# Sustainable waste management

Council questionnaire topline results



Prepared for the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission  
September 2007

# Auditor General for Scotland

The Auditor General for Scotland is the Parliament's watchdog for ensuring propriety and value for money in the spending of public funds.

He is responsible for investigating whether public spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management.

He is independent and not subject to the control of any member of the Scottish Government or the Parliament.

The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Government and most other public sector bodies except local authorities and fire and police boards.

The following bodies fall within the remit of the Auditor General:

- directorates of the Scottish Government, eg the Health Directorate
- executive agencies, eg the Prison Service, Historic Scotland
- NHS boards
- further education colleges
- Scottish Water
- NDPBs and others, eg Scottish Enterprise.

## The Accounts Commission

The Accounts Commission is a statutory, independent body which, through the audit process, assists local authorities in Scotland to achieve the highest standards of financial stewardship and the economic, efficient and effective use of their resources. The Commission has four main responsibilities:

- securing the external audit, including the audit of Best Value and Community Planning
- following up issues of concern identified through the audit, to ensure satisfactory resolutions
- carrying out national performance studies to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local government
- issuing an annual direction to local authorities which sets out the range of performance information they are required to publish.

The Commission secures the audit of 32 councils and 41 joint boards (including police and fire and rescue services). Local authorities spend over £14 billion of public funds a year.

Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission. Together they ensure that the Scottish Government and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.

### Note:

Prior to September 2007 the Scottish Administration was generally referred to as the Scottish Executive. It is now called the Scottish Government. When dealing with the earlier period this report refers to the Scottish Executive. Recommendations for the future refer to the Scottish Government.

# Introduction

Audit Scotland is undertaking a national study of waste management on behalf of the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland. An important element of the study is the gathering of quantitative and qualitative information from all councils across Scotland.

This survey is concerned with obtaining the views of the council on waste management. In that context, we would ask that the senior manager responsible for the waste management service complete this form.

31 councils returned the questionnaire. The base for each question is 31 unless otherwise stated.

Answers are given in numbers not percentages. Where responses do not add up to 31, this is due to multiple responses or non-answers.

All data in the questionnaire is 2005/06 except where stated otherwise.

Some questions have been removed due to poor response rates or open answers.

## Corporate policy and strategic planning

### Waste Management Strategy

What does the council use as the basis for its waste management strategy? PLACE A TICK IN THE BOX BESIDE YOUR ANSWER							
Area Waste Plan Only	1	Strategic Outline Case Only	0	Outline Business Case Only	0	Implementation Plan Only	0
Other – please specify				A combination of the above	30	No answer	

What time period does the strategy cover? (Base:28)	
Write in year	Up to 2020 – 21 councils
	Other – 7 councils

In what ways, if any, does the Environment Committee (or equivalent) monitor the implementation of the strategy? (Base:30)							
Annual Performance Report	17	Quarterly Performance Report	16	Performance Indicators	21	Doesn't monitor	0
Other – please specify							15

### Area Waste Plan

How adequate is the Area Waste Plan in helping the council deal with local issues in taking forward sustainable waste management?								
Very adequate	11	Slightly adequate	12	Slightly inadequate	5	Very inadequate	2	
							Don't know	1

### Service Plan

Does the council have a service plan for waste management?	
Yes	31
No	0

IF YOU ANSWERED NO AT Q6, GO TO Q8

What time period does the service plan cover? (Base:30)	
Write in year	3 yr plans – 15 councils
	Other – 15 councils

EVERYONE TO ANSWER

<b>Has the waste management service been the subject of a Best Value review in the past five years?</b>		
	Yes	18
	No	13

<b>Did the review cover both collection and disposal aspects? (Base:19)</b>						
	No-just disposal	0	No-just collection	6	Yes-both	13

<b>Was competitive tendering considered as part of the best value review option appraisal? (Base: 18)</b>							
Yes-for collection only	6	Yes-for disposal only	2	Yes-for both collection and disposal	7	No	3

<b>When were the collection and disposal contracts last put out to competitive tender? (Base:30)</b>							
Collection – insert date	Various	Collection never been put out to tender	7	Disposal – insert date	Various	Disposal never been put out to tender	10

## The waste hierarchy

<b>In your view, how helpful is the Strategic Waste Fund in enabling the council to move up the waste hierarchy?</b>							
Very helpful	23	Slightly helpful	8	Not very helpful	0	Not at all helpful	0
						Don't know	0

<b>Thinking about a) the SWF phase 1 funding the council received and b) the SWF phase 2 funding (which may yet to be received), how much of an impact, if any, do you think it had/will have on each of the waste hierarchy elements below? PLACE A TICK IN THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER BOX FOR PHASE 1 AND 2 FOR EACH ASPECT.</b>										
	Major impact		A little impact		Not very much impact		No impact		Don't know	
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2
Waste minimisation/reduction	5	6	13	6	6	9	3	1	0	2
Re-use/refurbishment	3	3	10	5	9	9	4	4	0	2
Recycling/composting	29	14	1	6	0	2	0	0	0	2
Other recovery	6	19	2	0	4	0	15	0	0	2
Landfill	17	20	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	2

## Recycling

Which of these methods, if any, has the council used to promote recycling?								
Leaflet drops	29	Direct mail	24	Advertisements in the local press	31	Advertisements in local radio	26	
Bus advertising	16	Council magazine	28	Council website	31	Other media	17	
Exhibitions/roadshows	28	Community events	30	Door-to-door canvassing	25	Posters	31	
		Competitions/incentives	17	Other -please specify - 13				

ANSWER ONLY IF YOUR COUNCIL UNDERTAKES ITS OWN PROMOTIONS (IE, NOT RUN BY SWAG). OTHERS GO TO Q16

Has the council undertaken any evaluations of these methods? (Base:16)	
Yes	8
No	8

Thinking about the introduction/expansion of separate collections after SWF 1 funding was received, were participation levels among the public: (Base:30)							
Much higher than anticipated (greater than 10% higher)	7	Slightly higher than anticipated (between 5 and 10% higher)	6	About the same as anticipated (plus or minus 5%)	12	Slightly less than anticipated (between 5 and 10% lower)	3
						Much less than anticipated (more than 10% lower)	2

Did the council conduct an evaluation of potential methods before selecting the type of separate collection?	
Yes – before the introduction/expansion of separate collections	26
Yes- Separate collections were expanded after SWF 1 funding and an evaluation was carried out when collections were first introduced	5
No	1

What, if any, data monitoring does the council undertake in relation to the performance of separate collections?							
Participation rates per round	10	Periodic sampling of participation rates	19	Tonnages collected by material per round	24	None	0
						Don't know = 0	Other = 2

a) How much of a barrier, if at all, are the following to improving recycling rates in your council area? (Base:28)						
b) Please number from 1 to 3 the three which you feel are the most significant barriers (Base:30)						
	(a)					(b)
	Very significant	Slightly significant	Slightly insignificant	Highly insignificant	Don't know	3 most significant
Revenue funding – for education and awareness	16	7	3	0	0	
Revenue funding – for separate collections	21	3	2	2	0	1
Revenue funding-other	14	8	0	2	3	
Capital funding	20	4	1	2	0	=2
Householder participation	20	7	0	1	0	=2
Planning permission for facilities	12	12	1	2	0	
Markets for recyclables	16	8	2	2	0	
Local political will	9	5	7	6	1	
Resident acceptance of fortnightly collections	11	6	3	1	6	
Charges for bulky uplifts	3	8	9	5	3	
Location of civic amenity sites/recycling centres	6	13	4	4	0	
National political will	12	7	3	4	0	
Other – please specify	3	0	0	0	0	

## Support and guidance

How adequate or inadequate do you feel the guidance received by the Council from a) the Scottish Executive and b) SEPA has been in regard to: PLACE A TICK IN THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER BOX FOR EACH ROW. (Base: where less than 31, base is in brackets after each process)						
	Very adequate	Slightly adequate	Slightly inadequate	Very inadequate	Don't know	Didn't need guidance
<b>Scottish Executive:</b>						
Area Waste Plan	8	10	8	2	3	0
Implementation Plan	5	10	3	7	2	4
Interim SWF Bid 1 (Base:26)	11	3	6	5	1	0
SWF Bid 2 (27)	4	4	1	16	2	0
Strategic Outline Case (29)	3	6	3	14	0	3
Outline Business Case (if applicable) (16)	1	0	2	11	2	0
PPP projects that the council has undertaken or is currently undertaking (16)	2	1	1	6	4	2
<b>SEPA:</b>						
Area Waste Plan (29)	9	14	5	0	1	0
Implementation Plan (27)	3	7	2	6	2	7

Interim SWF Bid 1 (24)	5	2	4	5	3	5
SWF Bid 2 (26)	2	4	4	9	2	5
Strategic Outline Case (24)	3	6	2	8	1	4
Outline Business Case (if applicable) (16)	0	1	2	5	5	3
PPP projects that the council has undertaken or is currently undertaking (18)	0	1	1	5	5	6

<b>Specifically thinking about the funding for project teams for SOCs/OBCs, how clear was the advice provided by the Scottish Executive regarding funding? (Base:30)</b>							
Clear	9	Not very clear	10	Not at all clear	11	Don't know	0

<b>How adequate do you feel the level of funding for these project teams is? (Base:30)</b>							
Very adequate	0	Adequate	9	Not very adequate	9	Not at all adequate	11
						Don't know	1

<b>Thinking about the development of sustainable waste management in your council area overall, how useful have you found the guidance issued by the following bodies? (Base: where less than 31, base is in brackets after each organisation)</b>					
	Very useful	Slightly useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful	Don't know
Scottish Executive	6	13	5	4	3
SEPA	4	18	4	2	3
CRNS (30)	1	6	12	5	6
CIWM (30)	5	16	2	3	4
APSE (30)	1	13	4	4	8
IDeA (29)	0	3	1	5	20
SWAG	6	18	3	2	2
Improvement Service (25)	0	3	1	3	18
ReMaDe (30)	3	20	2	2	3
WRAP (30)	5	17	5	2	1
DEFRA (30)	6	8	6	4	6
LARAC (30)	4	12	5	5	4
COSLA (28)	9	14	0	2	3
Other: (PLEASE SPECIFY)	2	0	0	0	0



## Consultation and communication

<b>Which of the following groups were consulted when the following were being developed...? PLACE TICKS BESIDE YOUR ANSWER</b>		
	<b>Area Waste Plan</b>	<b>Strategic Outline Case/Outline Business Case</b>
Residents	30	1
Local businesses	27	4
Scottish Water	16	2
Waste industry	30	19
Community groups	29	4
Interest groups (e.g., environmental)	30	3
Council Members	31	26
Other council departments	28	21
Other - please specify	4	6

<b>In what ways, if any, was consultation carried out when the following was developed...?</b>		
	<b>Area Waste Plan</b>	<b>Strategic Outline Case/Outline Business Case</b>
Public meetings	22	2
Proposals posted on council website	14	2
Proposals available in hard copy in council buildings	29	5
Proposals posted direct to stakeholders	20	2
Specific meetings/discussions with stakeholders	26	13
Other –please specify	6	9

<b>To what extent was membership of the group consistent during development of the Area Waste Plan?</b>							
Very consistent	7	Fairly consistent	22	Not very consistent	2	Not at all consistent	0
						Don't know	0

<b>How realistic, in terms of the councils' ability to deliver the actions in the plan, do you feel the outcome of the Area Waste Plan process was?</b>							
Very realistic	6	Fairly realistic	19	Fairly unrealistic	4	Very unrealistic	1
						Don't know	1

<b>How valuable do you feel the BPEO process was in terms of providing a framework for councils to implement the national waste strategy?</b>							
Very valuable	8	Fairly valuable	18	Not very valuable	4	Not at all valuable	1

<b>Thinking about the AWP group that your council was in, how useful do you feel the combination of councils in the group was? (Base:30)</b>							
Very useful	12	Fairly useful	15	Not very useful	3	Not at all useful	0

<b>Thinking about the SOC/OBC group that your council is in, how useful do you feel the combination of councils in the group is? (Base:30)</b>							
Very useful	18	Fairly useful	5	Not very useful	5	Not at all useful	2

<b>How clear do you feel the processes for applying for SWF funding are?</b>							
Very clear	3	Fairly clear	11	Not very clear	12	Not at all clear	5

<b>How transparent do you feel the processes for assessing SWF bids are?</b>							
Very transparent	1	Fairly transparent	10	Not very transparent	14	Not at all transparent	6

## Service delivery

<b>Has the council considered joint contracting arrangements with other councils or the private sector for waste management activities?</b>	
Yes	28
No	3

<b>Has the council considered any joint purchasing of materials with other councils or the private sector for waste management activities?</b>	
Yes	22
No	9

<b>Does the council have any joint purchasing arrangements with other councils or the private sector for waste management activities?</b>	
Yes	18
No	13

<b>Has the council considered any joint contracts with other councils to sell recyclables?</b>		
	Yes	12
	No	19

<b>Does the council have any joint contracts with other councils to sell recyclables?</b>		
	Yes	1
	No	30

<b>Thinking about the collection and disposal contracts the council has, would the council have preferred to let a contract for an integrated waste management programme or not? (Base:26)</b>		
	Yes	2
	No	24

<b>Do you think any existing contracts for collection and disposal the council has may create any problems in implementing the SOCs/OBCs?</b>							
Yes-definitely	6	Yes-perhaps slightly	5	No	19	Don't know	1

<b>Has your council's use of community groups to collect/recycle/re-use materials increased, decreased or stayed the same since 2002?</b>							
	Increased significantly	6	Increased slightly	14	No change	8	
	Decreased slightly	3	Decreased significantly	0	Don't know	0	

<b>The introduction/expansion of separate collections in my council area has...(please agree or disagree with each of the statements below)</b>			
		<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
	created the need to change mainstream routes	17	14
	decreased the reliability of the service	3	28
	increased the council's use of community groups for collection	8	23
	increased the council's use of community groups for disposal	7	24
	increased the council's use of the private section for collection	6	25
	increased the council's use of the private sector for disposal	21	10
	created issues relating to staff terms and conditions	12	19
	Created other issues – please specify	6	1

## Health and Safety

<b>Has the introduction of separate collections created any health and safety issues for your workforce or that of sub-contractors?</b>	
Yes	20
No	11

<b>How confident are you that guidance from the HSE will allow you to continue with separate collections in their current form?</b>							
Very confident	17	Slightly confident	12	Not very confident	2	Not at all confident	0
						Don't know	0

## Performance monitoring

<b>How often are the data from performance measures reviewed and action taken if required?</b>							
Monthly	10	Every 1-3 months	19	Every 4-6 months	0	7-12 months	0
Once a year	2	Every 1-2 years	0	Longer than every 2 year	0	Data is not reviewed	0

<b>How does the council compare its waste management performance with other councils?</b>							
APSE	13	SPIs	27	Informal comparison	21	Benchmarking club	2
Other – please specify					7	Does not compare with other councils	3

## Within the Council

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Does the council have an internal policy about waste minimisation?	23	8
Does the council have an internal policy on the re-use of materials?	18	13
Does the council have an internal policy on the use or procurement of recycled materials (including compost)?	20	11

## Waste projections

<b>Thinking about the landfill diversion targets that need to be met, how confident are you that your council will be able to meet each target?</b>					
	<b>Very confident (little or no risk of not meeting target)</b>	<b>Fairly confident (small risk of not meeting target)</b>	<b>Unsure (moderate risk of not meeting target)</b>	<b>Not very confident (significant risk of not meeting target)</b>	<b>Not at all confident (little or no possibility of meeting target)</b>
2010 LAS Target	6	6	7	4	8
2013 LAS Target	4	4	10	6	7
2020 LAS Target	9	4	8	5	5

<b>Please describe the major barriers to achieving the landfill diversion targets in your council area? (Answers have been banded together into themes)</b>	
Technology = 7 Delays in SWF decisions/uncertainty regarding Strategic Outline Cases/Outline Business Cases = 13 Funding – general = 10 Planning = 6 Timescales = 3 Public Participation = 5 Other = 4	

<b>Thinking about commercial waste, do you think your council will be collecting a higher or lower tonnage over the next three years?</b>							
Significantly higher (greater than 10%)	0	Slightly higher (between 5-10% more)	4	About the same (plus or minus 5% of current tonnage)	21	Slightly lower (between 5-10% less)	3
						Significantly lower (more than 10% less)	3

## Procurement and General Comments

The questions below relate to your authorities level of engagement with the supply-side in terms of municipal waste services.

<b>In terms of your ongoing waste strategy, do you regularly communicate that strategy with suppliers and seek feedback?</b>	
Yes	23
No	8

<b>If yes, do you seek feedback on any of the following? (Base:21)</b>							
Technological Feasibility	20	Skills Availability	14	Capacity Availability	20	All mentioned	
Financial feasibility	18	Other = 2					

<b>If no, why might you not do this?</b>							
Don't see it as necessary	2	Lack of Resources	2	Don't have the relationships	2	Concerned about perception of	4
Other = 3							

## Collaboration and / or integration of contracts

Do you plan to consolidate separate waste contracts in your council into a single (or smaller set) of contract(s)? eg, combining different types of collection into the same contract? (Base:30)	
Yes	5
No	18
Already in place	1
Don't know	6

Do you plan to collaborate with other councils to consolidate the number of waste contracts into a single (or smaller set) of contract(s)?	
Yes	21
No	4
Already in place	2
Don't know	4

## Other issues

What is your preferred method for funding of capital facilities for future waste management infrastructure?
SWF = 10 PPP = 6 Prudential = 1 Gate Fee = 2 Other = 1

What is the single biggest issue faced by your authority in terms of its Waste Strategy?
Funding = 12 Time/delays in decision making =8

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Audit Scotland, 110 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4LH  
T: 0845 146 1010 F: 0845 146 1009  
[www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk)

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