Appendix D: Background paper on internal waste minimisation activities – ‘Walking the Talk’
Waste Assessment Background Paper

WALKING THE TALK: REDUCING COUNCIL’S OWN IN-HOUSE WASTE

1. Background

The vision of Auckland’s Waste Management and Minimisation Plan is ‘To beome the most liveable city in the world, Auckland will aim for the long-term, aspirational goal of Zero Waste by 2040, turning its waste into resources.’

Three targets underpin this vision; the first addresses waste managed by council through kerbside collections and its own waste facilities, the second addresses all of Auckland’s waste – both council and private sector-managed, and the third addresses the waste produced by council as an organisation.

This third target as stated in the Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (WMMP) is; ‘to reduce council’s own in-house waste by 30 per cent by 2018’ and refers only to office-type waste (paper, cardboard, glass and plastic bottles, aluminium cans, food waste etc).

The target is set against a baseline of 0.75 kg/per staff member per week as determined by a 2011 audit which found that 26 per cent of council’s office-type waste could have been diverted from landfill using existing recycling systems, and 53 per cent which could be composted, or substituted in the case of hand towels. The total diversion potential was therefore 79 per cent, making a 30 per cent waste reduction target theoretically readily achievable.

Operational waste, or waste generated as a result of council activities, was not included in the target because of the many priorities of the newly amalgamated council. However a commitment was made to progressively address operational waste, in consultation with affected operational departments over time.

This paper discusses the current in-house target for office waste; what is being achieved and how council’s performance can be improved. It also discusses introducing a number of targets for operational waste to drive significant waste reduction from council and CCO activities.

2. Office Waste

Implementation of new system

To achieve the in-house waste target a new recycling system was rolled out across all council administration facilities, starting in 2012. The new system included replacing personal rubbish bins with desk-top cubes, introducing a three bin system in kitchens for rubbish, recyclables and food waste, introducing desk-top paper recycling trays and replacing hand towel dispensers with hand dryers in bathrooms. Food waste from staff cafeterias was also separated and wormfarms installed. The new system was introduced in 2012, supported by a new waste and recycling services contract in September 2013. Recycling and food waste

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1 Waste Management and Minimisation Plan 2012 (page 7)
services in this contract have gradually extended to other parts of council over the last four years.

The former Property Department Sustainability team led the roll-out of this project which the Energy Efficiency and Sustainability team within Community Facilities now monitors and reports on, receiving data from Council’s waste contractor and entering it into the Opal 3 reporting system.

Results to date

Immediately following the introduction of the new recycling system in 2012, a 27 per cent reduction in waste to landfill was achieved. This rose to 41 per cent in 2015, surpassing the 30 per cent target. However in 2017 waste reduction dropped to 19 per cent triggering an independent audit to investigate the cause.3

The audit and contractor reporting showed that although most buildings continue to meet or exceed the target there was a substantial increase in waste generated at the Albert Street Building and Henderson office. A number of issues were identified including anomalies in data reporting by the waste contractor, issues with cleaning contractor practices, and inconsistent use of recycling facilities by staff. Until data anomalies have been resolved it will not be clear what the actual waste reduction figure is, however the audit report makes a number of recommendations including:

- Working with cleaning contractor to ensure the system is implemented correctly
- Improving signage and education for staff
- Ensuring consistency of bins and signage across all council buildings
- Ensuring that cups and packaging provided in cafeterias and for in-house catering are reusable, recyclable or compostable

It is anticipated that once data anomalies and cleaning contractor issues have been resolved all buildings will be achieving or exceeding the 30 percent target. It is clear that when the system is operating as it should the current in-house waste target is easily achieved. It is

recommended therefore that it is increased in the next WMMP to 60 per cent – which is lower than the potential waste diversion identified in the 2011 audit (79 per cent) but a significant step up to show that council is serious about its zero waste goal. Supporting measures are required however to ensure waste reduction levels are maintained and increased over time.

Recommendations

1. Increase council’s in-house waste reduction target for office waste from 30 per cent per capita to 60 per cent per capita (from 2012 baseline data) by 2024
2. Upgrade in-house signage for recycling systems and regularly review and update this as required
3. Introduce bins for compostable packaging in staff cafeterias
4. Trial soft-plastic recycling bins in staff kitchens
5. Post quarterly waste reduction results for each building, and council as a whole, on the council intranet
6. Phase out the use of non-recyclable and/or non-compostable packaging in staff cafeterias and in-house catering services, and investigate best practice alternatives
7. Commission annual audits to identify opportunities for improvement

2. Operational Waste

The WMMP states, “Auckland Council has an important role: to demonstrate good waste-wise practice in its own operations. The council will therefore commit to reducing waste from its own in-house activities by 30 per cent per capita by 2018. The target initially applies only to normal office waste. Waste arising from other council activities will be incorporated progressively in consultation with affected operational departments. The results of waste reduction programme will be as transparent as possible, and included on council’s website to demonstrate its willingness to ‘walk the talk’. The progressive implementation of waste reduction programmes and targets is regarded as an obligation on council-controlled organisations (CCOs) through their Statements of Intent.”

Although work has started in some areas to address operational waste a strategy for progressive implementation has not yet been developed. It is recommended that one of more targets for operational waste are included as part of the in-house waste reduction target in the next WMMP to help drive implementation of waste reduction programmes across the organisation. This is important for the following reasons:

- **Addressing the approximate 80 per cent council doesn't directly manage**
  Operational waste is not part of the 17 per cent of waste council controls through kerbside collections and council-managed facilities (unless it passes through the Waitakere Transfer Station), but in the 80 percent handled by the private sector. It therefore offers an opportunity for council to target a potentially large commercial waste stream simply by changing its own internal practices.

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4 Waste Management and Minimisation Plan. Section 3.1.4 Corpororate Responsibility – ‘Walking the Talk’ (Page 72)
There is no readily available information on the total amount of waste council and its CCOs generate. However as one of the largest property owners in Auckland, council has the ability to reduce one the largest waste streams, construction and demolition waste, through its own property maintenance, construction, demolition and refurbishment activities. Community Facilities oversees a large list of property-related projects ranging from small maintenance projects to large demolition projects. Currently there is no requirement in council’s procurement processes to minimise the waste these projects generate, although work has begun to address this.

SLR’s recent review of Auckland’s waste services identified three ‘game changer’ policies that would significantly reduce the amount of waste Auckland sends to landfill, one of which is to introduce a statutory requirement for Site Waste Management Plans at construction sites to maximise reuse and recycling opportunities and minimise landfilling. While it will take time to develop an appropriate way to introduce this across all Auckland construction sites, it could be implemented relatively quickly with council projects by making it a contractual requirement.

- **Modelling best practice**

  Council has an important role to play in modelling best practice waste minimisation across the wide range of activities it is involved in – from managing leisure centres, libraries, zoos and parks to running events and refurbishing buildings. This wide reach across multiple sectors gives council the ability to influence behaviour city-wide in the the way it does business.

  Council’s needs to walk the talk. The WMMP is one of the core strategies sitting under the Auckland Plan and its vision and targets should be being applied across the organisation and its CCOs. There is a need to ensure consistencies between what council is committed to under the WMMP, and what it does in practice, to help achieve Auckland’s waste targets.

**Progress to date**

Some parts of council and the wider council family have already started aligning their policies with the WMMP and driving their own waste minimisation initiatives. Some of this has occurred independently, such as the City Rail Link project and the refurbishment of 135 Albert street, and some has occurred as a consequence of discussions between Waste Solutions and other council departments. The following examples show some of the progress that has been made since adoption of the WMMP.

- **The City Rail Link:** New Zealand’s largest infrastructure project has a zero waste target and notes in its 2015/16 Sustainability Report: “Construction and demolition waste represents a significant portion of Auckland’s waste to landfill and minimising this is an industry-wide challenge. In response to this challenge, and in line with Auckland Council’s direction, CRL is striving to send zero

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5 Waste Management Options Review and Modelling. SLR. March 2017
waste to landfill during construction by supporting and challenging or contractors to avoid, reduce, reuse, recycle and recover as much waste as practicable.

Designing for waste minimisation is a priority to support this aspirational goal, and the contractor’s waste avoidance and resource recovery plans are essential. Contractors are asked to identify:

- Likely sources of waste and when they will arise.
- Systems to monitor and report on waste.
- Predicted quantities and diversion paths

- Parks, Sports and Recreation’s Growing Greener Parks Forum acknowledges ‘Achieving zero waste to landfill by 2040’ in its Terms of Reference as one of the strategic directives of the Auckland Plan. A waste work stream has been established, drawing on subject matter experts from across council to quantify the amount of waste being produced by Parks and to find solutions, particularly around litter collections, construction and demolition projects, organic waste and use of local parks buildings.

- Procurement is working with Community Facilities and Waste Solutions to develop waste minimisation criteria that can be included in tender documents and contracts for construction and demolition projects. A key component of this is likely to be the requirement for Site Waste Management Plans (or Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Plans, as the City Rail Link project calls them). The next stage will be to look at how to encourage the use of recovered materials in construction projects.

- Community Facilities is collaborating with Waste Solutions to run deconstruction pilot projects. Two of the first projects were the redevelopment of Ranui Community House and the deconstruction of the Three Kings building. These projects, and the refurbishment of 135 Albert Street which took place earlier, were all successful and suitable sites are being sought for further piloting. Data from these projects will be able to be used to support the requirement for deconstruction practices in future council procurement processes.

- Tamaki Regeneration Company. The Tamaki Regeneration Company is a joint venture between Government and Auckland Council, with council being a 41 percent shareholder. The company has been mandated to replace around 2,800 social houses with 7,500 mixed tenure houses over a period of 10-15 years which will result in large amounts of construction and demolition waste. Discussions are being held to identify potential cross-council solutions to deal with this significant future waste stream.

**Setting a target for operational waste**

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Setting a target for reducing council's operational waste is problematic, firstly because of the difficulty in establishing the amount of waste currently being sent to landfill (at either a council or departmental level) and secondly in determining what baseline measure to use, taking into account population and GDP growth. Potentially this could be based on ratepayers – e.g. waste to landfill per ratepayer, but this would be a very blunt measure.

It is likely a number of targets will need to be set for operational waste to account for the different waste streams and the complexity of council as an organisation (and its CCOs). As a first step a target could be set for the number of council building and renewals projects that have waste plans. When two thirds have these a year of benchmarking could start to establish waste reduction targets.

The recommendation is for teams (Waste Solutions, Community Facilities and the Chief Sustainability Office) to work together to:

- Develop appropriate targets and baseline measure to include in the next WMMP.
- Ensure the objectives of the WMMP are included in CCOs’ statements of intent
- Investigate the potential for developing a waste performance measure for inclusion in Auckland Council’s Performance Plan.
- Post council’s performance against its own waste targets on its website to provide transparency

3. Recommendations

In summary the key recommendations for the next WMMP are:

**Office waste:**

- To increase council’s in-house target for office waste from 30 per cent to 60 per cent per capita by 2024 (from 2012 base line data)

**Operational waste:**

- To introduce one or more targets for council’s operational waste
- To ensure the objectives of the WMMP are reflected in CCO’s statements of intent