



CITIZEN LED INSPECTION

FEEDBACK REPORT FOR WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL

WASTE SERVICES

APRIL 2013

INSPECTION TEAM:

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A. Introduction to the inspection feedback report

- A.1. This feedback report has been produced following an inspection of Waste Services in West Lothian Council using the Citizen Led Inspection framework.
- A.2. The inspection process took place over 12 days in January and February 2013 and included the following steps:
- Evidence review and site visit planning
 - On site observations and interviewing
 - Consensus of strengths areas for improvement and scores by the CLI team.
- A.3. The inspection process was planned and completed by the Citizen inspectors who are residents and volunteers from the West Lothian Community. The team comprised:
- Mr P West
 - Mr A Slater
 - Mrs L Liddell
- A.4. During the inspection process every effort has been made by the team to ensure that the conclusions and feedback are based on fact and are the result of consensus.
- A.5. In the course of their work, the team have interviewed 14 staff and 5 of their key partners, individually or in groups. The team also visited 3 locations; Deans Depot (the main site for Waste Services staff), the West Lothian Civic Centre and Levensat landfill site

B. Key strengths

B.1. The key strengths of Waste Services are that:

- The service has a forward looking manager
- The service has staff that work well within their teams
- West Lothian Council is seen as a 'straight forward' council to work with by external partners
- The service is on course to meet long-term targets for recycling

C. Key areas for improvement

C.1. The key areas identified for Waste Services to improve upon are:

- Communication with the public
- Complete and implement Resource and Recycling Strategy including staff restructuring, review of Service Standards and performance indicators
- Improve communication with and the morale of operatives
- Consistency among supervisors
- More appropriate facilities

D. Ratings

D.1. The Citizen Led Inspection (CLI) team have rated the service as follows:

Criterion	Rating (✓)				
	<u>E</u> (Excellent)	<u>G</u> (Good)	<u>A</u> (Adequate)	<u>W</u> (Weak)	<u>U</u> (Unsatisfactory)
1 Leadership		✓			
2 Service Planning		✓			
3 People Resources		✓			
4 Partners & Other Resources		✓			
5 Service Processes		✓			
6 Customer Results			✓		
7 Key Results			✓		

E. Overview of the service

1 Leadership

Leaders:

- Identify a clear direction for the service
- Set long-term outcomes
- Are open, honest and accountable
- Put in place scrutiny to challenge performance

E.1. Waste Services sits with Operational Services, as part of Corporate, Housing and Operational Services directorate under Depute Chief Executive John Hill.

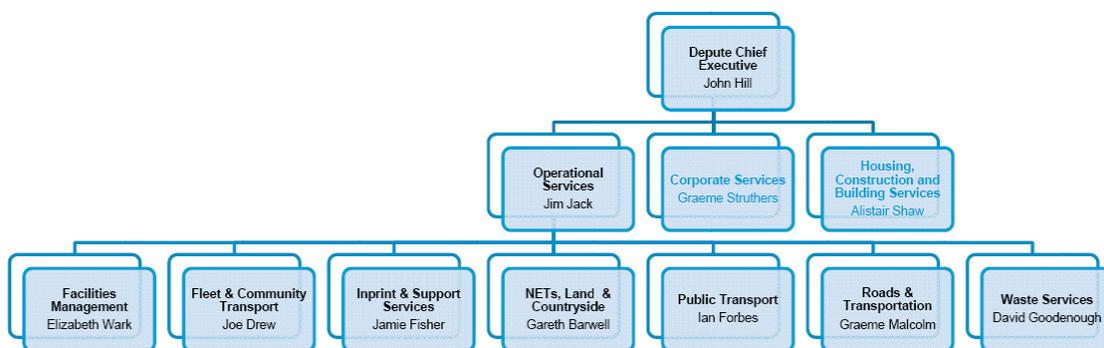


Figure 1: Corporate, Housing and Operational Services directorate

E.2. Jim Jack, Head of Operational Services and the Waste Services manager, David Goodenough were both able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the aims and purpose of the service.

E.3. The Waste Services manager has been in post since July 2012 and is currently developing a Resource and Recycling Strategy for West Lothian Council with the Waste Services management team. The new strategy will focus on current and pending legislation i.e. Waste [Scotland] Regulations 2012 and the Scottish Government's Zero Waste plan.

E.4. The main aims of the service have been identified as the following five key areas:

- Providing effective leadership
- Involving the community
- Reducing local and global environmental impacts
- Providing high-quality, continually-improving, effective and efficient service delivery
- Supporting economic development

- E.5. The service has an Operations team leader and the purpose of this role is to implement the vision and the (planned) new strategy of the senior management and to ensure that the specific operational aims and objectives are met. The team leader also updates and advises the supervisors of key service policies.
- E.6. The role of the supervisors is to: “ensure the streets of West Lothian were 100% free of litter and waste”. The supervisors also have a direct link with the waste operatives to ensure they are kept up to date with the operational requirements of the service.
- E.7. The office-based Waste Services’ staff interviewed provided consistent feedback and assurances to the CLI Team that all senior managers were open, honest, approachable and accountable. However, scrutiny to challenge performance is weak as current Service Standards and many performance indicators are out of date.
- E.8. Waste Services have been undergoing a “re-structure” for the last 5 years. An industrial dispute has been ongoing since 2007 without resolution. Consequently, morale and motivation amongst the operatives was very poor and they did not seem to share the positive and optimistic views demonstrated by senior staff. Nevertheless, the operatives also stated there was respect between them and the Waste Services management team.
- E.9. Elected Members represent the public in different parts of West Lothian. These representatives often have to deal with public enquiries or questions from the media relating to how the council organises or provides its various services. Waste disposal and recycling is one of the most high-profile and controversial of all council-services.
- E.10. The CLI team note the role of Elected Members in the development and review of the Waste Services’ policies.
- E.11. Recommendations
- The service should endeavour to complete the ongoing re-structuring activity as a matter of importance
 - The service should aim to improve staff morale and build a stronger, more constructive relationship between management and staff

Rating: GOOD

2 Service Planning

The service:

- Develop clear strategies
- Has effective annual planning that outlines the key activities
- Uses reliable tools and methods to engage and consult with customers
- Sets and meets targets for performance in all the key areas of activity

E.12. West Lothian Council has plans and policies in place that set out how they will provide a waste service to the local area and comply with the legislation laid out by the Scottish Government, and in particular the Zero Waste Strategy. The Waste Services management team are currently developing a new Resource and Recycling Strategy and this is expected to be ready for implementation in 2013/14.

E.13. The Operational Services management plan outlined all the planned activities for Waste Services in 2012/13. The plan was used by the CLI team to identify and understand the key improvement actions, challenges and capital projects that the service hoped to achieve within the financial year 2012/13.

E.14. Waste Services engages and consults with customers by:

- Annual Survey distributed to 2,700 members of the Citizens Panel
- Onsite consultation with customers that use the Community Recycling Centres (CRC) sites
- Ongoing consultation with Elected Members on their constituents' priorities
- Face-to-face consultation exercise with members of the West Lothian Disability Forum on service provision
- Consultation with community groups in regard to the siting of new bottle banks and public conveniences

E.15. The service publishes information about Waste Services via:

- The council's website, including information relating to the services available and contact details for service requests
- New media, including e-Bulletin, e-Alert, Facebook and the council's app
- Local press and the council's newsletter, Bulletin

E.16. The CLI team's interviews with operations staff highlighted an issue of communication. Whilst the management team seemed clear about policy and strategy, this information does not appear to filter down to supervisor or operative level.

E.17. Recommendations

- The service should identify new Service Standards to replace the current version – which are now seven years old
- The service should aim to improve the two-way dialogue between management and operational staff
- The service should continue to pursue all avenues to ensure the public are fully informed of, and engaged in, Waste Services processes

Rating: GOOD

3 People Resources

The service:

- Identifies the right people resources it needs to achieve outcomes
- Sets out desired qualities and acceptable behaviours for staff
- Reviews and improves individual people's performance
- Communicates effectively with people
- Involves people in reviewing and improving the service

E.18. The Head of Service is sensitive to the importance of ensuring that Waste Services service has the right mix of people to achieve good performance and has recently appointed a new Waste Services manager. In the short space of time since this appointment the Head of Service has noticed a marked difference in the team's spirit and a more positive attitude towards innovation.

E.19. The Waste Services manager is currently working with the Head of Service, and the rest of the operations management team, to progress a new strategy and structure for the service. However, the new strategy will not be implemented fully until the existing and outdated 2005/06 Service Standards have been successfully revised.

E.20. The Operations management team is made up of the Waste Services manager, Operations team manager, two Waste Strategy managers and an Admin team leader. This team meet on a fortnightly basis to review service policies and proposed changes. Information that the Waste Services manager has received from the Head of Service is passed on at these meetings to the staff and all members of the team have the opportunity to contribute to, and become involved with, the reviewing and improving of the service at these meetings.

E.21. All staff are encouraged to put forward suggestions, but it is not uniformly applied across all areas of activity. The CLI team were told that management and clerical staff have the opportunity for further training and development. Proposals in the new Resources and Recycling Strategy (still in draft) would mean that training for operatives, in appropriate SVQs, would also be available.

E.22. Management and clerical staff have a performance review and personal development plan (PRPDP) each year with their manager. The Admin team manager has regular meeting with all clerical staff to update them on any changes. The members of staff are also encouraged to put forward suggestions. The Admin team manager ensures that all clerical staff can undertake all duties in the admin office in order that adequate cover for absence, or illness, can be maintained.

E.23. Despite the ongoing "Work to Rule" the Operations team manager felt the operatives carried out a good job. The Operations team manager has daily contact with supervisors and operatives. Supervisors felt their opinions were listened to since the recent appointment of David Goodenough. However, this view was not yet shared by the operatives since they did not have much direct contact with him.

E.24. Interviews with Waste Services management team and officers identified the following advantages and disadvantages of the service's approach to managing and developing its staff.

E.25. Strengths are that the staff:

- Have a positive attitude to work
- Work well together as a team
- Have built a good working relationship with partner services and agencies
- Listen to customers about their needs and preferences
- Believe that the new Waste Services manager has had a positive impact

E.26. Areas for improvement are that:

- Staff in certain teams can be split between two buildings
- Not all staff have an up-to-date job description
- The operatives interviewed do not share the positive and optimistic views of other Waste staff due to:
 - A lack of communication between operatives and management, with no regular meetings

- No opportunities to voice opinion to management
- There is low morale amongst some staff

E.27. Recommendations

- The service should complete the strategic planning and re-structuring activity that has been ongoing for a number of years
- The service should improve communication with operational staff and ensure more frequent updates are provided
- The service should aim to improve staff morale
- The service should involve and engage staff in service re-design and improvement activity

Rating: GOOD

4 Partners and Other Resources

The service:

- Manages partnerships to add value for the customer
- Manages finances to deliver quality services sustainably
- Uses information and knowledge to support and enhance service delivery
- Uses assets (land, buildings, vehicles and equipment) to optimum effect

E.28. Waste Services main partners include: Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), WRAP, Zero Waste Scotland, ECO schools, COSLA, Scottish Government, recycling contractors, Fleet and Community Transport and other council services.

E.29. The service estimation was that it deals with “about 40” external partners, mostly for waste disposal and treatment. For example, the recovery of recyclable end products from household waste, bulky uplifts, etc.

E.30. The relationship between Waste Services and partners is based on “competitive commercial contracts” and seems to operate smoothly, with an open and free exchange of information relating to what expectations are from both sides. There has been an improvement in this respect since the appointment of the Waste Services manager.

E.31. Similarly productive are Waste Services relationships with internal partners. No significant problems in these liaisons with other council services were identified.

- E.32. The Waste Strategy officer produces reports to enable monitoring and controlling of the financial aspects of dealing with external partners and to ensure that the quality and costs of the service are sustainable.
- E.33. Information management and reporting systems are used by the service to manage this information, including the council's performance reporting system, Covalent. The external monitoring systems, Waste Data Flow (recycling volumes) and AXIM (recycling costs), are used to maintain a balance between the cost and quality aspects of any contractual arrangement with partners. The service's reporting mechanisms are facilitated by the council's Procurement Service in the collection and monitoring of this data.
- E.34. Other databases such as the *Assessment of Public Sector Information for Comparisons* are used to benchmark performance against other public sector organisations, and Zero Waste information is also used to compare performance with other local authorities. The service has quarterly performance meetings to discuss performance and benchmarking data.
- E.35. Partnerships are managed to ensure the service is aware of the potential benefits of new recycling technology and any revenue or cost savings that can be realised.
- E.36. The service also benefit from dealing with partners in a competitive environment. For West Lothian Council to benefit from economies of scale and install its own recycling plan, it would have to generate in excess of 200,000 tonnes of waste annually. In 2011/12 it collected 109,783 tonnes of which 74,524.71 tonnes were household waste. Thus it remains dependent on the services provided by these partners.
- E.37. In terms of effective asset management, the service and other internal partners made reference to the following issues:
- The restriction on available space at depots
 - Teams are split between locations which detrimentally affects communications and teamwork
- E.38. Recommendations
- The service (along with other partners) should continue to pursue options for relocation to a site more suited for operational needs

Rating: GOOD

5 Service Processes

The service:

- Designs processes to meet the needs of customers
- Ensures processes are efficient and effective
- Delivers services to customers in the way they want
- Reviews the efficiency and effectiveness of processes
- Uses customer feedback as part of the review process

E.39. Waste Services are responsible for the collection of all household waste and the environmentally-responsible management of waste in line with the government's Zero Waste plan. The service provides a weekly uplift to around 75,000 households and a monthly uplift of garden waste during the growing season to the majority of these households.

E.40. Every year the service carries out around 21,000 bulky uplifts. There are twice-weekly commercial uplifts from approximately 1,100 trade waste premises and council services. This amounts to more than 4.6 million uplifts a year. Over 43% of all waste managed was recycled, equaling 47,600 tonnes – which is approximately 4,700 bin lorries a year diverted from landfill. The Scottish Government recycling targets of 40% were met for 2010 – 1 year ahead of schedule.

E.41. The service also has six Community Recycling Centres (CRC) strategically located throughout West Lothian, where residents bring their own household waste for recycling. In addition to this, the service provides information and support to customers on how to reduce, reuse and recycle their waste. The service is also responsible for the provision of 13 public conveniences in various locations throughout West Lothian.

Activities

E.42. The main activities of the service are:

- Domestic refuse collection
- Kerbside recycling
- Commercial waste collection
- Clinical waste collection
- Operating Community Recycling Centres (CRC)
- Bulky Uplifts (three free per household per year)
- Free Uplifts from registered charities
- Disposing of residual waste to landfill
- Provision of public conveniences

- Storage, removal and provision of wheeled bins to households
- Operation of a waste transfer station
- Waste Strategy
- Customer liaison and advice services
- Waste and recycling education for the community
- Securing future waste management infrastructure

Customers

E.43. The main customers of the service include:

- All households – flatted and non-flatted
- Bulky waste producers– residential and commercial
- Community Recycling Centres' users
- Household clinical waste producers
- Primary, secondary and nursery schools
- Community groups
- Other council services

E.44. The council's proposed Resources and Recycling Strategy will set out practice for the Service in West Lothian for the short and medium term future as the authority moves towards meeting the Government targets of:

- 50% household recycling, composting or preparing for reuse in 2013
- 60% household recycling, composting or preparing for reuse in 2020
- 70% recycling, composting or preparing for reuse of all waste in 2025

E.45. This is likely to require changes to existing service processes, as well as introduction of wholly new processes. One example is the collection of food waste; firstly as a pilot in 2013 and then from all households by January 2016. Other changes may include the rationalisation of collection, as poor routing of vehicles causes problems with overlapping and repeat journeys, calendars, changes to operative shift-patterns and re-deployment of supervisors.

E.46. Non statutory services, such as bulky uplifts, and assisted-takeout of bins may also be reconsidered, though this is likely to require a political rather than an operational decision. The completed strategy will also include up-to-date targets and performance indicators. As a general statement and observation, current Service Standards are urgently in need of review and updating.

E.47. Current performance is measured against a number of indicators. Some are Specified Performance Indicators (SPIs), used by all Scottish Authorities, whilst others are West Lothian Council Waste Services' own indicators.

E.48. Given that targets and indicators are under review, it is only worth underlining those that the inspection team felt were clearly not being met; were too low to be satisfactory or should definitely be reconsidered in the forthcoming new strategy:

- It is unclear why the percentage target for some customer perception performance indicators varies from 55% to 90%. There is frequent reference in the framework documentation to setting and meeting “challenging” targets. The general view of the CLI Team was that a target for customer satisfaction below 80-90% could not be considered as “challenging” for a major provider of UK public services.
- Of particular concern were the people (staff) perception indicators. Target levels of only 40% seem very low and, even though the current performance levels are almost entirely better than target, there is evidence that work needs to be done here. Council staff at supervisor level and above were very positive about most aspects of the service, including process and management. However staff at operative level gave indication that morale was low. Whilst they had confidence in the “new” service manager, their current situation gave some concern with regard to the introduction of changes to existing service processes. Where any proposed changes were likely to impact on their daily tasks, these alterations would have to be very carefully managed.
- The service regularly collects feedback from customers annually as part of the Operational Services customer survey, occasionally as required from other user groups, and by ongoing analysis of complaints recorded on the *Confirm* system. Many complaints arise as a lack of understanding on the part of customers as to what their responsibilities are in disposing of material in bins, or overloading bins, etc. As a result, bins may not be emptied because of non-compliance. This can result in many unjustified complaints against service operatives. Inaccurate (even malicious) complaints are currently being reduced as collection vehicles are now fitted with CCTV cameras which allow the service to review and assess the accuracy of some of these complaints.

E.49. The service also has (currently) one enforcement officer who engages as much as possible with the public. It was of some concern that some “deprived” areas in West Lothian, and some “repeat offenders”, are considered as ‘inevitable’ and that little can be done to change their circumstance. This was considered by the CLI team to be a somewhat complacent or fatalistic attitude which would preclude any improvement measures to be considered.

E.50. An education team has been in operation in the past, working in schools for example, to make sure the public is aware of recycling and re-use strategies. However this has not been in operation recently.

E.51. Recommendations

In addition to reconsidering all targets, as is planned in the new Resource and Recycling Strategy, the council should:

- Address, as a matter of urgency, the low morale detected amongst operatives. Supervisors and managers seemed to consider that their daily contact with operatives, often described as a ‘daily briefing,’ means that they are fully aware of any issues the operatives have. This appears to be viewed differently by the operatives who did not think they had a “daily-briefing”. Some felt that there were a few supervisors who played one section off against another, or who felt that ideas that they might have for efficiency improvements were largely ignored.
- Continue to explore every possible method to make the public fully informed of all aspects of the service’s interaction with them. This will be particularly important as new processes, such as food-waste collection, are introduced.
- Consider expanding its team of Enforcement Officers, though this job title may need to be reconsidered e.g. “Compliance-Officers”.
- Consider some method of joint working, with other council services, to support behaviour change in “difficult” areas and with difficult customers
- Reintroduce education teams to continue to raise public awareness of the Zero Waste agenda and how it will impact on them.

Rating: GOOD

6 Customer Results

The service:

- Are measuring the right thing(s) in relation to customer results and what is important to the customer
- Can show positive and sustained good performance over a period of 3 or more years
- Have set and met challenging targets
- Compare their own performance against performance leaders in other councils or organisations
- Can explain any dips in their performance or positive changes

E.52. A customer survey is undertaken annually, asking members of the *Citizens Panel* to evaluate their satisfaction with the service provided and highlight areas for improvement. The most recent survey was carried out in April 2012, and around 700 panel members responded.

E.53. A *Quality of Life* survey is undertaken by the council every three years, asking broadly similar questions about the Waste Service.

E.54. The feedback from customers collected by the Waste Service is generally very positive. Almost 84% of respondents rate the waste and recycling collection service as “good” or “excellent”.

E.55. In order to determine customer satisfaction, all council services use a five-point scale for customer surveys, with the ratings; (1) *excellent*, (2) *good*, (3) *adequate*, (4) *poor* or (5) *very poor*. The service is required to report on the percentage of customers who rated the service in the top two (*good* or *excellent*) on each survey question.

E.56. A selection of customer perception indicators, measured performance, and targets in table 1:

Customer perception Indicators	Current Performance	Target
Percentage of customers who rated the Service at the Community Recycling Centres as good or excellent	91.25%	87%
Percentage of customers who rated the Waste Services Complaints Process as good or excellent	72.15%	55%
Percentage of customers who rated the quality of Waste Services Customer Service as good or excellent	65.66%	60%
Percentage of customers who rated the Waste Services employees professional conduct as good or excellent	78.77%	65%
Percentage of customers who rated Waste Services timeliness of response as good or excellent	74.48%	60%
Percentage of customers who rated the service delivered by Waste Services as good or excellent	77.14%	68%
Percentage of customers who rated Waste Services performance in keeping them informed as good or excellent	68.81%	65%
Percentage of customers who rated Waste Services staffs' attitude as good or excellent	82.43%	78%
Percentage of customers who rated Waste Services Staffs' professionalism and knowledge as good or excellent	78.77%	70%
Percentage of customers satisfied that they were treated fairly by Waste Services staff	93.57%	90%
Percentage of customers who rated the overall quality of the service provided by Waste Services as good or excellent	83.34%	81%

Table 1: Customer performance indicators

E.57. The indicators show overall continued improvement year on year over the last 3 years, but it was difficult for the team to determine if the targets and the performance indicators in table should be considered robust. Comparisons with other similar local authorities are problematic as the measures of satisfaction used vary. For example, another neighbouring council measures the customers that are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the service.

E.58. The new benchmarking framework for Scottish councils, launched in March 2013, allows only limited comparison with other Scottish local authorities. In general, West Lothian compares favourably in all available indicators.

E.59. It was felt that some of the targets (shown in table 1) were low and should be raised to further challenge the service. There was no fully understandable rationale given to explain how the target levels are arrived at beyond variation from a notional baseline. For example, WMO21, WM022, etc. have target levels which are too low.

E.60. There was no evidence given to show why survey respondents had not rated the service higher than they did. Waste Services should be proactive and use other ways to gather more detailed information on customer needs and preferences. The service should consider:

- Holding focus groups to better understand customer's perception of the service

Or:

- Find ways of raising their profile in order to bring the importance of recycling more to the forefront of the public's attention

E.61. Customer complaints about the service are recorded and managed on the Confirm system. This system is also interrogated to provide performance data relating to the number, type and the service's handling times of complaints.

E.62. An examination of complaints received over a period of 3 months gave no indication of systematic failings. The service receives around 20 complaints relating to refuse collection per 1000 households.

E.63. Recommendations

- The service should review their target setting rationale for customer results, to ensure targets are challenging the service to improve performance
- The service should review the methods used to engage customers in the service and collect feedback and satisfaction data
- The service should look for opportunities to benchmark performance on customer satisfaction

Rating: ADEQUATE

7 Key Results

The service:

- Are measuring the right thing(s) in relation to the key activities and the long-term outcomes
- Can show positive and sustained good performance over a period of 3 or more years
- Have set and met challenging targets
- Compare their own performance against performance leaders in other councils or organisations
- Can explain any dips in their performance or positive changes

E.64. A new benchmarking framework for Scottish councils was launched in March 2013. This framework involves all 32 Scottish councils. The purpose of the new framework is to help local authorities understand their performance, allow them to compare performance with that of other authorities and take opportunities to improve their performance and adopt “best-practice”.

E.65. Benchmarking is an important improvement tool that helps organisations determine what is *good* performance by assessing how they perform against comparator organisations. Comparisons can help the service understand how others perform well and what approaches can positively affect performance results. This supports change and improvement by helping to identify and share good practice.

E.66. The benchmarked indicators relevant to Waste Services and the Scottish average are:

2011/12 Results	West Lothian	Scotland
Gross waste collection cost per premises	£76.89	£81.06
Gross waste disposal cost per premises	£118.14	£105.40
% of total household waste that is recycled	43.4%	41.0%
% of adults satisfied with refuse collection*	81.7%	80.9%

* 2010/11 data

Table 2: Comparative Performance Results 2011/12

E.67. The service also collects Specified Performance Indicators (SPIs) which are national indicators used and reported by all Scottish authorities to the Scottish Government. They were established to measure and compare performance in key services, and to help set local and national targets.

E.68. The SPIs for Waste Services are:

2011/12 Results	West Lothian
Net cost of refuse collection per premises'	£73.20
Net cost of refuse disposal per premises'	£90.26
Total tonnes of household waste collected	74524.71 tonnes
% of adults satisfied with refuse collection*	81.7%

Table 3: Performance Results 2011/12

E.69. The service also generates a range of internal indicators to measure performance and set targets.

E.70. The existing indicators do allow some comparison with other Scottish authorities, and this shows that the performance of West Lothian's Waste Services compares favourably with the Scottish average.

E.71. Recommendations

- The service should continue to challenge their performance and look to produce a range of indicators that constitute best-practice.

Rating: ADEQUATE

F. Review date

F.1. The inspection team will return to complete a review of the service's progress by the end of December 2013.