

**Wiltshire Council**

**Environment Select Committee**

**10 January 2012**

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**Waste and Recycling Collection Service  
Harmonisation Update**

**Executive Summary**

The significant project to both harmonise and improve the Waste Collection and Recycling services residents receive is moving to the second phase. This report highlights progress made to date and considers issues to be addressed as part of the completion of this work over the next few months.

The report includes a brief update on the project to construct a Mechanical Biological Treatment plant to divert some of Wiltshire's waste away from landfill.

**Proposal**

That the Committee note this update.

**Reason for Proposal**

The Committee requested a further update on delivery of the Waste Transformation Programme.

**TRACY CARTER**

Service Director, Waste Management

**Waste and Recycling Collection Service  
Harmonisation Update**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To:
  - (i) Respond to the request received from the Committee to provide an update on the work taking place to deliver a single Waste Collection and Recycling Service across Wiltshire.
  - (ii) Provide a brief update on progress towards the construction of a Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) plant.

**Background**

2. The One Council bid document 'next steps' contained commitments to harmonise waste collection and recycling arrangements across Wiltshire. Potential cost savings were identified, with the commitment that these would be reinvested in service enhancements to provide a consistent service across the whole Council area.
3. Public consultation on a preferred service option was carried out over the summer of 2010. Results indicated broad support with 72% of those responding in favour.
4. Work to progress the implementation of the preferred option was authorised by Cabinet on 19 October 2010. The key features of the new service agreed by Cabinet are:
  - (i) collection of residual waste becomes fortnightly across all areas (currently still weekly in the north and south of the county);
  - (ii) a kerbside collection of plastic bottles and card will be introduced to all areas (at that time only the south received this service);
  - (iii) a non-chargeable opt-in garden waste kerbside collection will be introduced across all areas (previously this service was charged for north, east and south of the county);
  - (iv) black box collections of dry mixed recyclables will continue as now for all households.

5. Following the announcement of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in October 2010 the Council was advised that savings required were likely to be front-loaded into 2011-12. Further work was carried out on a range of proposals that would help delay expenditure. Following the detailed settlement, these were considered on 10 January 2011 at both Cabinet Capital Assets Committee and a further Cabinet sub-group meeting. This resulted in a revised implementation timetable for rollout of the new service package during the latter half of 2011-12.
6. Table 1 below sets out the implementation timetable

**Table 1**

Area	Material	Date collections start
North	Plastic bottles and card	10 October 2011
	Garden waste and fortnightly collection of residual waste	5 March 2012
West	Plastic bottles and card	7 November 2011
East	Plastic bottles and card	28 November 2011
	Garden Waste	12 March 2012
South	Garden Waste and fortnightly collection of residual waste	26 March 2012

7. A key element in Wiltshire's strategy to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill has been identified as being fulfilled by the building of a MBT plant which will allow 60,000 tonnes of household waste to be treated, rather than sent for deposit in landfill.
8. The Hills Group received planning permission for the MBT plant to be constructed on the Northacre Trading Estate, Westbury in March 2009. Wiltshire Cabinet approved the signing of the Waste Management (Landfill Diversion) Contract at their meeting on 15 February 2011.
9. The contract was signed in April 2011 and is based on the construction of the £20 million facility on the Northacre Trading Estate, Westbury. Building works commenced in August 2011. Significant construction work has taken place, at ground level and below, and the plant is expected to be fully operational by the late summer of 2013.
10. The Cabinet Member for Waste, Property, Environment and Development Control Services presented a report to update Environment Select Committee on progress at its meeting held on 21 July 2011. The Committee requested a further update on delivery of the Waste Transformation Programme to its November meeting. Due to the workload of the Committee this item was subsequently deferred to the meeting to be held on 10 January 2012.

## **Main Considerations for the Committee**

11. The following paragraphs set out current progress and some of the issues experienced and managed during the first phase of the waste and recycling collection service changes and makes final preparations for the second phase involving garden waste and non-recycled rubbish.

### **Plastic bottles and card rollout**

12. Production of the new blue lidded plastic bottle and cardboard bins started in late July with the Council starting to take delivery during August. This allowed a stock to be built up, at the former Royal Wootton Bassett Highways Depot, before deliveries to households commenced in early September in the north.
13. Building up a 'buffer stock' was subsequently demonstrated to be a prudent contingency measure when the supplier (MGB Plastics) suffered a major mechanical breakdown on one of the two production lines dedicated to Wiltshire's bins. Production was significantly impacted, and yet deliveries to households were able to continue with the result that the vast majority of residents – in excess of 99% - were provided with a bin before collections started.
14. The delay in deliveries which started in the north also affected deliveries in the west and east as the service was unable to fully recover. This has resulted in some residents only receiving bins a day before start of collections. However, mitigation measures introduced by the Waste Service significantly reduced the number of residents who would otherwise have not had a new bin by their collection day. These are set out below.
  - Once the production facilities were repaired the bin supplier was requested to use an additional line for Wiltshire's bins for a short period to replenish stocks.
  - Bin deliveries were rescheduled so that deliveries to properties were made in strict accordance with the design of the collection rounds. For example, this meant that properties due to receive their new collections from the Monday of the first week of the collection cycle received their bins first.
  - Delivery capacity was increased to ensure no lag between the Council taking possession of the bins and their deployment to residents. Many Waste Collection staff worked weekends, and assistance was sought from, and provided by, Street Scene staff. Additionally, staff and vehicles were made available by contractors including, Focsa, English Landscapes and Ringway. These were particularly valuable in allowing timely deliveries to the more remote rural locations. A record has been kept of all costs incurred - both from contractors and in-house staff - in supplementing bin deliveries beyond the capability of the supplier and these will be recharged as permitted by the liquidated damages provisions within the contract with MGB.

- Some residents called and asked for their new bins to be taken away. These were collected and redeployed as quickly as possible (approximately 1400 households either opted out prior to the rollout, or requested their delivered bin be retrieved).
  - Daily production and delivery reports have been provided throughout the rollout and these have been used to provide an up-to-date projection of delivery completion by town and locality to ensure early identification of properties that might not have received a bin before their first collection was due.
15. A key planning application was required to support the service changes for a temporary change of use of a warehouse at Portemmarsh Trading Estate, Calne, to deal with the delivery and bulking of plastic bottles and cardboard collected in east, north and west Wiltshire. Planning permission was granted at the end of August. Despite break-ins and vandalism during the short period for works, the building was made ready in time and is now receiving collections daily. Drivers have adhered to the agreed route plans in all but two reported instances, when training was repeated. Baling equipment is now in place to reduce the number of outward loads. A further improvement is due by the end of January, when new sorting and baling equipment should be operational which will allow collected materials to be sent direct to commercial reprocessing facilities. Due to the decision that the collection service should collect on bank holidays, a Section 73 application has been submitted by Hills to reflect the needs of the collection service. If approved, this would not lead to the facility being open on more days; it would open on named bank holidays but would no longer need to open on following Saturdays as currently permitted.

### **Garden and residual waste**

16. During February and March 2012 the second phase of the rollout will take place. This will see fortnightly collections of residual waste introduced into the north and south, and opt-in, non-charged, fortnightly garden waste collections introduced into north, south, and east Wiltshire (residents of west Wiltshire already have a fortnightly, non-charged garden waste collection).
17. Robust discussions have taken place with the bin supplier which build upon lessons learned during the rollout of the plastic bottle and card service, and contingency arrangements were requested of and supplied by MGB Plastics. Preparations included the development of a detailed plan for delivering to only those customers who had opted-in to the garden waste service by 30 November 2011. It should be noted that this is inherently more complex and resource intensive than the area-by-area approach used during the plastic bottle and card deliveries. The dispersed nature of the households signed up for the garden waste service will serve to severely reduce any time advantage gained by having lower numbers to deliver to.
18. Members will recall that promotional material advertised a deadline of 30 September for opting into the garden waste collections. At the end of this period approximately 40,000 households had opted in. Requests continued to arrive – at a slower pace – after this date and so it was considered prudent to place an initial order for 55,000 bins. This will allow a large stock and should

also ensure that all residents who opted in by 30 November (when the database was 'frozen' to allow maps to be produced for the supplier) receive a bin during the initial phase of deliveries, during February and March.

19. It is expected that many other households will elect to sign up for the service once the first bins are delivered – partly in response to seeing their neighbours taking delivery, and partly due to seasonal climate changes that heighten awareness of the use that can be made of such a service. These households will be invited to sign-up for a second phase that will see bins delivered from late May 2012.
20. Construction of a new composting pad at Parkgate Farm, Purton, has been progressed to provide capacity for the new garden waste collections. The current pad at Lower Compton is used almost to capacity. This is situated in a remote rural location and issues such as odour are not anticipated. The pad has now been completed, with a contract variation and payments having been agreed. Deliveries of garden waste are expected to commence during Spring 2012, as garden waste tonnages increase with the expanded collections.

### **MBT Plant**

21. Excavation for the MBT plant has been completed. The concrete floor slab for the reception hall has been poured and the reinforcing steel has all been fixed for the slab for the bio-treatment hall. Work has now started on constructing the walls. The surface water drainage for the site has been completed. In preparing the site the ground was treated to stabilise it meaning that work has progressed during periods of wet weather. This has reduced the number of lorry movements to and from site as less earth has been dug out and less replacement material brought in.
22. The order has been placed for the structural steelwork and for the cranes that will move the waste within the plant, for example from the reception hall to the treatment hall. The construction of the plant remains on programme.

### **Performance**

23. The service changes and the MBT plant will help drive considerable improvements in the Council's performance on a range of measures.
  - (i) Wiltshire's Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy sets a target for an increase in recycling to 50% of all household waste by 2020. Current performance is 41%. The service changes should allow the 50% target to be achieved by 2014-15. This will place Wiltshire Council in the top quartile for all Unitary and County Waste Disposal Authorities.
  - (ii) At the time of drafting, plastic bottle and cardboard collections have commenced in all areas with early data available for the north, west and east areas. These show that over 700 tonnes a month on average were collected county-wide during the first two months. This is hugely encouraging given that it might be expected tonnages will increase further once the north and south move to a fortnightly collection of residual waste.

- (iii) The changes will drive significant reductions in volumes of waste being sent to landfill and should place the Council in the top quartile of comparable authorities.
- (iv) The MBT facility will receive 60,000 tonnes each year of municipal waste from households in the county, and in doing so help the county's taxpayers avoid Landfill Tax, which will cost £80 per tonne by 2014. It should reduce the proportion of Wiltshire's municipal waste sent to landfill to less than 25%, from a current performance of about 37%.

## Communications

- 24. Multiple channels have been used to both inform and promote the new services to as many residents as possible. These include the Council's website, local newspapers, local radio, area boards, road shows and leaflets mailed direct to households. The emphasis has now shifted to informing residents of the opt-in garden waste service and, in the north and south, the move to fortnightly collection of household residual waste.
- 25. The approach is graduated with general awareness raising first and becoming more specific and detailed as we move closer to service commencement dates. For example, approximately two weeks before new collections start instructional letters that will contain collection calendars specific to each household will be delivered. This approach will be supported by a comprehensive campaign, some highlights of which are included in Table 2, below.

**Table 2**      Key Communications activities

<b>Communication channel</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Garden waste sticker (underside of bin lid)	Provide guidance on materials that can and cannot be placed in the bin	February – March, with bin deliveries
Road shows	Engage residents and provide information on garden waste and fortnightly residual collections	February onwards
Area Boards	Engage and inform local residents and other interested parties	Ongoing throughout project
Bin hangers (placed on residual bins at time of last weekly collection)	Remind north and south residents of the move to fortnightly collection	February - March
Radio advertising (Heart & Spire FM)	Promote service changes	January - March
Wiltshire Residents Magazine	Advice on opt-in garden and fortnightly residual collections	Spring
Housing Association Magazines	Advise residents in housing association accommodation (including flats) of service changes	Ongoing

26. In support of the service changes, the Waste Management Service has worked very closely with Customer Services staff. CSU staff have responded positively and allowed back-office Waste staff to remain focussed on delivering the new collections. Scripts are constantly being developed and modified to ensure CSU staff have the latest information to provide to residents. Call volumes are being monitored to ensure their responses are in place to provide a quick response to calls at all times. Data gathered shows fairly predictable patterns with call numbers increasing in line with implementation dates for changes and bin deliveries. Since the beginning of September 2011, daily calls handled have typically been in the region of 200-300, with peaks of around 400 calls per day. CSU management have ensured temporary additional staff have been available to meet increased demand and, to date, call volumes are reported as manageable.

## **Budget**

27. Regular further reviews of the budget are carried out to take account of updated cost information and revised forecasts of landfill tonnage following the introduction of the service changes. Regular cost updates are being produced and at present the service expects to be able to fund the changes from current budget provision.

## **Detailed Policy Issues**

28. It was always recognised that special arrangements would need to be developed for residents in flats and other types of dwelling with limited access and space, such as terraced housing without gardens, where traditional bins cannot be readily accommodated. Although the October 2010 Cabinet report contained guidance on exceptions, and highlighted the alternatives available, it did not contain any detail of how this would be implemented. This was later progressed by a Cabinet Member Decision which ensures that:
- The Council continues to comply fully with the requirements of the Household Waste Recycling Act 2003;
  - residents in these types of dwelling receive a broadly equivalent suite of services to those in other types of housing;
  - health and safety considerations are fully observed.
29. Discussions with Housing Associations have taken place and staff members' local knowledge has been relied on to draft an initial list of such accommodation for site assessment where necessary. Members of Salisbury Community Area Board have been consulted about such properties within their divisions. To ensure none are missed, a request for concerned residents to make contact with the Council, if they have not been contacted prior to the start of the rollout of service changes, is being included within promotional communications.



30. Due to the need for Waste Technical Officers to visit certain premises (in conjunction with an officer from Hills to ensure black box arrangements are also agreed) service changes for residents in flats may not proceed to the same programme as the main rollout. With the available resources this is unavoidable. It is expected that completion will take place within three, and certainly no more than six months of the rollout to other households not requiring visits and special arrangements. To date, in excess of 50 visits have been carried out and these will continue over the coming months. Many such properties will be provided with alternatives to the standard wheeled bins due to the assessment determining that space and access are inadequate.
31. The new opt-in garden waste service allows households to purchase additional capacity at an initial annual charge of approximately £30 (the first provided bin being at no additional charge). The former District Councils each had different policies, which resulted in some households being able to purchase more than one additional bin, whilst in the west the former Council provided a non-charged service but allowed no additional bins. In future, residents will be permitted to purchase one additional bin only. This will help contain the cost to the Council (which has to pay for additional composting capacity) whilst allowing for the continued promotion of more environmentally sustainable alternatives such as home composters. Expressions of interest have been received in respect of a second paid-for garden bin and these are being recorded. To date, numbers are low, but this can be expected to increase once the initial phase of deliveries commences. It is anticipated that second bins will be delivered from May 2012, alongside a second phase of bins for those households missing the initial opt-in deadline for the non-charged service.
32. Other policy and process points to note include:
- The standard residual waste bin capacity of 180 litres will, upon request, be increased, subject to satisfaction of certain criteria, to 240 litres;
  - Where households can satisfy more stringent criteria the 180 litre bin may be swapped for a 360 litre bin (this will normally require a visit from a Waste Technical Officer);
  - Any authorised increase in capacity will be subject to regular review to ensure the circumstances warranting the increase remain in place;
  - Households with additional bins in excess of the agreed limits, due to former District Council policies, will be gradually moved to the new standard capacity, in line with the protocol, giving them some time to adjust.
  - Residents in the west, where 240 litre bins have previously been the standard, are now receiving 180 litre replacement bins when required, in line with the published policy.

## **Environmental Impact of the Proposal**

33. The impacts of the service changes on the environment are described in detail in the report to Cabinet in October 2010. In brief, they are essentially twofold.
- (i) Recycling has a lesser environmental impact than use of waste for energy recovery, or disposal in landfill. The project will provide the means for increasing the Council's average recycling rate from 41% currently, to around 50%.
  - (ii) Whilst vehicle miles to collect the increased volumes of plastic bottles and card and garden waste will increase, this is likely to be offset by a reduction in vehicle miles to collect residual waste and in mileage travelled by residents to local bring sites and Household Recycling Centres. Moreover, the reduced tonnage of residual waste being deposited in landfill will lead to a decrease in the production of harmful greenhouse gases.
34. The environmental impacts of the MBT have formerly been fully identified in reports to the Council's Cabinet. In brief, MBT with energy recovery was identified as a best practicable environmental option in the adopted Regional Waste Strategy and as one of the appropriate secondary recovery methods in the Wiltshire Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy. It is estimated that the Hills' Northacre facility will save significant Council lorry miles each year as waste from the west of Wiltshire will no longer need to be transported to Hills' landfill site at Lower Compton. By reducing the miles that these refuse collection vehicles travel, the facility has the potential to make a reduction in Wiltshire's carbon footprint. Initially, the refuse derived fuel (RDF) produced will be transported by road to port and then shipped to Germany for use in energy from waste plants, but it is anticipated that the production of RDF will encourage the creation of a more sustainable local market.

## **Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal**

35. No specific impacts have been identified.

## **Risk Assessment**

36. Any change to waste collection carries the risk of disruption and some adverse reaction from the public and the media. A carefully planned rollout accompanied by a comprehensive communications campaign reduces, but cannot eliminate, this risk.

## **Financial Implications**

37. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

## **Legal Implications**

38. No specific additions to the implications outlined in the October 2010 report to Cabinet have been identified. Legal and procurement advice has been sought and obtained as necessary to vary existing contracts with suppliers.

### **TRACY CARTER**

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**The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:**

None

**Appendices:**

None