

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

**COUNCIL
13 JULY 2010**

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR TREVOR CARBIN HOLT AND STAVERTON DIVISION

TO COUNCILLOR TOBY STURGIS CABINET MEMBER FOR WASTE, PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT

Question

Wiltshire Council's so-called 'consultation' on the future of waste collection is based on a fortnightly residual waste collection. However Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, has stated that: "Fortnightly collections are unpopular and unhygienic. It's the traditional weekly bin round that people want. The new Government will work with councils to freeze council tax and help them improve the frequency of rubbish and recycling collections. Let's use incentives and rewards to increase recycling, rather than cuts, fines and taxes. Families now pay a fortune in council tax - it's time they got a better deal." How will WC respond to the Secretary of State's advice, and will it be taken into account during the current 'consultation'?

Response

Why is the Council consulting on only one service option ?

The Council has considered the views of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the results of earlier surveys before looking at a number of options for waste and recycling collections before making this proposal.

The Council came to a view that the proposal is the only option that could achieve all our aims, as follows:-

- provides the same service everywhere
- provides service improvements and better recycling opportunities to all
- meet targets set out in our Waste Strategy at an affordable cost.
- Avoid potentially huge EU fines

For these reasons the Council believes that many residents will support the proposal.

If the “No” vote is large, the Council can carry out further research using the “peoples voice” focus group of local residents to find out which aspect of the proposal is not supported.

The New Government has said that it is in favour of Weekly waste collections. Why is the Council not proposing to carry these out?

The council has timed its consultation on the proposal so that emerging government policy on waste can be assessed.

Any government announcements will be taken into account by the council when it decides on the proposal during the Autumn, following this consultation.

Recently, statements expressing a preference for weekly collections have been made by The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, without any guidance how to increase recycling, whilst maintaining weekly collection of residual waste.

For example, Mr Pickles’ recent letter to the Audit Commission expressed anxiety that Councils might be given “perverse incentives” to cut the frequency of rubbish collections.

However, Mr Pickles also stated in the same letter that it was ultimately up to councils when they collected rubbish and recycling. This reflects his views about the importance of “localism”. In a speech about this, Mr Pickles also encouraged local councils to be innovative, taking opportunities to improve services and reflecting the views of residents.

Mr Pickles also praised a recycling trial scheme in Windsor and Maidenhead, where residents are rewarded for recycling. Wiltshire Council’s view of this is that the most effective and helpful way to encourage recycling is by offering more of the kerbside collection services that residents have asked for. Also, unlike any incentive scheme, the proposal does not involve weighing anybody’s wheely bin or recycling box and keeping information about residents.

Caroline Spelman MP is Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, or DEFRA. Her responsibilities include waste management. In a recent speech, Mrs Spelman covered many subjects, including a commitment to “help councils deliver the quality and frequency of services their customers want whilst delivering our commitment to waste reduction.”

The Council’s view is that the proposal reflects these priorities, provided that it is supported by residents. If that support is forthcoming, a local solution has been found which delivers our aims at an affordable cost reducing landfill tax paid and the risk of EU fines which could be £150 per ton.

The Council is in discussion with a number of organizations to investigate the possibility of providing food waste treatment within the County.