

REPORT

Subject : Waste and Recycling
Report to : The Cabinet
Date : Wednesday 05 September 2007
Authors : Matti Raudsepp – Head of Environmental Services
Nick Darbyshire – Waste and Street Services Manager

Cabinet Member for Environment : Councillor Robertson

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with feedback on the consultation over future arrangements for waste and recycling collection in the district.
- 1.2 To secure a way forward for waste and recycling collection with a view to ensuring that the authority can meet its obligations in respect of recycling performance in the future.

2. Introduction.

- 2.1 At the Cabinet meeting of 13 June 2007, members received a report reviewing the Council's policy in respect of waste management and in particular its plans for improving recycling performance. Cabinet was made aware of the key issues driving change in waste management and of the financial and environmental consequences of failing to take steps to reduce the amount of waste currently being land filled. The policy approved by the last administration is based upon an alternate week collection system (one week recycling, the next residual waste) based on wheeled bins plus a black box for further recycling.
- 2.2 Members were made aware of the current recycling rate within the District of 23%, and attention was drawn to the recently increased targets that councils nationwide will need to reach. These are 40% by 2010, 45% by 2015 and 50% by 2020.
- 2.3 Members were advised that current performance and waste collection arrangements in the District were unlikely to reach these targets and consequently a process of significant change would be necessary if punitive landfill tax fines are to be avoided.
- 2.4 Members considered that the issues were significant enough to warrant a wider debate before having to consider whether or not to support the existing policy or find an alternative. To this end officers were instructed to consult upon the options contained in the report.
- 2.5 The report contained a number of options, both in terms of overall collection methods and also specific measures that could have been added to any method that was adopted. It was consequently considered appropriate to refine the options in readiness for public consultation.



3. The Options

3.1 Three options were selected for consultation which broadly mirrored those presented in the Cabinet report. These were as follows:

3.2 Option 1 **Alternate week collection service (existing approved policy)**

180 litre wheeled bin for household waste collected on alternate weeks

180 litre wheeled bin for plastic bottles and cardboard collected on alternate weeks to household waste

55 litre kerbside box for glass bottles and jars, paper, cans, foil and textiles (collected on same day as recycling bin)

3.3 Option 2 **Weekly collection service for household waste with alternate week collection of recyclable materials.**

120 litre wheeled bin for household waste collected weekly

180 litre wheeled bin for plastic bottles and cardboard, collected fortnightly

55 litre kerbside box for glass bottles and jars, paper, cans, foil and textiles (collected on same day as recycling bin)

3.4 Option 3 **Alternate week collection service (amended scheme)**

180 litre or 120 litre wheeled bin for household waste collected on alternate weeks

180 litre or 120 litre wheeled bin for plastic bottles and cardboard collected on alternate weeks to household waste

55 litre kerbside box for glass bottles and jars, paper, cans, foil and textiles (collected on same day as recycling bin)

Choice of smaller bin available to many households

Team of on-street recycling advisors to help residents become familiar with scheme

Subsidised offer of household food waste digesters.

3.5 In addition, all options above would contain the following features:

3.5.1 Provision of sack collections for properties unable to accommodate wheeled bins

3.5.2 Continuation of assisted collection scheme for the elderly, infirm or disabled

3.5.3 Optional (chargeable) garden waste collection service using a 180 litre bin.

4. Consultation

4.1 The consultation process began following the Cabinet meeting of 13 June 2007 and finished on 15 August 2007. It consisted of two elements, an awareness raising campaign and consultation on the options.

4.2 Awareness raising campaign

4.2.1 The aim of the campaign was to draw attention to the issues surrounding the need for change in managing household waste. The campaign involved:

4.2.2 Press releases on a weekly basis

4.2.3 Presentations to area committees

4.2.4 Presentations to a number of parish councils

4.2.5 Presentation to the Parish Council forum

4.2.6 Presentations to open meetings in the Wilton, Tisbury, Mere, Downton and Amesbury community areas.

4.2.7 Waste awareness event in the Guildhall car park on Saturday 21 July 2007

4.3 Consultation on the options

4.3.1 Consultation on the options was carried out using a leaflet (see Appendix I) which was distributed to the following:

- 4.3.2 Ward Members
- 4.3.3 Parish Councils
- 4.3.4 A range of organisations anticipated to be interested in the issues e.g., primary care trust
- 4.3.5 Libraries and other council information points
- 4.3.6 It was anticipated that ward members and parish councils could make the leaflet available in their areas, and at the same time the leaflet was available for download or on-line completion on the Council's website.

5. Feedback from the consultation

5.1 The feedback can be divided into the statistical responses to the consultation leaflet, in addition to the general responses to the presentations. Emphasis was given to encouraging response through the leaflet with the aim of achieving a more robust understanding of public opinion. The results were as follows:

- Option 1 15%
- Option 2 36%
- Option 3 47%

Option 3 therefore was the most popular preference of the three
2% of returns indicated no preference
442 responses were received

5.2 Additional comments were made either on the consultation leaflet or recorded from public presentations. A summary of the most popular questions/comments is included in appendix I. The comments show that a great many residents are concerned about how the chosen scheme would work, and many of these questions have either been answered or would be answered as part of the communications campaign that would take place in advance of the rollout of the new service. Others reflect a normal fear of change to a service residents have become used to and which they value as it is. It should be noted that where questions were raised in public meetings they will have been answered by officers at that time, and throughout the process officers have responded to residents who are as keen about improving recycling as those are about keeping things as they are. Consequently the feedback reflects the polarised opinions that the waste management debate has created across the country and the difficulty in determining a way forward that everyone would be completely satisfied with.

6. Impact of decision to create a Unitary authority in Wiltshire

6.1 The decision to create a unitary council in Wiltshire will inevitably have an impact on council services in the future, and there is likely to be a drive to establish greater consistency in service levels county wide. It is not clear exactly how such a change will influence waste management at this time, but it must be stressed that wheeled bins and alternate week collection methods are established in two of Salisbury's neighbouring districts with a third planning the introduction of an AWC based scheme in the near future. Such methods are consistent with the current Joint Municipal Waste Strategy.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The opportunity to engage with residents and their local representatives has been valuable. The challenges the Council faces in respect of managing waste in the future are unfortunately complex and face to face contact has proved very useful. There was an appreciation from those who attended presentations of the opportunity to debate the issues and understand more clearly why change is necessary, and the reality of how this will require a cultural change in how we manage our household waste and our expectations from the Council as collection authority.
- 7.2 It is fair to say that for many, any change to the current, and very popular, waste collection service will be regretted. However, a great many recognised that current practices are

unsustainable and do not safeguard our environment for future generations and neither do they protect council tax payers from the effects of future landfill tax fines. There was a understandable frustration with those within the community that do not make the most of current recycling opportunities, which it was felt had led to a need for a dramatic change at this time. Furthermore, there was a widely held view that more should be done to reduce packaging and encourage greater recycling within the commercial sector.

7.3 Of the three options presented within the consultation leaflet, and in view of the feedback, both statistical and anecdotal, it is the view that Option 3 represents the most popular way forward. This is the alternate week collection option with enhancements. This view comes forward despite the apparent preference in anecdotal feedback for the retention of current arrangements, but is no doubt influenced by the financial consequences of trying to retain a weekly collection alongside an expanded recycling service. It can be therefore assumed that it represents the pragmatic approach that residents who participated in the consultation felt compelled to adopt.

8. Recommendations:

- 8.1 Note the feedback on options for improving recycling performance in the district
- 8.2 Instruct officers as to the preferred option for progressing improvements to managing the collection of waste and recycling in future.

9. Implications

- 9.1 Financial: Dependant upon waste collection option selected, although all options aim to provide a degree of protection from future landfill tax charges that will apply in the event that recycling performance does not improve to meet government targets.
Options 1 and 3 - Can be contained within existing budgets
Option 2 - Will cost an additional £800,000 for which there is currently no budget available. Compensating savings will need to be identified within the MTFS if members wish to pursue this option.
- 9.2 Legal: The law requires amongst other things that the responses to the consultation are conscientiously taken into account in making a decision on a preferred option. Failure to select a wheeled bin based option for waste collection may result in a claim for damages due to the existence of a contractual agreement for the supply of wheeled bins to the Council. This contract was agreed under approved Council policy and prior to the decision to review that policy.
- 9.3 Human Rights: A contract is a property right for the purposes of Protocol 1 Article 1 [protection of property]. If a claim for damages were made under the existing contract arising out of any decision by the Council payment of compensation should mean that the Protocol would not be infringed
- 9.4 Personnel: None
- 9.5 Community Safety: None
- 9.6 Environmental: This decision aims to address environmental concerns that are anticipated if alternatives to land filling waste are not pursued.
- 9.7 Core Values: Providing excellent service, being environmentally conscientious, communicating with the public, wanting to be an open, learning council and a willing partner.
- 9.8 Information Technology: None
- 9.9 Wards affected: All

Top 25 responses from the consultation.

1. More information is needed on recycling and waste collection.
2. We do not want to pay for our garden waste to be collected.
3. Rotting food waste will smell if left for two weeks.
4. My property is unsuitable and cannot have bins.
5. The 180l bin will be too big and we will never fill it.
6. Why does option 2 cost more?
7. Fortnightly collections are a health risk.
8. Why won't option 2 reach the recycling targets?
9. Force supermarkets to reduce their packaging.
10. Wheelie bins are unsightly.
11. What are the financial penalties? Are they for everyone if we do not meet targets as a whole, or are they for individuals that make a mistake?
12. Will the sacks be biodegradable?
13. If we go onto fortnightly collection, then reduce council tax as the service is reducing.
14. Why can you not recycle all plastics?
15. Fortnightly collections are cost cutting measures.
16. I am elderly, I have space for wheeled bins but I cannot handle them.
17. Can we have more than one black box?
18. Paper sacks should continue for garden waste.
19. Will current bring sites remain?
20. What about manoeuvring a wheelie bin along a gravel drive?
21. What if you go on holiday and miss your collection, waste will then be left for 4 weeks!
22. Will bins be lockable and if not why not?
23. I have no outside space in my property am I expected to keep two weeks worth of waste inside my house?
24. There will be an increase in vermin.
25. There will be an increase in fly tipping.