

REPORT TO THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE		Report No.8
Date of Meeting	28 th February 2008	
Title of Report	Report of the Household Waste & Recycling Task Group	
Link to Corporate Priorities	Environment – Waste & Recycling	
Public Report	Yes	

Summary of Report

This Report presents the Findings of the Household Waste & Recycling Task Group.

Task Group Recommendations

1. Option 4, (at 5.4) Sorted Weekly Collections, is the preferred option as it constitutes best practice. However, it could not be implemented until the new Unitary Wiltshire Council (WC) is established, as North Wiltshire District Council (NWDC) decided not to introduce Alternate Weekly Collections (AWCs). Therefore, the decision will be taken by WC. The rounds system should ideally be structured so that the bins for each household are emptied on the same day each week (at 4.5). This would avoid confusion and encourage recycling.
2. To introduce an awareness raising program (at 5.6) across the district to highlight the need to reduce waste overall and recycle more. This will prepare the Council Tax payers of the district for the likely introduction of a form of AWCs following the transition to WC in 2009.
3. More rigorous enforcement and extra capacity charging policies (at 5.7). A robust policy regarding excess waste and a charging policy for those households requesting additional capacity will enhance the efficiency of programmes designed to reduce waste sent to landfill.

Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
Yes	None	Yes	Yes	None

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Household Waste & Recycling Task Group was established by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 13th September 2007.
- 1.2 The Task Group membership was as follows; Cllrs A.K.Hill (Chairman), J. Hartless, S. Parker and M.L. Singlehurst.
- 1.3 The Task Group's Terms of Reference were as follows:

To consider and recommend a way forward on the following matters, using an evidenced based approach:

- The need to reduce the amount of waste and increase domestic recycling in order to meet Government requirements.
- To educate and encourage residents to reduce the amount of waste and recycle more.
- The possible introduction of Alternate Weekly Collections (AWCs).
- Health issues associated with AWCs having regard to the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee Report on Refuse Collection (Fifth Report of Session 2006-07).
- Investigate ways of dealing with food waste.
- The limitations or failures of existing waste collection and recycling policy.
- Other issues relating to waste & recycling as determined by the Task Group in the course of their business.

2. Background Information – The Current Context

- 2.1 North Wiltshire District Council's (NWDC) target for recycling and composting in 2007/08 is 20% as set by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
 - 2.1.1 The Council is on track to exceed the 20% target for 2007/08 (2nd quarter figures at 23.15%).
 - 2.1.2 The Government published a report "Waste Strategy for England 2007" in May 2007 that sets out a vision for sustainable waste management; it sets national targets for recycling and composting of at least 40% by 2010, 45% by 2015 and 50% by 2020.
- 2.2 NWDC is part of the Wiltshire Waste Partnership (WWP) and as such has signed up to the Wiltshire Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS).
 - 2.2.1 Some of the principles of the JMWMS include meeting the following targets by 2010/11:
 - To achieve a 40% recycling rate across the whole county.
 - For all districts within the county to have a fortnightly residual waste collection service.

- For 95% of all households to receive a kerbside collection of multiple recyclables.
- 2.2.2 It is predicted that Wiltshire will meet the 40% recycling target.
- 2.2.3 North Wiltshire already offers a kerbside collection of multiple recyclables to 98% of its households. The 2% of householders who do not receive a kerbside collection of recyclables tend to be the more rural areas, which Hills Waste Solutions cannot currently service with existing resources.
- 2.2.4 There is legislation forming part of the Household Waste Recycling Act 2003 that will require two recyclables to be collected from every household by 2010.
- 2.2.5 The Government is under pressure from the European Union to reduce landfill. From April 2005 the Government introduced a Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) which limits waste disposal authorities to a specific volume of biodegradable waste; the allowance declines progressively year on year to 2020. Authorities that exceed their allocation must purchase any available unused allocations from other authorities or pay a fine of £150 per tonne exceeded.
- 2.2.6 In order to encourage recycling the Government have been increasing Landfill Tax by £3 per tonne per year, it is currently £24 per tonne (North Wiltshire produced 38,000 tonnes of household waste in 2006/7).
- 2.2.7 Whilst the Landfill Tax for household waste is paid by Wiltshire County Council (WCC), this increase still has an impact on the Council Tax of NWDC taxpayers.
- 2.3 Local authorities are required by Section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to collect household refuse without imposing any direct charge for doing so. They are also required to arrange for the collection of commercial waste where asked to do so, although a charge is permissible for this.
- 2.3.1 Charges are also permitted for collection of particular types of household waste, such as bulky items (furniture and electrical appliances) and garden waste.
- 2.3.2 Since 2005, authorities have also had the power to issue fixed-penalty notices to householders who breach rules on how waste is to be presented for collection, including what may be put in bins.

3. Background Information – The Work of the Task Group

- 3.1 The Task Group met for the first time on the 21st August 2007 and held 14 meetings in total.
- 3.2 The Task Group was supported in their work by Mrs M. Scott, Cleansing and Amenities Waste Strategy, Education & Enforcement Officer.
- 3.3 In carrying out its work, the Task Group considered the documentation listed in Background Documents. The Task Group also gathered evidence by conducting interviews with the following persons:

- Councillor T.R. Sturgis (Executive Member – Waste & Sustainability Portfolio Holder at NWDC and Cabinet Member at WCC for Planning & Waste).
- Mr A. Conn (Waste Services Manager – WCC).
- Tessa Polniaszek, Pip Saunders, Camilla Timms, John Sutton and Jacky Thomas, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT).
- Adrian Hampton and Mary Treneer (Kennet District Council).
- Stephen Eades (Friends of the Earth – North Wiltshire)
- Councillor S.K. Doubell (Former Executive Member - Environment).

3.4 The Task Group undertook a visit to Bath & North East Somerset Council to examine services provided by the Council and received a presentation from Sarah Alder (Waste and Contracts Manager – Bath and North East Somerset Council).

4 Findings

4.1 The Task Group has found that the biggest issue for the public regarding recycling is plastic and cardboard waste. Whilst facilities are provided at the Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) the majority of people would like to see these recyclables collected at the kerbside.

4.2 There is also an issue regarding the range of plastics that can be recycled at the HRCs. WCC endeavours only to collect plastic that can be recycled in the UK. This limits the range to plastics that have the recycle symbol 1, 2 or 3 displayed, this is mainly plastic bottles. The public are confused by this and become frustrated at not being able to recycle all types of plastics. The Task Group is of the opinion that plastic which cannot be recycled easily should not be allowed to be used by manufacturers, thus increasing the recycling of plastic and reducing the amount of plastic going to landfill. However, Government legislation would be required here. It is therefore impossible for NWDC, WCC or the new Unitary Wiltshire Council (WC) to do this in isolation, but lobbying through the Local Government Association and by Members through their MPs would certainly help.

4.3 At present the majority of recyclable plastic is empty plastic bottles and transporting these is expensive because of the large number of journeys required with high bulk, low weight freight.

4.4 The Task Group considered the possibility of siting compaction skips at HRCs for plastic bottles. Compaction skips are similar to compaction vehicles in that they are a stationary skip with a facility to compress the material into a small volume periodically. However, they need an electrical power supply to operate the hydraulic rams. This option was discussed with Hills Waste Solutions who advised that there are significant health and safety concerns and these skips cannot be left on site unmanned. The possibility of isolating the electricity supply and an operative visiting the sites once a day to compact the contents was explored. However, it would not be an acceptable solution as these skips have only a small reception hopper and consequently need to be compacted regularly throughout the day to prevent overflow. The cost of manning such sites permanently would be prohibitive.

- 4.5 The Task Group considers that in order to encourage as many people as possible to recycle it needs to be convenient and easy. Most people want to recycle, but if they are confused by what is collected on which day each week, they give up. The Task Group would like to see each property have their waste and recycling collected on the same day of the week, and suggests that NWDC discuss this with Hills Waste Solutions. However, this will be difficult as Hills provide a recycling service for West Wilts and Salisbury District Councils as well as NWDC. The Task Group feel that the establishment of the WC would be a good time to reassess the collections rounds system in its entirety.
- 4.6 Around 140 authorities have introduced AWCs, a blanket term covering a range of methods based around the idea that the collection authority picks up recyclable materials one week and residual waste the next. These schemes have frequently been characterised as being fortnightly; in fact refuse is collected weekly, just not all refuse every week.
- 4.7 Research has shown that the recycling top 10 local authorities all have AWC systems in place.
- 4.8 With more Councils converting to fortnightly collections, the adverse press coverage of less frequent residual waste collections has prompted fears about public health. This fear was also expressed on the doorstep during canvassing. However, DEFRA has concluded that there is no evidence that AWCs increase health risks (the Wycombe report, Feb 2007). It is also recommended in this report that householders should take responsibility for their own waste and ensure that food waste, kitchen waste, nappies and other such items should be tightly wrapped before being put into the wheeled bin. The House of Commons study into Refuse Collection 2006-07, also recognises that research conducted into the health impact of the AWC system has found no evidence of adverse health effects. Overall, health issues associated with AWCs are difficult; it is generally accepted that there are no problems with rodents, despite scare stories in the press, but possible problems with maggots if food waste is not properly wrapped. Smells are also reduced to acceptable levels if food waste, nappies etc are wrapped. Research has shown that all authorities that have introduced AWCs of any description, have suffered complaints and bad press about the service initially, but after a period of settling in, usually approximately 6 months, the new service is accepted by the public.
- 4.9 Food waste is the biggest concern that the public have regarding AWCs. This concern is primarily centred on smell and health issues. Theoretically, food waste can be collected separately and converted into a compost product by an anaerobic digestion facility. Whilst this process has been demonstrated successfully in small volumes under controlled conditions by trained operators, it has not been used successfully to dispose of the large volumes required by a commercially viable enterprise. Such a facility requires a large capital investment and a strong, secure outlet for the final product. With the carbon footprint in mind, the facility needs to be located close to the collection area. Currently there is no such facility available locally.

- 4.10 Somerset County Council has set up a large scale anaerobic digester, but it has not been very successful. The food waste is often contaminated, particularly by small pieces of plastic from wrappings etc; the anaerobic process does not affect this contaminant, so it reduces the quality of the final compost. This makes the material suitable only for landfill and the Somerset operation are having such difficulty organising the disposal of the product that they are having to deliver it themselves at their own expense to anyone who will take it rather than selling it as was originally planned.
- 4.11 The WWP are promoting the national “Love Food, Hate Waste” campaign which Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) has implemented following the recommendation from the House of Commons Refuse Report. This campaign highlights the amount of food being thrown away by each household every year (up to 1/3rd of that which is purchased) and offers tips on food purchasing, preparation and storage to avoid this wastage. Less food waste in the waste stream would reduce the public perception of food waste issues.
- 4.12 The Task Group has assumed that decisions made by the current WCC will be carried over into the WC; including the intention stated in the JMWMS to roll out AWCs across Wiltshire during 2010/11. However, NWDC has decided that AWCs will not be introduced during 2008/9 (NWDC Transitional Corporate Plan 2008/9 Appendix 2 to Report 7).
- 4.13 The Task Group found that whilst NWDC is performing within existing targets for minimisation and recycling of household waste, there are no plans in place for rapid improvement in the immediate future. However the Task Group believes that NWDC should be putting changes in place in readiness for the assumed introduction of AWCs in accordance with JMWMS in the future.

5. Options and Options Appraisal

5.1 Option 1. Change nothing; continue to provide the service as at present.

5.1.1 Advantages: The public are happy that AWCs will not be imposed upon them. There are no increased costs to budget for. There are no changes for the public to get used to in terms of collection and recycling days.

5.1.2 Disadvantages: Limited potential for containing the rate at which waste to landfill is increasing. Not providing the service the public want in terms of recycling plastic and cardboard.

5.1.3 Financial Implications: None.

5.1.4 Recycling Target Impact: None.

5.2 Option 2. Introduce traditional AWCs. 2 wheeled bins are provided, one for traditional waste to go to landfill, the other different coloured bin for garden waste. A black box is provided for the fortnightly recycling collection of paper, glass, cans, textiles and aluminium. All provided free of charge.

5.2.1 Advantages: Reducing the amount of landfill waste collected forces householders to recycle. The collection of garden refuse increases the tonnages considerably, thus improving the recycling performance figures.

5.2.2 Disadvantages: Generally very unpopular with the public, it is perceived as a reduction in service provision. It is also seen as unfair within the community; whilst it is easy for a small family to keep the 2 weeks' waste within the capacity of one bin, it is more difficult for a large family to do so. Furthermore, not everyone wants garden waste collected and it discourages home composting. The garden waste collection part is also inefficient as it is so seasonal. There is still no provision for the collection of plastic and cardboard that the public want. It is contrary to the Local Area Agreement (LAA) that is focused on waste minimisation.

5.2.3 Financial Implications: There would be the cost of providing every household with an additional wheeled bin, approximately £1.12 million, plus the loss of income from the existing garden waste collection service that is currently running at £158,000 per annum.

5.2.4 Recycling Target Impact: Would increase recycling to at least 45%, the top 8 recyclers in the UK are achieving over 50% recycling with this system.

5.3 Option 3. To alternate a weekly collection of landfill waste bin and recycling box whilst retaining the charged collection of garden waste.

5.3.1 Advantages: To force householders to recycle by reducing the landfill waste collections. This has been introduced in Kennet District Council who saw an increase in recycling overnight from just over 20% to 42%.

5.3.2 Disadvantages: This would be seen as a huge reduction in service by the public. There is no provision for the collection of plastic and cardboard. It could cause an increase in fly-tipping.

5.3.3 Financial Implications: This would attract a saving due to a reduction, by half, in the number of vehicles and human resources required to empty the residual waste wheeled bins. The black recycling box would continue to be collected by Hills Waste Solutions using existing resources.

5.3.4 Recycling Target Impact: Of the 22 local authorities that have introduced this service their recycling rates are between 35% and 45%.

5.4 Option 4. Sorted Weekly Collections. A form of AWCs whereby householders would be provided with 2 wheeled bins and a box. One wheeled bin for plastic bottles and cardboard, the other (of a different colour) for residual (landfill) waste. The 2 wheeled bins are emptied on alternate weeks; household waste one week, plastic and card the next. The black box is emptied as at present, i.e. every second week, not necessarily with either of the bins. Plus the opt-in, chargeable garden waste collection as at present. This would allow the existing refuse compactor vehicle fleet to be used to empty both wheeled bins, on an alternating basis. The black box is emptied using the same Hills Waste Solutions vehicles as

at present. Therefore, there is no requirement for additional vehicles and their crews.

- 5.4.1 **Advantages:** This system provides the public with the plastics and cardboard collection from their doorstep that they want. It also encourages householders to recycle and encourages home composting by households who do not want to pay for a garden waste collection service.
- 5.4.2 **Disadvantages:** This option may be seen as a reduction in service due to the collection of residual waste becoming alternate weeks. It would incur complaints regarding smells and maggots from the residual waste bin until the public became used to the requirement to wrap certain items properly. It may encourage contamination of the recycling bin when people fill the landfill waste bin early, or an increase in fly tipping. There may be complaints regarding the need to find room to store another wheeled bin.
- 5.4.3 **Financial Implications:** This scheme should have no running costs increase over the present one. However, there would be the initial cost of providing every household with an additional wheeled bin, approximately £1.12million.
- 5.4.4 **Recycling Target Impact:** Those authorities that have introduced this method are showing recycling targets of between 30% and 36%. This is in line with the calculations Salisbury District Council carried out when they were planning to introduce this service. Their prediction was 33.13%.
- 5.4.5 It has to be recognised that this option will not produce the level of recycling that Option 2 does, however the Task Group believes that it would be a more popular option with the public, would provide a comprehensive service in line with best practice and would address the concerns of the public regarding the lack of a kerbside plastics and cardboard recycling service.
- 5.5 Option 5.** A continuing weekly collection of residual household waste and an alternate weekly collection of plastic and cardboard one week (in an additional, different coloured bin) and other recyclable material the next (black box); plus the opt-in chargeable garden waste collection.
 - 5.5.1 **Advantages:** This would probably be the option most members of the public would want given the choice, however the cost would be prohibitive.
 - 5.5.2 **Disadvantages:** The continued weekly collection of household waste does not encourage increased recycling, as there is no restriction on capacity.
 - 5.5.3 **Financial Implications:** The additional cost of providing this service would be huge. The existing fleet of compactor vehicles is still fully occupied collecting household waste each week. In order to collect the plastic and card from the other wheeled bin using compactor vehicles. The existing fleet would need to be doubled, an extra 13 vehicles at a cost of approximately £1.7million, plus running costs and the cost to crew them. In addition there would be the cost of providing every household with an additional bin, as outlined in the options above.

5.5.4 Recycling Target Impact: There are 8 councils operating this level of service and their recycling rates are in the high 20%*s*.

5.6 Awareness and Education Programme. Because the Task Group has assumed that the WC will roll out AWCs across Wiltshire during 2010/11 (4.11 refers), the Task Group believes that, in addition to and irrespective of the five options above, an extensive education program is required to enhance public awareness of waste problems and the need to increase recycling. However, the timing of the start of such a programme is significant. The experiences of other Councils have shown that approximately a 2-year period of education and understanding by the public prior to the introduction of AWCs is ideal. It seems to be difficult to conduct such a programme effectively in less time, but a waste of resources to start too early as significantly improved results are not realised. Therefore, the earliest notice of the intentions of WC regarding the introduction of any form of AWCs would be helpful.

5.6.1 The Task Group is aware that as part of the Cleansing and Amenities (C&A) Improvement Plan an awareness campaign is about to be launched. This will be run by the Council's Communication Team in conjunction with C&A and will focus on reducing waste, by both minimising waste and recycling. It will focus on the poor participation areas and give information about how people can increase their recycling. Details of all the poorer performing areas are available from Hills Waste Solutions.

5.6.2 Once this campaign has had an opportunity to have some effect, the Task Group recommends buying in professional help in order to implement a more comprehensive education programme. WWT are already a contractor to WCC with a task of increasing waste minimisation by carrying out awareness raising campaigns both in schools and with the general public. WWT have 3 qualified teachers working for them who are very active in visiting both primary and secondary schools. They are well received by teaching staff and pupils as their experience and qualifications are recognised.

5.6.3 WWT also has dedicated community workers who are again experienced in this work. The Task Group believe that they are probably more effective in talking to the public about the importance of waste minimisation and recycling, as they are not local authority based and are therefore seen as impartial.

5.6.4 The Task Group has approached WWT to get an idea of what they could do for NWDC. They have suggested that they could carry out a doorstep campaign in the low performing recycling areas in NWDC. The target would be to bring participation rates up in these areas to the county's average of 58%. Whilst carrying out the doorstep campaign the education section of the team would work in the surrounding schools, thus providing a comprehensive package.

5.6.5 Financial Implications: The price that WWT have estimated is £43,500 to provide a full time officer for one year. They recommend that this could be made up of two part time posts, one qualified teacher and one community worker. Plus a further £12,000 budget to spend on equipment etc. Should this course of action be taken, a tendering exercise would need to take place.

- 5.6.6 Recycling Target Impact: Whilst this work would not have a large impact on the district wide recycling rate, probably 1% overall, it would have enormous effect on the participation rates in the affected areas. This work will start to make the public more generally aware of the waste they generate and the need to start to reduce it in readiness for the anticipated introduction of AWCs.
- 5.6.7 The Task Group would like see better use being made of the advertising opportunity on the side of the council's fleet of vehicles travelling around the District collecting rubbish. Some of the vehicles already carry such messages, but they are looking rather tired; these need to be kept up dated and looking fresh. The introduction of WC may be an opportunity to revise and renew the advertisements along with the introduction of the new WC logo and name.
- 5.7 Enforcement and Extra Capacity Policies.** To enable any of these options to have an impact on reducing waste sent to landfill, the Task Group recommends that NWDC adopts a robust policy regarding excess waste. There needs to be a strictly enforced "no side waste, lids completely closed" policy relating to wheeled bins. As well as ensuring that small animals and birds do not get into the bins and forage, this policy will have the effect of decreasing the amount of space available to the householder and further encourage recycling.
- 5.7.1 The Task Group recommends that NWDC should also consider banning garden waste in the residual waste bin in order to encourage home composting or the use of the chargeable garden waste collection service.
- 5.7.2 NWDC currently provides a second bin on request for households consisting of 5 people or more; there is a one-off fee of £24.50 for this additional bin. The Task Group recommends that, prior to a second bin being issued, an audit of the applicants' residual waste should be carried out and only if they can demonstrate that they recycle to their full potential should a second bin be provided. The Task Group also recommends that an annual charge should be made for the provision of a second bin as well as the initial delivery fee. This charge should be set at a level sufficient to make the householder think whether they still require the bin should their domestic arrangements change.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The adoption of Option 4, Sorted Weekly Collections (at 5.4) would require the provision of an additional wheeled bin to every household; this would cost approximately £1.12million.
- 6.2 WWT has estimated the cost of a comprehensive education programme (at 5.6) would be approximately £55,500. This is comprised of £43,500 to provide a full time officer for one year, although they recommend that this should be made up of two part time posts, one qualified teacher and one community worker. Plus a further £12,000 budget for equipment etc.
- 6.3 A small saving can be achieved by making an annual charge for the provision of a second bin as well as the initial delivery fee (at 5.7.2). This charge should be set at a level sufficient to make the householder think whether they still require

the bin should their domestic arrangements change. Depending upon the charge levied, this may bring in £5-8000 per annum.

7 Human Resources Implications. WWT has recommended that the provision of a comprehensive education programme (at 5.6) would require the establishment of two part time posts, one qualified teacher and one community worker.

8 Community and Environmental Implications

8.1 The recommendations of this report will have community and environmental implications.

8.2 They will have a positive impact on the environment by encouraging people to reduce waste and recycle more; thus less waste will be sent to landfill.

8.3 They will also have a positive impact on the community as they will provide the kerbside collection of plastic and cardboard waste material which many people are keen to receive, thus enhancing the service provided.

9 Risk Analysis

- With a new national statutory recycling target of 40% due to take effect in 2010, action needs to be taken to increase recycling.
- If no action is taken, NWDC will enter into the new WC with the lowest recycling rate of all the Wiltshire districts, this would be bad for the reputation of NWDC.
- Not being seen to introduce new recycling initiatives could allow the public to lose interest in recycling. Once this interest is lost it is difficult to regain.
- Customer satisfaction ratings for this service will suffer without some thrust on recycling issues.

Appendices:	
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiltshire’s Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS). • The JMWMS Business Plan. • The Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Controlled Waste Regulations 1992. • The Household Waste Recycling Act 2003. • The House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee Report on Refuse Collection Fifth Report of Session 2006-07. • Waste Strategy for England 2007. • The Cleansing & Amenities Improvement Plan – Education Strategy. • Wiltshire’s monthly recycling performance statistics. • Information gained from the “askjennie.com” website. A specialist waste management website comparing service

	<p>standards and performance of local authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Impact Assessment of Alternate Week Waste Collections carried out by Enviro Consulting Ltd, Integrated Waste Management Centre, Cranfield University. • The Wycombe Report, February 2007
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Previous Decisions Connected with this Report

Report	Committee & Date	Minute Reference
NWDC Transitional Corporate Plan 2008/9		Appendix 2 to Report 7