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Report

Subject : Recycling of Household Waste

Report to : Western Area Committee

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Cabinet Member: for Environment & Transport Councillor James Robertson

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to:
- 1.2 Seek area committee consideration of the future arrangements for the management of household waste, and specifically plans to improve recycling performance in the district.

2. The drivers for change

- 2.1 It is anticipated that landfill sites will run out of capacity within 9 years.
- 2.2 Britain sits in the bottom three of European nations for recycling with an average rate of 27% for household waste.
- 2.3 Recycling within Salisbury district currently stands at 23%, despite 98% of all households having the opportunity to recycle a range of materials at the kerbside.
- 2.4 The drive for improvement is underpinned by concerns for the environment and the need to conserve the world's natural resources for future generations and reverse the trend of our 'throw away' society. The approach being adopted at a national and international level to make this happen is one where poor performance is punished by financial penalties.
- 2.5 As a result of the introduction of the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS), waste being sent to landfill within the county must fall year on year in order to stay within specified limits. If these limits are not met, any excess waste that is landfilled will be subject to a fine based on tonnage. It is estimated that if recycling performance within the district does not improve from current rates, the fines will be approximately £1.2 million in 2010. In addition, and regardless of LATS targets, the cost of landfilling each tonne of waste is increasing above inflation year on year.
- 2.6 The government has recently published its Waste Strategy for England which has increased recycling targets for household waste. These targets are:
 - 40% by 2010; 45% by 2015; 50% by 2020
- 2.7 Between the pressures of LATS targets and Waste Strategy targets, the message is clear. Councils must improve their recycling rates or suffer the financial and environmental consequences.



Awarded in:
Housing Services
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3. The way forward for South Wiltshire

3.1 The Council's current approach to waste collection and recycling will not achieve the targets set out above.

3.2 It is recognised that the system of charges and fines on local authorities is designed to change behaviour on recycling. Consequently, such fines are likely only to get worse in the event that performance does not improve. Doing nothing is therefore not considered an option and this was endorsed by Cabinet on 13th June 2007.

3.3 Any new scheme must:

- Encourage householders to change their waste habits
- Increase recycling
- Cater for and include all residents
- Make it easy for the public to recycle
- Be cost effective

3.4 The following materials will be recyclable from the kerbside

- Paper
- Glass
- Tins/cans
- Cardboard
- Plastic bottles
- Foil
- Textiles
- Garden Waste (optional)

3.5 The scheme to achieve the aims set out above became council policy under the last political administration. This was a waste and recycling collection scheme based on alternate week collections. That is to say, recyclables collected one week, residual (landfill) waste the next. The change of administration following the elections in May 2007 has resulted in a request for a review of its policy, in order to consider alternatives. It is expected that any alternatives must be capable of taking forward the council's recycling performance in order to avoid significant costs to taxpayers in the near future.

4. The development of options

4.1 The options contained in the Cabinet report of 13th June 2007, included the current approved policy, plus a number of possible alternatives. These alternatives were designed to recognise the concerns that some members of the general public have over alternate weekly collections, and to illustrate the variety of approaches that could be adopted. However, in view of the severe penalties for failure to improve our recycling performance it is considered that a small number of options should be consulted upon and the scope to significantly improve recycling performance must be an underpinning requirement of those selected.

4.2 As a result of paragraph 4.1, the options within the Cabinet report have been refined. The 'do nothing' option has been removed and the option that included a weekly collection of putrescible (largely cooked food) waste has been absorbed within a new option. The latter change reflects the fact that cooked food waste collected from each home in the district would be expensive and could not be appropriately composted within the county at this time. This waste would consequently end up in landfill, and would therefore not contribute at all to recycling performance.

5. The Options

5.1 Option 1

- 180 ltr wheeled bin for waste, emptied on alternate weeks
- 180 ltr wheeled bin for recyclables, emptied on alternate weeks
- 55 ltr black box for recyclables, emptied on same week as wheeled bin for recyclables
- Optional & Chargeable – 180 ltr wheeled bin for garden waste
- Bin reading and weighing on certain vehicles
- Sack collections remain for properties unsuitable for wheeled bins

5.1.1 This option is the AWC based scheme, as approved under the last administration.

5.1.2 This option is already funded and should meet the 40% recycling target by 2010.

5.2 Option 2

- 120 ltr wheeled bin for waste, emptied weekly
 - 180 ltr wheeled bin for recyclables, emptied on alternate weeks
 - 55 ltr black box for recyclables, emptied on same week as wheeled bin for recyclables
 - Optional & Chargeable – 180 ltr wheeled bin for garden waste
 - Bin reading and weighing on certain vehicles
 - Sack collections remain for properties unsuitable for wheeled bins
- 5.2.1 This option would retain a weekly collection, but based in a smaller wheeled bin. It would cost an additional estimated £800,000 to deliver due to the need for additional vehicles and staff.
- 5.2.2 Whilst it would achieve an increase in recycling performance, the retention of a weekly collection of residual waste is likely to limit improvement, as there is less incentive to make full use of recycling bins.

5.3 Option 3

- 180 ltr wheeled bin for waste, emptied on alternate weeks
 - 180 ltr wheeled bin for recyclables, emptied on alternate weeks
 - 55 ltr black box for recyclables, emptied on same week as wheeled bin for recyclables
 - Optional & Chargeable – 180 ltr wheeled bin for garden waste
 - Recycling Ambassadors
 - Choice of smaller bins where needed
 - Assistance for residents to manage food waste
 - Sack collections remain for properties unsuitable for wheeled bins
- 5.3.1 This option is an AWC based option but with the benefit of a number of enhancements over the original scheme. Funding would be moved from equipment designed to read and weigh bins to the provision of additional staff on the ground in the initial months of the introduction of the scheme. These staff would help residents understand the new arrangements and ensure those with specific and exceptional needs are able to cope with the changes.
- 5.3.2 Recycling performance under this option is likely to be on a par with Option 1. It is possible that with the enhancements, greater public satisfaction will result in further and quicker improvements than the original option. There would be no additional costs to this option.

6 Ensuring customer service excellence

- 6.1 Salisbury District Council Environmental Services are proud to be one of only a handful of councils to have been awarded a Charter Mark for its Household Waste & Recycling Collection Service. The Charter Mark is one of the highest possible accolades for customer care and customer service achievable. Initially awarded in 2000 the service was re-evaluated in 2003 and achieved even higher scores in each of the criteria.
- 6.2 It is recognised that whichever option is pursued, customer service must remain as important to the Council as ever. Whilst change will inevitably create uncertainty and concern amongst residents, our commitment to customer service will form a critical part of the way forward. Any scheme adopted must therefore balance the need to drive changes in behaviour with the recognition that residents may have particular needs that we must do our best to provide for.

7 Suitability of properties to store bins

- 7.1 The council has undertaken a survey of the entire district and is aware that there are approximately 3,200 out of 50,000 properties for which wheeled bins will not be suitable. The decision is based upon practical issues affecting sufficient space and access to the point of collection.
- 7.2 The council accepts that if a resident does not have room they will be unable to have a wheeled bin. Sacks to the same capacity will be provided instead. However, in order to ensure the success of the scheme such exceptions must be kept to a minimum, and decisions based on consistency and equity.

8 Assisted collections

- 8.2 We do go the extra mile to meet our customer's needs and this is reflected in the statutory Best Value customer satisfaction surveys where the service's rating has again topped 92%.
- 8.3 Outside of sheltered housing schemes the council has over 390 households currently receiving an assisted collection.

8.4 In circumstances where a householder is genuinely unable to manage a wheeled bin to the normal point of collection we will either provide sacks, an alternative point of collection, or both depending on the needs of that householder.

9 Perceived health hazards

9.2 Two of the three options include alternate week collection. The issue of potential public health hazards resulting from fortnightly collections of landfill waste have been raised both locally and nationally. This concern is centred around food/putrescible waste and the potential for bacterial proliferation over a fortnight coupled with an increase in the presence of vermin. With the average household disposing of approximately 30% of all food purchased, the quantity of putrescibles in the average bin is a concern to many.

9.3 Scientific research in this area is limited at the moment. However, of the studies undertaken so far none have suggested that fortnightly collections themselves result in any additional concerns to public health. A wheeled bin with a lid provides a very effective means of containment for waste. However, problems do arise when residents continue to leave sacks of waste outside the bin or piled up in the bin preventing the lid from closing. These sacks become vulnerable to vermin, flies etc

9.4 Although considerable national media coverage in recent months has raised public awareness and created some alarm over the principles of AWC schemes, very little attention has been given to the schemes which have been successfully operating for several years and even less attention to the lack of viable alternative schemes. It should also be noted that wheel bins provide a far better means of containing waste than our current bags, which are easily torn and as a result vulnerable to rats etc.. Consequently there is a balance between the length of time waste would be left before collection and the improved means of storing it. It is considered therefore that any AWC based option will not in itself result in greater numbers of vermin.

9.5 The Wiltshire Waste Partnership is about to publish a Food Waste Strategy aimed at trying to reduce the quantity of food waste and help manage that waste in the home. WRAP are undertaking a nationwide campaign in the Autumn of 2007 to raise public awareness into the issue and encourage minimisation.

10 Conclusion

10.1 The management of waste is one of the most important and challenging issues affecting local government at the present time. The pressures to increase recycling and the penalties for failing to do so are clearly recognised and will create a substantial financial burden on the council in the future if action is not taken now. In view of the circumstances described in this report, it is inconceivable that the Council can make sufficient progress in recycling performance without initiating a significant change in behaviour and the way the Council goes about collecting waste. The two are inextricably linked.

11 Recommendations

11.1.1 The Area Committee are recommended to:

11.1.2 note the contents of this report

11.1.3 provide views on the options for taking forward recycling in the district, to be considered as part of the wider consultation currently taking place.

Implications

Financial:	Contained in report.
Legal:	Contained in report
Environmental:	Contained in report.
Wards affected:	All.