

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Environment Select Committee

2 March 2011

Waste Collection and Recycling Service Harmonisation Update

Executive Summary

There is a need to provide a harmonised Waste Collection and Recycling Service to Wiltshire households to replace the different patterns of service provision the Council inherited from the four former District Councils.

A timetable to implement these changes has been agreed and a major project established. This report highlights the progress made to date, together with the key issues, risks and challenges posed.

Proposal

That the Committee note this update.

Reason for Proposal

The Committee requested an update report on progress in introducing the service changes to Waste Collection and Recycling.

MARK BODEN
Corporate Director
Department of Neighbourhood and Planning

Waste Collection and Recycling Service Harmonisation Update

Purpose of Report

1. To 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.

Background

2. The One Council bid document 'next steps' contained commitments to harmonise waste collection and recycling arrangements across Wiltshire where currently different materials are collected, in some cases at different frequencies, as a legacy of the different approaches taken by the four former District Councils. Potential cost savings were identified, with the commitment that these would be reinvested in the form of service enhancements to provide a consistent service across the whole Council area.
3. Public consultation on a preferred option for new services was carried out over the summer period, 2010, and results indicated broad based 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 package agreed by Cabinet are:
 - (i) A non-chargeable kerbside collection of plastic bottles and card will be introduced to all areas (currently only the south receives this service).
 - (ii) A non-chargeable opt-in garden waste kerbside collection will be introduced across all areas (currently this service is chargeable in the north, east and south of the county).
 - (iii) Black box collections of dry mixed recyclables will continue as now for all households.
 - (iv) Collection of residual waste becomes fortnightly across all areas (currently still collected weekly in the north and south of the county).
5. Following the announcement of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 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 notification of the detailed settlement, a revised proposal for implementation has been considered by Members through the budget setting process. The revenue and capital investment required is in the financial plan for agreement at Full Council on 22 February 2011. The revised implementation timetable is for rollout of the new service package during the latter half of 2011-12.

6. Table 1 below sets out the proposed new implementation timetable.

Table 1

DATE	ACTIVITY
October 2011	Plastic bottles and card collections commence in the north of the county.
November 2011	Plastic bottles and card collections commence in the east and west of the county.
February 2012	Garden waste collections (opt-in) commence in the north and east of the county. Alternate weekly collections of residual waste commence in the north of the county.
March 2012	Garden waste collections (opt-in) commence in the south of the county. Alternate weekly collections of residual waste commence in the south of the county.

7. Members will note that kerbside collections of plastic bottles and card are to be introduced in advance of both a move to fortnightly collections of residual waste in the north and south of the county, and also the introduction of a non-chargeable opt-in garden waste collection across all areas. This sequencing has certain advantages to residents. The introduction of plastic bottles and card collections before Christmas should help households cope at a time when additional volumes of waste materials are produced and also help households to rely less on their residual bins. Very little garden waste is collected over the winter and so there is little pressure to introduce this service enhancement at the same time as plastic bottles and card. Garden waste volumes pick up noticeably again during spring and the introduction of the garden waste collection service in February and March is designed to enable residents to address this. Hopefully, this phasing minimises disruption to residents who will be required to accommodate the service changes.

Main Considerations for the Committee

8. The service changes will help drive considerable improvements in the Council's performance on a range of measures.
- (i) Experience of previous service changes in east and west Wiltshire indicates that the new services will help continue the trend of reduction in overall municipal waste tonnage and waste produced per household.
 - (ii) 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 approximately 40%. The service changes will allow the 50% target to be achieved by 2014-15. This will place Wiltshire Council in the top quartile for all Unitary and Waste Disposal Authorities.

- (iii) The changes will drive significant reductions in volumes of waste being sent to landfill and should, once again, place the Council in the top quartile of comparable authorities. In so doing, the Council's performance will move appreciably closer to the levels required by the EU Landfill Directive which has specific and binding targets for the UK.

9. Robust project management arrangements have been put in place and a project team established that includes a range of managers and staff from both within and outside the Waste Management Service. Day-to-day management of the overall implementation project rests with a dedicated project manager with specific experience of managing a waste collection service and introducing substantial service changes. In order to progress the many changes, the activities involved have been grouped into four work streams, each led by an experienced council manager. Table 2 below describes the work streams and sets out some of the key issues which they have to address.

Table 2

Work Stream	Main Considerations
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring collection rounds accompanying new services are properly aligned between the Council, Focsa and Hills to minimise confusion and disruption to residents. <p><u>Issue:</u> preserving the same collection day for residents for each material is not always consistent with the most efficient use of resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing specifications for new bins and vehicles. <p><u>Issue:</u> collection of plastic bottles and card in north, east and west in future may require different vehicle types to those currently used. Additional vehicles will be needed for the period when plastic bottles and card collections commence through to the move to fortnightly collections of residual waste and the introduction of garden waste collections. These vehicles require temporary crews, supplemented by experienced drivers. This will involve extending the operational life of some vehicles as they fall due for replacement and the use of agency staff.</p>
Customer Access and IT Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Customer Services to ensure staff are briefed and equipped to handle the expected increase in customer enquiries before, during and after implementation of service changes. • Co-ordinate the design of new and improved processes for responding to customer demand. • Develop a process that allows residents to opt-in to the non-chargeable garden waste collection service. Ensure existing services continue to be provided up to the point of change, and ensure payments for chargeable services continue to be sought.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the specification and rollout of a new dedicated Waste Management Information System across all areas. <p><u>Issues:</u> processes differ in each of the former District Council areas. A 'systems thinking' approach must be taken to ensure we have consistent and efficient processes in place to underpin delivery of the new services.</p>
<p>Contracts and Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and implement contract variations required to current arrangements with Hills and Focsa to ensure a seamless rollout of collections across all areas, irrespective of who actually does them. • Work with contractors to develop solutions to the materials, delivery and management issues created by the planned rapid increase in volumes of some collected materials, in particular plastic bottles and card and garden waste, and the reduced tonnage of residual (non-recycled) waste. The increased tonnages will require new or expanded and relocated treatment facilities. Reduction in residual tonnages will require a change to waste transfer arrangements, to ensure that the appropriate tonnage can be supplied to the Lakeside energy from waste incinerator. <p><u>Issues:</u> long-term solutions will require two or more years to bring fully on-line (taking account of the timescales for acquiring sites, obtaining planning consent and environmental permits and constructing facilities). With new kerbside recycling collections scheduled to commence from October 2011 additional temporary solutions must be found. This has proved challenging, but good progress has been made with business negotiations underway. A series of planning applications and environmental permit applications will also be required.</p>
<p>Communications, Education and Behaviour Change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all stakeholders are identified and kept informed at each stage of the project. Particular emphasis is placed upon the impact of decisions on residents and any action they need to take. • Provide targeted awareness raising to promote better understanding of the need to recycle, and reduce volumes of household waste. • Proactively engage with other work streams to ensure all changes and significant decisions have communication impacts considered.

	<p><u>Issues</u>: uncertainty over implementation timetable due to Comprehensive Spending Assessment has caused planned communications to be either aborted or modified. Communications Plan now completely re-drafted to take account of new timescales. External funding for communications activities has been secured from the Waste Resources Action Programme. This must be spent by the end of this financial year. This has proved challenging as the financial uncertainties have delayed communications activities whilst the timing of the rollout of new services has been clarified.</p>
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10. Some additional challenges have been experienced to date:

- (i) Some experienced members of staff have left the organisation as a consequence of the Council's management review, including the manager of one of the project's work streams.
- (ii) Although the project will receive some grant funding to assist with the communications and publicity of the new services, the delay in moving forward due to the CSR has reduced this sum by approximately 30%.
- (iii) The service has been working with a supplier to update and extend a former district council management information system to all areas. It was hoped to bring this new capability on line this spring. The delays in ordering due to CSR uncertainty resulted in the supplier withdrawing from the planned implementation programme. Work is currently progressing to re-programme this part of the project.

11. Paragraph 9 described the work of the teams delivering the project. It is pertinent to also consider its governance. Each work stream lead meets regularly with the project manager and submits progress reports on a fortnightly basis. The project manager in turn uses the information to produce progress (highlight) reports to the Waste Management Strategic Management Team on at least a monthly basis. Interactive sessions with the wider pool of managers and senior technical staff from across the service help plan and co-ordinate the project. Briefings have taken place at appropriate intervals for the Waste Cabinet and Portfolio Members. A risk register is maintained and updated regularly.

12. In addition to this planned approach to reporting progress and addressing issues, given the importance of this project to the Council, Members and senior managers also address issues as necessary between meetings to ensure that the project is delivered in accordance with the programme.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

13. The impacts 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, or disposal in landfill. The project will provide the means for increasing the Council's average recycling rate from 40% currently, to around 50%.
 - (ii) Whilst vehicle miles to collect the increased volumes of plastic bottles and card and garden waste will increase, this will likely be offset by a reduction in mileage travelled by residents to local bring sites and Household Recycling Centres. Moreover, the reduced volumes of residual waste being deposited in landfill will decrease harmful greenhouse gasses. The increased emphasis upon recycling and reduction of landfill will reflect the Government's "waste hierarchy" which supports the treatment of waste, rather than disposal to landfill.
14. It is important to note that, at present, the calculation of the Council's carbon footprint does not include the carbon equivalent of emissions associated with waste disposal. As part of the review of waste policy Defra is considering a change from tonnage based targets to a system based on carbon which would allow waste to be incorporated into the Council's carbon management plan.

Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal

15. No specific impacts in addition to those already highlighted in the October 2010 Cabinet report have been identified.

Risk Assessment

16. There are a range of project specific risks and these are tightly managed within the overall governance process in place. Some of the key risks are highlighted in Table 3.

Table 3

Risk	Mitigating Actions
Vehicle manufacture and delivery takes longer than planned.	Contract documentation requires the manufacturer to cover the costs of hired vehicles if agreed delivery dates are not met.
Outlets for the disposal of increased volumes of plastic bottles and card and garden waste cannot be found.	Work with our contractor to identify new short-term and longer-term solutions.
Introduction of AWC of residual waste in south and north is received poorly by residents and adverse publicity is generated.	Carefully targeted communications. The south will be the last area to change. Staff capacity will be maximised and lessons learned from other areas.

Risk	Mitigating Actions
Proposals to re-model roles and harmonise working patterns within the in-house workforce may create industrial relations issues and disrupt the rollout of the service changes.	Robust project management principles in place. Regular meetings taking place with workforce and union representation.

Financial Implications

17. There are no specific implications arising from this report.
18. Implications of the new service rollout for both capital and revenue expenditure were approved by Full Council at its meeting on 22 February 2011.

Legal Implications

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

MARK BODEN

Corporate Director
Department of Neighbourhood and Planning

Report Author:

John Geary

Head of Waste Management Transformation

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

None

Appendices:

None