

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

Waste Task Group (Communications)

17th February 2015

Progress Report

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the work of the Waste Task Group in relation to communications to date, since being reconvened in December 2014.

2. Membership

The Task Group comprises the following members:

Cllr Jose Green (Chair)
Cllr Rosemary Brown
Cllr Peter Evans
Cllr Mollie Groom
Cllr Pat Aves
Cllr Jacqui Lay

The Task Group has been supported by the following officers:-

Tracy Carter - Associate Director Waste and Environment
Allan Clarke – Communications Officer
David Crisfield – Senior Corporate Support Officer
Emma Dove – Senior Scrutiny Officer

3. Terms of Reference

Upon being reconvened the Task Group has drawn up the following terms of reference to govern its activity:

- To investigate how improved communications with householders on the council's waste services may facilitate an improved rate of recycling (including garden waste);

- To investigate how to increase the awareness of the range of services and resources available to assist in achieving improved recycling rates; with clear information on how to access the available resources and services.

4. Meetings

The Task Group has met on three occasions

6th January 2015

14th January 2015

28th January 2015

5. Key Issues

Discussions within the Task Group has been wide ranging, however, the following issues have been identified by the Task Group as those around which recommendations should be developed and brought to the Environment Select Committee:

a) Legislative drivers

The Task Group recognise that there are legislative changes that will not only require the council to improve performance but also provide opportunities for the council to engage in communication campaigns, e.g.:

- By 2020 the council will have to reduce the amount of biodegradable waste that goes into landfill to a level where it is no more than 35% of those in 1995.
- Use the opportunity presented by the future implementation of charging for plastic carrier bags to promote recycling.

b) 'Carrot and Stick' approach

The Task Group recognise that the approach to communication needs to be varied to reflect the different mind-sets that residents have to recycling. Broadly speaking there are residents who are already pro recycling, those who may need some additional encouragement and those whose behaviours it will be difficult if not impossible to change. A 'carrot and stick' approach is therefore required i.e.

- Positive messages that acknowledge, affirm and reinforce good practice (e.g. celebrate the fact that data on tonnage of municipal solid waste collected shows that recycling rates have been increasing in Wiltshire)
- Harder messages that set out the costs and possible implications for poor practice (e.g. charging and fining).

c) Cost benefits

With the increasing financial pressures on the council, it will be important deliver clear messages to householders about the financial benefits to the council tax payer of disposing of waste correctly i.e. recycling v non-recycling and recycling correctly (the costs associated with cross contaminating recyclables with non-recyclable).

d) Improve information about kerbside collection

The Task Group have identified that it is in the area of kerbside collections that much useful work can be done e.g.:

- Greater clarity about which plastics are recyclable in the blue lidded bins to avoid contamination
- Early information that plastics other than bottles will be kerbside recycled in 2017 as part of new waste contract
- A second blue lidded bin and black box can be provided at no additional charge.

e) Garden Waste

The Task Group are aware that a proposal to introduce a standard charge of £40 per annum for the collection of garden waste with a lesser charge for garden waste bags for people with small gardens who have no room for a wheeled bin.

These changes present a Communications opportunity, not only to publicise the changes to the pricing, but also

- to make clear what alternative options there are for disposing of garden waste if not signing up for a chargeable kerbside collection
- to promote the benefits of garden waste composting generally

f) Website

Following a presentation of the council's waste and recycling website pages, the Task Group have identified that this an area where a significant number of improvements can be made to both the overall appearance and presentation of information. Whilst it may be possible to introduce small changes to the website now, a major redesign of the Waste and Recycling pages may be more advantageous as part of the new council website redesign.

5. Possible Solutions

The Task Group has already begun to identify a range of possible solutions. These are due to be discussed in more detail at its next meeting in order that a final set of recommendations can be brought to the Environment Select Committee at its meeting on the 14th April 2015.

6. Next Steps

- Task Group to meet and agree a final set of recommendations to bring to the 14 April meeting of the Environment Select Committee
- Prepare final report for 14 April Environment Select Committee

Cllr Jose Green – Chair of the Waste Task Group

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