

# Agenda Item

**Executive Board**

**4 July 2007**

**PD**



## Future Waste Initiatives for East Devon

### Summary

This report considers the options for the way forward to increase the amount of recycling which takes place and to contribute towards achieving the Statutory Target of 30% and the national target of 40% by 2010. Members will be aware that the next phase of the Strategy is to introduce in a trial area (some 10-12,000 properties) the collection of additional materials i.e. plastic bottles and possibly cardboard.

The proposal that was being considered was to offer:

- Weekly collections of dry recyclables including plastic bottles and possibly flattened cardboard (grey board – cereal packets and brown board – brown cardboard boxes).
- A fortnightly residual waste collection in a wheeled container (180 litre with a closed lid and no side waste policy)
- Then at a later date (2010 onwards) introduce a separate kitchen waste collection

This scheme was originally proposed to be introduced in a pilot area (Axminster and Seaton) in June 2007 but with the national campaign conducted through the media highlighting concerns with alternative weekly collection schemes it was agreed to 'pause' this roll out of service for the new Council to have the opportunity to consider the published material and concerns of residents communicated during and following the local elections.

The report explains that the concerns with an alternative weekly collection scheme can be addressed by the collection of food waste on a weekly basis. This system accords with the Council's waste strategy and the waste contract. Should Members wish to roll out such a scheme there will be significant financial implications for the Council and the Council will have address with Devon County Council the lack of capacity to handle kitchen waste beyond the trial area.

### Recommendations

1. **That Executive Board determine how it wishes to respond to the public's concerns over the introduction of an alternative weekly collection scheme.**

#### a) Reasons for Recommendation

If members wish to address the genuine public concern with the implications of moving to an alternative weekly collection scheme change is required in the planned trial.

#### b) Alternative Options

Members could adhere to the proposed trial scheme; alternatively the Council could maintain the current service and fail to meet statutory targets on recycling. Members could also decide they want a weekly collection of residual waste, as currently is the case, but combined with a weekly recycling service. This would have financial implications, i.e., would cost more, and would not meet statutory targets.

**c) Risk Considerations**

The main risks relate to on-going contract discussions with Sita, potential financial implications, negative customer satisfaction, a failure to meet statutory targets, and inadequate capacity to meet needs of kitchen waste collection scheme.

**d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations**

The cost of introducing a kitchen waste collection scheme together with the weekly collection of dry recyclables and a fortnightly collection of residual waste is likely to be significantly higher than the current budget. Should members wish to pursue the proposed trial scheme without a kitchen waste collection, the cost would be less expensive for the whole District but a similar increase on budget for the trial area; either way the financial consequence of the roll out would hit the 2008/09 budget and beyond. (see report in Part 2)

Other factors relating to the introduction are that there is a requirement for the disposal authority (Devon County Council) to reduce dramatically the amount of bio-degradable material going to landfill by up to 65% (of the 1995 disposal figure) by 2020. There are target years in 2010 and 2013 where if they fail in the targets they will be liable to a fine of £150.00 per tonne for every tonne over the set target. They may try and pass on some of the costs to the districts if they feel the recycling and waste minimisation efforts are not adequately provided.

**e) Date for Review of Decision**

N/A

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**1 East Devon's Waste Strategy**

- 1.1 The East Devon Waste Strategy outlines the way that the District Council wishes to take its waste services forward and the Strategy was finalised in September 2004.
- 1.2 The Strategy put forward a number of objectives that were:
- Provide all residents with a kerbside dry recyclables collection
  - Expand the range of material to include plastic bottles and cardboard
  - Change the frequency of recycling collection from fortnightly to weekly
  - Provide a weekly separate collection of kitchen and organic waste (17.5% of household waste stream)
  - Encourage waste minimisation and greater use of recycling facilities
  - Ensure all the changes are backed up by education, communication and, if necessary, enforcement.
- 1.3 The main policy drivers for the strategy are:
- Statutory Recycling Targets – 30% - 2007/8
  - Household Waste Recycling Act 2003
  - Waste Minimisation Act 1998
  - Landfill Directive (Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003)

**2. The first phase of contract implementation**

- 2.1 The first part of the Strategy was to let the waste collection service through competitive tendering. This was carried out in 2005/6 and a new waste and recycling contract commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006. The first initiative, which was carried out under this contract, was to introduce a fortnightly dry material recycling collection to 100% of properties in East Devon and this was implemented in September 2006. However this initiative was not carried out to the standard that would be expected from a leading waste contractor. It has since come to light that they had considerable human resources issues which have now been addressed and the service is now working considerably better but still with room for improvement. This has led to an improvement in the council's recycling rate from 17.21% in 2005/6 to 19.36% (1<sup>st</sup> draft figure provided by Devon CC) in 2006/7 (this increase reflects an

increase but this may rise to over 20% in a full year after implementation). However having made this improvement the Council is still short of its statutory recycling target (30%) and further initiatives need to be undertaken.

### **3. The proposed second phase of contract implementation**

- 3.1 The next phase of the Strategy is to introduce the collection of additional materials i.e. plastic bottles and cardboard. This has been discussed with the contractor who has indicated that to carry out this additional collection is a deviation from their original tendered price. Officers have had prolonged discussions with the contractor over the costs involved in this deviation and they have indicated that there would be an increased cost to implement this collection. However on the fulfilment of the strategy when food collections have been introduced the overall contract price would remain the same as it would be if based on the original tendered price.
- 3.2 The proposal that was being considered was to offer:
- Weekly collections of dry recyclables including plastic bottles and possibly flattened cardboard (grey board – cereal packets and brown board – brown cardboard boxes).
  - A fortnightly residual waste collection in a wheeled container (180 litre with a closed lid and no side waste policy).
- 3.3 This scheme was originally proposed to be introduced in a pilot area (Axminster and Seaton) in June 2007 but with the national campaign conducted through the media highlighting concerns with alternative weekly collection schemes it was agreed to 'pause' this roll out of service. The reason to introduce these changes was to increase the amount of waste recycled by up to 9%<sup>1</sup> as it is established that the introduction of a plastic bottle collection increase the amount recycled as participation increases. The other factor is that by providing a limited amount of space for residual waste will also increase the amount being recycled. If food waste were also included this figure could rise to 11% which would put East Devon on target for reaching its statutory figure, but this would be on the basis of the whole district being brought into the new scheme.

### **4. Alternate Weekly Collections – the media's viewpoint**

- 4.1 The press coverage relating to alternate week residual waste collections has been covered by a number of national papers with the Daily Mail being the most vociferous with its 'Save Weekly Refuse Collections' campaign. They had raised issues such as rodents, maggots and smells that if waste is not managed properly can cause problems. The guidance to householders on these issues is that food waste should be wrapped in paper before being placed in the bin and the bins should be cleansed on a regular basis. It is likely that the rat population could reduce, as waste stored in a wheeled bin is much less likely to be attacked than that put out for collection in a plastic sack.
- 4.2 Defra commissioned research in to the Health Impact Assessment of Alternate Week Waste Collections of Biodegradable Waste<sup>2</sup>, which has shown that the health implications of fortnightly waste collections are no greater than that of a weekly collection provided common sense steps are taken.

### **5. Government's View set out in Waste Strategy 2007**

- 5.1 The Government's strategy states waste should be minimised to the greatest extent practicable and such waste as does arise to be managed as far up the waste hierarchy as is reasonably achievable. Resources should be recovered in ways that maximise the cost-effective reduction in greenhouse gas emissions over the lifecycle.
- 5.2 The strategy covers:
- the Government's vision of the waste collection and treatment infrastructure needed;

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<sup>1</sup> From a survey by the SPARSE benchmarking group the average recycling rate increased from 26.56% to 35.33%

<sup>2</sup> Document available at [www.enviros.com/PDF/Defra%20HIA%20Alternate%20Week%20Collections.pdf](http://www.enviros.com/PDF/Defra%20HIA%20Alternate%20Week%20Collections.pdf)

- support available for local authorities in making investment decisions and following them through;
  - actions to reduce planning risk for waste facilities;
  - policy on energy from waste, including anaerobic digestion; and
  - support for business, contract design and markets for recycled materials.
- 5.3 Better collection and treatment of waste from households and other sources has the potential to increase England's stock of valuable resources and also to contribute to energy policy. And achieving both of these aims helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Government's vision is of a waste collection and treatment infrastructure where:
- increasing amounts of waste are separated by householders and other producers themselves for joint kerbside collection. This maximises its value whether as material (e.g. aluminum cans) or energy feedstock (e.g. food waste);
  - greater value is derived from unwanted products that can be reused;
  - valuable materials find ready markets as recyclate;
  - other wastes have electricity and heat recovered where appropriate;
  - better joining up between municipal and private sectors enables provision of local as well as regional facilities, with plant treating both merchant and municipal wastes wherever practicable;
  - properly managed landfill (with capture and use of methane gas emitted) is available to take those wastes from which no useful value can be extracted economically from further treatment.
- 5.4 Delivery of this vision will be facilitated locally by early and open consultation between stakeholders as part of development of waste strategies; access to expert, impartial advice from the new Waste Infrastructure Delivery Programme; and financial mechanisms which provide the appropriate incentives to all participants in the waste market. It will also require clear-sighted decision making from all those involved, including regional and local planners. The landfill tax escalator will strengthen the incentives to private businesses and municipal waste collectors to manage their wastes further up the hierarchy and enable synergies with changes in municipal waste management which are mandated by the Landfill Directive to be achieved.

### **Collection and food waste**

- 5.5 Properly planned and coordinated collection of wastes holds the key to unlocking their latent value, whether as material or energy feedstock. Local authorities' and other stakeholders' decisions on choices about the collection systems they use will be crucial to:
- which materials they can recycle;
  - the quality of the material they can send for reprocessing;
  - the revenue they obtain from such material;
  - whether they can use composting and/or anaerobic digestion processes; and
  - the value of Mechanical and Biological Treatment plant (MBT) and thermal treatment technologies in dealing with residual waste.
- 5.6 Increasing amounts of waste of all the main kinds need to be separated at the point of collection in order to increase its value. There has already been a considerable expansion of kerbside recycling collection schemes. But for any given locality decisions on the best ways to collect waste are a matter for local authorities, with the Government's role being to set clear outcomes and provide a strong evidence base, but give local authorities as wide a range of tools as practicable to do the job effectively.
- 5.7 There has been some public concern about the impacts of alternate weekly collection systems, in which recycling and residual waste are typically collected on alternate weeks. In practice nearly all the concern about such systems has revolved around collection of food waste, mainly centered on arguments that collecting food waste fortnightly risks damaging both health and amenity (e.g. through aggravating smells in summer).
- 5.8 The Government does not believe it is right to prescribe from the centre how collection is done in different parts of the country. That is a matter for local authorities. The evidence does

not suggest alternate weekly collection is the only way to boost recycling but equally experiences from authorities in both the UK and abroad suggests that such schemes can work well, and can contribute to significantly higher recycling rates, provided they are well designed and implemented.

- 5.9 Recent research by Defra has found no evidence of increased health risks with such schemes. In introducing and sustaining such schemes there needs to be good consultation. There are strong arguments for encouraging more separate collection of food waste, especially since it can help achieve environmental gains more cost-effectively; including the production of energy through the use of anaerobic digestion. Separate collection of food waste has so far been introduced by a small number of authorities, all on a weekly basis and WRAP research suggests this can lead to higher tonnage and participation rates. The Government welcomes the fact that many local authorities are promoting home composting of organic waste.
- 5.10 To provide further guidance to local authorities, WRAP is supporting a number of trials of food waste collection arrangements (up to 20) in local areas (one of these being West Devon) in the period to spring 2008, in order to establish good practice options and to identify barriers to further roll-out. These trials will:
- Investigate good practice models for food waste collection and processing for a range of typical local authority circumstances;
  - Establish cost benchmarks for each model;
  - Identify barriers to wider roll out of food waste collection; and
  - Identify any continuing role for WRAP or other intermediaries in a successful roll out.
- It is felt that any further roll out of the scheme to the remainder of the District could benefit from discussions with West Devon in what they feel is good practice as well as what has been learnt from the pilot.

### The way forward

- 5.11 The consensus of opinion within the waste sector in local authorities is that in order to keep the householders changing their collection regime; this is best achieved by providing a weekly dry recycling collection and a weekly food waste collection with the remaining waste being collected every other week. The dry recycling collection needs to include plastic bottles and cardboard so as to reduce the volume of residual waste collected every other week, as well as the material being easily recycled and saving considerable energy in producing new items.

### The Importance of Refuse Collection Frequency<sup>3</sup>

The analysis of financial costs has assumed, in all cases, that the frequency of refuse collection is reduced relative to the baseline. This is clearly important in the analysis of financial costs. On a per household basis, the costs of refuse collection are not halved when the frequency is halved, but on a per household basis, refuse collection costs might be expected to fall to between 65%-75% of the level of costs at the higher (weekly) frequency.

This approach to optimising costs is important in the context of the operation of the overall system. The effect on costs is not simply limited to the change in refuse *collection* costs.

The approach has been shown to increase the capture of biowaste *and* dry recyclables, thereby reducing the quantity of material (and costs of) disposal, though increasing the costs (in per household terms) of collecting and treating biowaste and dry recyclables.

The system effects are important. Effectively, in the absence of charging systems (which can be used to influence collection frequency), changing the frequency of refuse collection increases capture rates of targeted recyclables and reduces the costs of the refuse collection and disposal system. Partly for these reasons, the measure is gaining in popularity as local authorities face up to the task of improving performance under cost constraints.

Key to public acceptance though is engagement with the residents prior to roll-out of reduced rate residual waste collection; consultations on the proposed approach which must ensure food waste is regularly removed, and include monitoring to check performance.

Key to public acceptance, though, are the following factors:

- a) Comprehensive coverage of recyclables, including those materials which occupy large volumes (cardboard and plastic bottles);
- b) An average weekly container volume for separately collected materials which is adequate to allow consumers to maximise their recycling;
- c) Frequent removal of putrescible items, such as food;
- d) Engagement with the residents prior to roll-out; and
- e) Support, especially during the roll-out period, for households experiencing difficulties

Systems that work well have tended to respond positively to householder feedback

5.12 In order to implement this type of scheme within East Devon the contractor must have the resources in place to service the households and the processing capacity must be available from Devon County Council in their in-vessel composting facilities either at Broadpath near Tiverton or at Heathfield near Chudleigh Knighton. The existing processing capacity at the two sites is at present limited and would not be sufficient to cope with the remaining properties in the district. There is some capacity outside the county and this is also being investigated.

## **6. A kitchen waste collection scheme for the Pilot Area**

6.1 Should members wish to introduce a kitchen waste collection scheme in the proposed pilot area to cover some 10 – 12,000 households in the east of the district, the recommendation would be to establish a scheme as detailed below.

6.2 The collections would be as follows:

### **Weekly**

Collection of dry recyclables (paper, cans, glass, textiles, batteries and to include plastic bottles and possibly cardboard)

Collection of kitchen waste

### **Alternate weekly**

Residual waste

6.3 Each householder would receive:

- An initial explanatory leaflet delivered 4 -6 weeks before the wheeled bin etc is delivered.
- A wheeled bin (households with 5 or more could receive a larger bin on request and for smaller occupancy a smaller bin could be offered)
- A kerbside food waste container
- A kitchen caddy
- A initial supply of liner bags which are compostable and used to line the kitchen caddy
- A calendar giving the collection dates and information on the new scheme

6.4 In proposing only 10 bio-bags this proposal has been put forward following discussions with other areas who feel that however many bags you provide either initially or on an on-going basis it will not be enough for householders. Therefore the intention would be to distribute with the caddies only 10 sacks but at the same time set up a retailer network working in partnership with a supplier to sell sacks to householders. However information would go to householders that they can use their caddies by either washing them out when they have emptied it into the kerbside bin or line it with newspaper. Discussions have taken place with a supplier who would with some financial support from EDDC provide a short term of buy one get one free offer, the supplier would also provide the retailer with other size liners, additional caddies and compost bins for householders to purchase.

## **7. A possible implementation plan**

7.1 The contractor would have to carry out a major re-routing exercise for the district to ensure resources are provided and are used efficiently. This would take approximately six weeks to undertake and then would need to be thoroughly checked by officers. There would be a need to ensure a good communications programme is put in place so those householders are well informed and understand the proposed system. The possible programme would include:

- Some work has taken place already in the proposed pilot area to establish which properties may not be able to accept a wheeled bin – they would be offered the alternative of a 'gull' sack. A decision on the collection frequencies as to whether either weekly or fortnightly needs to be taken in light of these households having limited storage opportunities within their premises.

- Some work has also taken place at flats where again a small wheeled bin would be inappropriate. The likely proposal is that they would receive an 1100 litre wheeled bin.
- Training and information for the Customer Call Service operatives so they are able to answer calls from householders
- Information would be distributed to all staff outlining the new service and programme for implementation.
- A leaflet would be delivered to all households 4-6 weeks prior to the delivery of their wheeled bin explaining the new system and giving details of contacts etc.
- A series of information talks to Members, Town and Parish Councils
- Road shows in the implementation area
- The delivery of the wheeled bin, food waste container and kitchen caddy with a calendar detailing the dates of collections. This would probably take place 3 – 5 weeks before collections commence.

7.2 Should members wish to introduce this process, a commencement date of mid October – early November is felt to be achievable and would ensure that the preparation is undertaken to give householders a clear understanding of the new waste collection process.

## **8. On going implementation in East Devon**

8.1 Whilst at present the introduction of a weekly dry recycling collections should pose no particular issues in terms of delivery it is likely that there will be a considerable cost increase (see costs in Part 2 report) from the contractor as stated previously this is a change in contract terms. The introduction of a food waste collection to the remainder of the district may prove more problematical as there is unlikely to be capacity at either of the two plants in Devon but the County Council are at present considering other interim alternatives, but discussions are taking place with the County Council regarding the future capacity for processing food waste.

### **Legal Implications**

No legal observations.

### **Financial Implications**

The implications of the recycling and refuse scheme will have a significant impact on the finances of the Council.

### **Consultation on Reports to the Executive**

None

### **Background Papers**

- East Devon's Waste Strategy
- Government's Waste Strategy 2007

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Executive Board  
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### **Exclusion of the Public**

**The Vice-Chairman of the Committee to move the following:-**

**“that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description(s) set out on the agenda is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing this item in private session (Part B).”**