

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet – 27th July 2010

PROPOSED WASTE AND RECYCLING

COLLECTION SYSTEMS

Report of the Cabinet Member Sustainability

1. Executive Summary and Recommendation

1.1 The issue.

1.1.1 This report presents a set of affordable proposals to further reduce the amount of household waste which is sent to landfill. The proposals are in line with the strategic objectives and action plan of the Gloucestershire Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy which was approved by cabinet in October 2007.

1.1.2 If approved the proposals will increase recycling and composting performance to over 40% and enable the council to meet its strategic and business plan targets. The proposals can also be delivered within existing budgets and represent value for money for the people of Cheltenham as well as providing equality of opportunity and improved access to services. The changes will also deliver carbon reduction and other environmental benefits.

1.2 I therefore recommend that:

1.2.1 Cabinet note the recent improvements to kerbside recycling services and the aim to provide every household in Cheltenham with the opportunity to recycle at kerbside glass, paper, card, plastic bottles and cans by 2012.

1.2.2 Cabinet approve the weekly collection of segregated kitchen food waste and the alternate weekly collection of residual waste and recycling with effect from April 2011.

1.2.3 Cabinet delegates authority to the Assistant Director Operations in consultation with the Cabinet Member Sustainability to complete the supply agreement with Gloucestershire County Council on terms and conditions approved by the Borough Solicitor.

1.2.4 Cabinet approve a new fortnightly garden waste collection scheme with access expanded to all households in the Borough (subject to site specific health and safety considerations). The new scheme will start in February 2011 and households who wish to participate in the fortnightly garden waste collection scheme will be provided with a special wheeled bin at a cost of £3-00 per month.

- 1.2.5 A budget of £20,000 per annum be set aside to promote home composting and to provide subsidised home compost bins to those who do not want to participate in the garden waste collection scheme. The recycling centre at Swindon Road will also continue to receive garden waste free of charge.**
- 1.2.6 Cabinet approve the policy of closed lids and no side waste with effect from 1st September 2010.**
- 1.2.7 Cabinet approve the policy of charging for the supply of additional or replacement waste and recycling containers with the level of charge being set as part of the annual review of fees and charges contained within the budget consultation process.**

1.3 Summary of implications

1.3.1 Financial

The cost of Waste and Recycling services has increased by approximately £1 million over the last ten years to £2.36 million per annum. These proposals would reduce the overall cost of these services to £1.56 million per annum. The detailed financial implications are as outlined in the report. The impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the replacement of the DEFRA funded vehicles of £70,000 would now occur in the financial year 2011/12.

To financially and administratively control the proposed level of customers (i.e. potentially in excess of 20,000 households) either a new or extended payment / operational system would be required.

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1.3.2 Legal

The proposed arrangement with Gloucestershire CC in respect of food waste will require the input of One Legal.

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1.3.3 HR

No direct HR implications arising from this report. It is not envisaged that the changes proposed will result in a reduction of the current workforce.

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1.4 Implications on corporate and community plan priorities

1.4.1 Promoting sustainable living is a community aim and a corporate priority. Enhancing and protecting our environment (Objective 1 in the council's Corporate Strategy 2010 – 2015) identifies a clean and well maintained environment as a priority outcome with a specific action to improve opportunities for recycling and composting.

1.5 Statement on Risk

1.5.1 Corporate Risk Register reference CR10, risk score 9 - If the council is unable to approve long term solutions for its waste and recycling services then cost will continue to increase and the council will fail to meet its strategic environmental targets.

1.5.2 A risk assessment is attached as Appendix A.

2. Introduction

2.1 The Gloucestershire Waste Partnership Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) was approved by Cabinet on 30th October 2007. The Strategy has also been approved by the County Council and the other five district councils in Gloucestershire.

2.2 The JMWMS includes a joint strategic statement by the Gloucestershire Local Government Association, signed by the leaders of all seven local authorities, with a vision that "all households in Gloucestershire will have convenient and easy to use collection services, enabling them to recycle and compost at least 70% of their rubbish by April 2010". The Strategy also contains a high level collection system action plan which aims to:

- Increase the range of dry recyclables collected from the home.
- Introduce the kerbside collection of kitchen (food) waste.
- Introduce alternate weekly collection of residual waste once sufficient recycling and composting infrastructure is provided. Residual waste is the waste that is not recycled or composted but is currently disposed of at landfill.
- Consider enforcement policies such as a no side waste ban and compulsory recycling measures.

2.3 The JMWMS sets targets for Gloucestershire to recycle and compost 40% of waste by 2009/10, rising to 50% by 2014/15. This council's corporate strategy 2010 to 2015 states that over the next 5 years we will decrease the amount of waste that goes to landfill and increase recycling and composting of household waste. A key milestone in achieving this is to recycle and compost at least 40% of household waste in 2011.

2.4 Recycling and composting performance increased steadily from 2001 to 2006, although unfortunately this improvement tailed off between 2006 to 2008. Kerbside recycling for paper, glass bottles, tins and cans was introduced in 2002/03, and kerbside collection of garden waste in 2005/06. Recent improvements include the kerbside collection of cardboard and the phased introduction of the kerbside

collection of plastic bottles during 2010.

- 2.5** These service improvements will meet customer demand and increase satisfaction with recycling services but will not in themselves enable the council to meet its strategic or corporate targets. Further service improvements are needed to divert biodegradable waste from landfill and reduce the cost of collection and disposal to the householder.

3. Background

- 3.1** The purpose of this report is to outline affordable proposals to increase recycling and composting. The key drivers behind these proposals are reducing pollution, reducing carbon emissions and controlling the escalating costs of waste collection and disposal.
- 3.2** Anaerobic decomposition of biodegradable waste, as occurs in landfill, produces methane which is significantly more harmful to the environment than CO₂. Diverting biodegradable waste from landfill is therefore a key objective of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) and the council's climate change strategy.
- 3.3** The push to increase recycling and composting has required significant investment in additional collection resources. Previously, one vehicle visited each street on a weekly basis to collect our dustbins. With the introduction of separate fortnightly kerbside collections of dry recyclables (paper, card, cans, plastic bottles and glass) and fortnightly garden waste collections these visits have doubled. Fuel consumption and carbon emissions have increased proportionately and, with the rising cost of fuel, the annual cost of providing the service has also increased. Between 2000 and 2010 the net cost of waste and recycling collection has increased from £1.37 million to £2.36 million, an increase of almost £1 million, or 178%. Given the current squeeze on public sector finance and the need to protect other essential services this level of funding is no longer financially sustainable.
- 3.4** The cost of landfill increases year on year due to the landfill tax escalator and the county council face further punitive financial measures if they fail to meet landfill diversion targets. Failure to divert waste from landfill will therefore have a significant negative impact on the council tax payer and as a collection authority we can play a significant role in reducing, recycling and composting waste thereby reducing the volume and cost of waste entering landfill. To put this in context, landfill tax is currently set at £48 per tonne but will increase annually up to £72 per tonne. Diversion from landfill of a further 5,000 tonnes of waste at the current level will avoid landfill tax payments of £240,000 (£360,000 at the higher rate).
- 3.5** It is therefore essential that ways are found to increase the diversion of waste from landfill that are environmentally and financially sustainable. In 2008 this cabinet approved a package of service changes which would have delivered environmental benefits and reduced landfill costs. The proposals were, however, opposed by some councillors and did not receive majority support at full council. Since then over 6500 tonnes of biodegradable food waste has needlessly been landfilled at a cost to the council tax payer of over £500,000.
- 3.6** Officers have now revised the proposed service changes to take into consideration technical and infrastructure developments and a new set of proposals are detailed in

the remainder of this report. In making these proposals I anticipate that there may be future changes to details in response to consultation with members, but not such as to jeopardise implementation or key milestone dates for purchase of equipment.

4. Dry Recycling

- 4.1** The current green box scheme allows householders to recycle paper, cards, cans and glass bottles and jars. In April of this year we launched a new collection system to include plastic bottles. This was initially provided to 10,000 households, with another 10,000 households added in July. The aim is to have a total of 40,000 households recycling all 5 materials by the end of this year and for all households to have kerbside collections of all 5 materials by 2012.
- 4.2** The system of communal collection facilities for flats has been improved and I have asked officers to ensure that all locations have the necessary facilities to collect all 5 materials by 2012.
- 4.3** The provision of neighbourhood bring sites will continue and run in conjunction with our kerbside collection schemes but will be continuously monitored and reviewed to take account of trends in demand and use.

5. Maintaining Weekly Collections of Kitchen (Food) Waste

- 5.1** It is estimated that at least 20% of household waste is kitchen food waste that can be collected separately and composted and it would therefore be sensible to target this particular waste stream to improve performance. Diverting biodegradable food waste from landfill will also assist Gloucestershire County Council in meeting their landfill reduction targets and reduce methane emissions.
- 5.2** In order to collect and compost this waste stream it is necessary to use a highly controlled composting process, which is designed to eliminate the potential for disease transmission. Officers have worked closely with their colleagues at the County Council who have procured processing capacity for the anticipated volume of waste. They have also indicated that they will assist in securing the provision of local transfer facilities to enable the efficient collection of kitchen waste.
- 5.3** Should approval be given to proceed with the collection of kitchen waste, it will be necessary to enter into a legal supply agreement with Gloucestershire County Council which will clearly specify the responsibilities of both parties. The agreement will also include details of an incentive payment to be paid to this council in return for diverting even more waste from landfill.
- 5.4** Given the nature of this waste it is essential that it is collected frequently and it is proposed that this should be done weekly. Providing a service to every household in the borough will, given a 55% participation rate which is comparable to that of new recycling schemes, deliver the potential to compost 5,700 tonnes of food waste per annum, or 10% of total household waste arising. However, the cost of introducing a separate weekly collection scheme for kitchen food waste is estimated at £533,000

per annum (full year costs). In the current financial climate this cannot be considered a feasible option and consideration must instead be given to a co-collection option, as described in Section 6 below.

- 5.5** To store kitchen waste, every household will be provided with a 5 litre kitchen caddy free of charge. This will enable temporary storage in kitchens until such time as it can be collected or transferred to a larger bin for outside storage. The larger bin will have a capacity of 22 litres and will also be provided free of charge.
- 5.6** It is also proposed to encourage householders to use paper bin liners or newspaper to keep their caddies as clean as possible. The use of corn starch bags is acceptable but many outlets are selling biodegradable plastic bags which are not readily composted. These are often confused with corn starch bags and if used they can cause contamination and processing difficulties.

6. Alternate Weekly Collections

- 6.1** The JMWMS contains a high level collection system action plan which aims to, amongst other things, introduce alternate weekly collection of residual waste once sufficient recycling and composting infrastructure is provided. With the addition of card and plastic bottles to the dry recycling scheme and the introduction of a segregated kitchen food waste collection on a weekly basis, the volume of residual waste will be significantly reduced.
- 6.2** Many other councils are now successfully operating an alternate weekly collection system. Experience has shown that once the system is bedded in there is an increase in the amount of dry recyclables collected (up to +45%) and a corresponding decrease in waste sent to landfill (- 25%) (source – Waste and Recycling Action Programme). This method of operation will also significantly reduce carbon emissions through reduced vehicle movements, miles travelled and fuel consumed. It is estimated that a reduction of 167 tonnes of carbon per annum is possible if these proposals are accepted.
- 6.3** It is therefore proposed that an alternate weekly collection scheme operates in conjunction with the weekly collection of kitchen food waste. This means that in week one the householder will have kitchen food waste and dry recycling materials collected and in week two they will have kitchen food waste and residual waste collected. The collections will alternate throughout the year.
- 6.4** Whilst alternate weekly collections are suitable for many households the system is not practical for some types of dwelling. The key factor to consider is the space available to store waste containers at either the front or the back of the property. It is not this council's policy, nor that of the highway authority, to permit waste receptacles to be stored on the highway (footpaths) other than on collection day. Apart from the obvious public health and safety hazard that this creates and the obstruction of the right of way of pedestrians, prams and wheelchair users, the street scene is severely compromised.
- 6.5** It is therefore proposed that some streets continue to receive a weekly collection and that some streets in the town centre area receive a twice weekly collection in respect of all materials (kitchen food waste, residual and recycling).

7. Garden Waste

- 7.1** The current garden waste scheme is provided to 42,000 households and diverts 6150 tonnes of biodegradable waste per annum from landfill (12.1% of total household waste arising). Collections are made on alternate weeks using long life polypropylene bags. It is fully subsidised by the revenue budget in that it is free at the point of collection by those receiving the service.
- 7.2** Whilst it is popular the scheme in many ways is counter productive. A fully subsidised service discourages home composting and this is the antithesis of the national waste hierarchy which promotes home composting first and foremost.
- 7.3** To promote waste reduction, reduce environmental impact and increase choice, I therefore propose to continue to promote home composting. A sale of subsidised compost bins in April of this year proved to be very popular and I therefore propose to set aside a budget of £20,000 in 2011/12 to repeat the exercise. The subsidy for home composting recognises the importance of waste reduction in the waste hierarchy and the contribution that home composting can make in reducing methane and CO₂ emissions.
- 7.4** The current scheme is also counter productive in terms of equality of opportunity. There are a significant number of households not included in the scheme who might benefit from it. These householders complain regularly that they do not receive a service their close neighbours benefit from even though they pay the same level of council tax. Furthermore, because the service is fully subsidised it effectively means that those householders who do not receive the service, including those who live in flats, are contributing through their council tax payment to the cost of a service they do not receive.
- 7.5** The biggest issue however is that of manual handling. The use of bags, which are often very heavy, is labour intensive and presents health and safety manual handling risks to both customers and collection operatives. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) currently has a focus on improving safety within the waste collection and recycling industry. The most common accidents in the waste industry arise from manual handling and the HSE recommend that manual handling should be minimised wherever possible by the use of wheeled bins. An internal health and safety assessment is attached to this report as Appendix B.
- 7.6** It is therefore necessary for the manual handling risks associated with garden waste collections to be significantly reduced through the use of wheeled bins. To provide wheeled bins to every existing user under the current arrangements is unaffordable. At £18-00 a bin the total cost to the council would be £756,000 and given the pressure on public sector spending this option has to be discounted.
- 7.7** The most equitable, cost effective option to address the above issues is to introduce a charge for the provision of the removal of garden waste on a fortnightly basis. Customers who choose to subscribe to the service will benefit from the provision of a sturdy, manoeuvrable wheeled container for their garden waste and will receive a collection every other week.
- 7.8** I propose that the charge for this service be set at £3.00 per bin per month, payable yearly in advance. This compares well with charges made by neighbouring Gloucestershire Waste Partnership member authorities such as Cotswold (£30 per

annum for a weekly collection) and Tewkesbury (£32 per annum for a collection every other week). Charging at the point of collection means that only those householders requiring the service pay for it.

- 7.9** Householders will of course still have the option of taking their garden waste to the Swindon Road recycling centre or to one of the county council's household recycling centres free of charge.
- 7.10** We will continue to collect Christmas trees from all households free of charge in January of each year.

8. Collection Policies

- 8.1** The JMWMS, which was approved in 2007, also commits the council to review all collection policies to drive segregation, encourage waste reduction and ensure waste collection systems do not have a negative impact on the street scene. Having supporting policies in place will be essential to the success of the changes proposed in this report. Key policy issues include limiting the amount of waste per household that can be reasonably expected to be collected and replacement of waste containers.
- 8.2** Households with a low number of occupants may prefer a smaller wheeled bin for residual waste. Elderly residents may also prefer a smaller wheeled bin as it is easier to move, although the current assisted collection scheme for elderly or infirm householders will continue. Where the preference is for smaller bins I propose that the council provide a 140 litre bin in place of the regular 190 litre bin.
- 8.3** Where it can be demonstrated that there is a large household in residence or where properties are in multiple occupancy consideration will be given to the supply of a larger 360 litre wheeled bin, with each request judged on its merits.
- 8.4** I also propose to introduce a policy of no side waste and a closed lid on every wheeled bin with effect from 1st September 2010. This means that on the day of collection, bins may only be loaded to the level at where the lid can be firmly closed. No bags or other receptacles will be picked up if left beside the wheeled bin. This will increase diversion of waste and encourage the use of recycling schemes. More importantly, it reduces health and safety risks, vermin problems and the likelihood that spills and littering will occur. This policy will only apply to areas where wheeled bin collection is in place. In other areas, such as terraced housing and flats, similar limitations will be introduced.
- 8.5** I also recognise that it will take time for householders to adjust to the new service and the aim is to persuade as many people as possible to participate by providing the necessary information and support. To that end enforcement will be strictly low key with the emphasis on advising householders on how best to adapt to the new collection systems. Formal enforcement action will only be taken as a very last resort.
- 8.6** The council will in the first instance provide every household with the appropriate wheeled bins, boxes and caddies free of charge. Replacements will be responsibility of the householder but the council will continue to replace life expired bins free of charge on a like for like basis. The council will provide replacements at cost plus a

small administrative / delivery fee. The level of charge will be determined as part of the 2011/12 budget setting process.

The purchased replacement can be ordered on line and delivered within 5 working days or can be pre ordered and collected direct from the council's depot at Swindon Road.

- 8.7** The introduction of service and policy changes will have a significant impact on householders. Explaining the changes and the need for change will require considerable investment in time, effort and materials. I am therefore proposing that a comprehensive customer service and communications campaign be delivered throughout 2010/11 and 2011/12 to promote the change and the reasons for change. It is anticipated that this would be match funded with the County Council at the level of 50%.

9. Shared Services

- 9.1** The proposed changes are in accordance with the Gloucestershire JMWMS and facilitate joint working on a county wide basis.
- 9.2** The proposed system also closely mirrors the system used by Tewkesbury Borough Council, the only difference being that we will continue to segregate dry recyclables at kerbside (as per the JMWMS) whilst Tewkesbury Borough Council collect co-mingled dry recyclables which are later separated at a sorting facility. Apart from this difference the systems are alike and the potential for joint working between the two authorities remains.

Appendices

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| 1 | Risk Assessment |
| 2 | Health and Safety Advisory Note |
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| 4 | |
| 5 | |

Background Papers	Gloucestershire Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy – Cabinet Report 30 th October 2007
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Accountability	Councillor Roger Whyborn Cabinet Member Sustainability
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Scrutiny Function	Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
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