

Information/Discussion Paper

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 November 2011

Implementation of the new Waste and Recycling Scheme – review and lessons learned

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 Committee requested a review of the implementation and performance of the new kerbside Waste and Recycling Scheme which was introduced in April 2011.

2. Background

- 2.1 The 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. This was increased to 46% in the 2011/12 corporate strategy action plan and is a challenging target.
- 2.2 To achieve this target Cheltenham Borough Council launched a new kerbside waste and recycling scheme which introduced weekly food waste collections to the whole of the borough in April 2011.
- 2.3 At the same time refuse collections were changed to alternate weekly collections for the vast majority of households in the borough. These households therefore receive a collection of refuse and food waste one week, and recycling and food waste the next.
- 2.4 The cabinet report of 27 July 2010 recognised that whilst alternate weekly collections are suitable for many households the system is not practical for some types of dwelling.
- 2.5 A very small number of streets still receive a weekly collection of refuse and in the town centre some streets receive a collection twice a week.
- 2.6 This reflects the type of property located in these areas, the key factor being that there is little or no space available to store waste containers at either the front or the back of the property.

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2.7 A policy of no side waste and a closed lid on every wheeled bin came into effect from 1st September 2010. Enforcement of these policies has been low key to date in recognition of the time needed for residents to adjust to using the new scheme.

3. Performance Review

3.1 Overall, the new scheme has been received very well by the residents of Cheltenham, with the food waste collections proving successful from the outset.

3.2 In April 2011, 250 tonnes of food waste was diverted from landfill to be composted and this figure has increased in the first 6 months of the scheme to an average of 280 tonnes per month.

3.3 Recycling at the kerbside has also increased very significantly, with growth in tonnage across all materials collected. Kerbside arisings are now an average of 80 tonnes higher per month than in the first 6 months of 2010/11.

3.4 The most improved material collected at the kerbside is plastic bottles. In quarter one of this year, 88 tonnes of plastic bottles were collected for recycling in Cheltenham, compared to just 55 tonnes the previous year. 69% of this tonnage is now collected from the kerbside.

3.5 The scheme also saw instant success in reducing the borough's household waste to landfill. Refuse arisings dropped significantly from day one of the new scheme, and the tonnage to landfill in quarter one of 2011 was down from 52kg to 37kg per household per month. If this rate continues to be achieved just under 23,000 tonnes of household waste will be landfilled in 2011/12 compared to just over 31,000 tonnes landfilled in 2010/11.

3.6 The uptake of the food waste recycling scheme, improvement in recycling tonnages and reduction in waste to landfill has boosted Cheltenham's recycling and composting figures from 35% in the first quarter of 2010 to 50% in the same period this year.

4. Lessons learned

4.1 The increase in recycling arisings at the kerbside has resulted in an unprecented demand for kerbside recycling boxes. Between March 2011, when publicity for the scheme began in earnest, and the end of August 2011, over 7500 recycling boxes were requested.

4.2 This demand resulted in the council's stock of boxes running out shortly after the scheme commenced. More boxes were ordered and the backlog of box requests was cleared as quickly as possible once these arrived.

4.3 Demand remained high and the new stocks were soon also depleted. Box requests are currently being held and will be fulfilled as soon as more stocks are received.

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- 4.4** This has resulted in additional and unforeseen costs being incurred, not only in purchasing additional boxes, but in hiring in resources to deliver the boxes to fulfil demand. The funding for this has been met through additional recycling income.
- 4.5** The demand for recycling facilities in flats and houses of multiple occupation also exceeded expectations, with many residents also complaining about insufficient refuse bin allocation once the alternate weekly refuse collections commenced.
- 4.6** 240 litre communal food waste bins had been delivered to all such properties prior to the commencement of the scheme however the provision of refuse and recycling bins had not been specifically reviewed before the new scheme started.
- 4.7** 278 site visits were undertaken in response to these complaints. For the vast majority of sites it was a lack of recycling facilities or misunderstanding of the new scheme which were the root cause of the issue and successful participation in the scheme was achieved once these problems were resolved and additional recycling facilities were installed. Enquiries of this nature have since returned to their normal level.
- 4.8** Some problems arose which were specific to individual allocations. These included issues such as bin storage problems, a failure of the local residents to participate in the scheme or irresponsible and inconsiderate behaviour in relation to the management of wastes. Officers have worked with housing associations, ward councillors and community groups to tackle these issues at a very local level, and will continue to do so as such problems arise.
- 4.9** Side waste continues to be problematic in certain areas of the borough and this needs to be addressed in the near future to ensure the continued success of the scheme and to allow further improvements in the recycling rates achieved.
- 4.10** The first step to addressing this issue with residents will be to encourage correct participation in the scheme through education and support with formal enforcement action being taken only as a last resort.
- 4.11** A paper on the new garden waste scheme will be provided under separate cover.

Background Papers	2010-2015 Corporate Strategy Cabinet Report 27 July 2010 'Proposed Waste and Recycling Collection Systems'
Contact Officer	Beth Boughton, Waste and Recycling Manager, 01242 774644 beth.boughton@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Councillor Roger Whyborn
Scrutiny Function	Environment

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