

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

Extending Cardboard Recycling Collections and Changes to Winter Refuse Collection Arrangements

Summary

1. This report has been produced following the request by Members at the Executive meeting on 24 October 2006 to consider how cardboard recycling services can be delivered to the remaining 40,000 residents who are able to use this service if provided at the earliest opportunity due to its positive impact on recycling participation and waste diversion. The report also recommends changes to the current domestic refuse collection arrangements for the period between 1 December 2006 and 31 March 2007, which will maintain waste diversion levels from landfill.

Background

2. In the Spring of 2005, City of York Council made a decision to make changes to the way it carried out its refuse and recycling collections. These changes were made to assist the authority in meeting its statutory recycling targets and to lay the foundations for ensuring future compliance with the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS).
3. Members agreed that the best approach was for grey bin refuse collections (residual waste collections that are taken to landfill) to alternate with kerbside recycling collections to households that have gardens. To ensure that residents had capacity in their wheeled bin to last two weeks, an additional garden waste collection service was introduced. Only properties receiving the full range of kerbside collections received the additional garden waste collection and thus the alternate week collections. This equated to a little over 60,000 properties. The remaining 22,500 properties in York remained on weekly residual collections due to their nature (flats or communal areas, assisted collections or medical needs) or because they were receiving a lower level of kerbside collections or none at all (mostly terraced areas). These changes took place on 3rd October 2005.
4. Whilst the new service had expanded recycling opportunities, residents contacting the authority directly, or via their elected member, commented that plastic bottles and cardboard were an issue as these took up most of the space in their wheeled bin. With LPSA 2 funding a decision was then taken to

add plastic bottles and a phased implementation of cardboard when the garden waste collections resumed in March 2006. Based on an expected increase in participation of 5%, five new Terberg Kerbside vehicles were purchased ready for March 2006 to replace the previously used 'Fame' vehicles.

5. It was clear from the first day of adding plastic collections to 60,000 properties and cardboard to 10,000 properties that residents were fully supportive and were participating in great numbers which was far in excess of the estimated 5% increase.
6. Since kerbside recycling collections were introduced, the collection teams have counted the number of properties presenting materials for collection each day. This gives us the 'set out rate' rather than a participation rate. Many more residents will participate in the scheme, as has been measured separately, but will only put their materials out when necessary. The set out rate is, therefore, a more accurate indication of the amount of materials we can expect to collect.
7. From the start of kerbside collections in May 2002, until plastic and cardboard was introduced in March 2006, the set out rate averaged at 52% across all collection areas (with individual areas ranging between 78% and 22%). There was an increase in the set out rate average, to 56%, in October 2005 when the garden waste collections were introduced, as many residents had to recycle to maximise the capacity of their wheeled bin. However, the average dropped back to 52% during the winter period when garden waste collections were suspended. ***When plastic and cardboard was added in March and July 2006 the set out rate rose to an average of 69% - an increase of 32.6%.***
8. As well as the set out rate, the other important measure of our service is the amount of material collected by the kerbside vehicles. Each time it visits the Material Recycling Facility (MRF), a round collects a weight ticket giving an accurate record of its weight. This information is recorded by the supervisors and information goes back to the start of the kerbside service in 2002 (for the purposes of our information we count the whole of the weight though we frequently weigh individual fractions for the purpose of reporting back to DEFRA).
9. Up until the introduction of the garden waste collections, the kerbside collections averaged 141 tonnes of material per week (paper, cans and glass). This average rose to 150 tonnes following the introduction of garden waste collections but dipped slightly during the suspended period. Since the introduction of plastic and cardboard collections, ***the weekly average has risen to 200 tonnes – a rise of 33% on average*** with the largest rises being from the cardboard areas and equates to a saving on landfill charges of c£100,000 per year. This is consistent with the rise in the set out rate and gives us an indication of the likely impact on the service as cardboard is offered to more properties.

10. Weights for garden waste vary with the seasons. In the autumn of 2005, between 100 and 200 tonnes per week was the average. In the spring and early summer of 2006, weights between 450 and 550 tonnes were collected though this dropped through July, due to the prolonged dry spell. Current weights are back to the same levels as autumn 2005.
11. ***The above information leads us to conclude that for every additional 5,000 properties that receive cardboard collections it is likely to generate approximately another 700 properties participating regularly (setting out).*** Therefore, the roll-out of the remaining 40,000 properties to receive cardboard recycling could generate another 5,600 properties participating and taking the average set out rate across the service to 80%.

Expanding Cardboard Recycling

12. Officers consider that it would be possible to introduce cardboard collections to the remaining 40,000 properties after the Christmas and New Year Holidays if three additional vehicles were hired and six staff employed. This would be an appropriate time to expand the service as it would reduce the impact of the proposed winter changes to refuse and recycling for the 60,000 homes receiving alternate week collections detailed below whilst also increasing participation.
13. Therefore it is proposed that cardboard collections are introduced in stages as from Monday 15 January 2007. Officers consider that 5,000 properties each week could be introduced to the new service. This would result in the service being offered to all of the remaining 40,000 properties by Monday 5 March 2006.
14. The costs of introducing this service between January and March 2007 would be £2k per week per vehicle including labour costs. Therefore the cost of providing this service during this financial year would be £66k. As there is no existing budget provision for this service and it would represent a one off expense the additional costs would need to be met from the Council's reserves. The Council's reserves have just increased by over £500k due to a one-off extra dividend from Yorwaste. Reinvestment within the waste management service seems an appropriate use for this dividend.
15. In the medium term it would be necessary to procure vehicles, as this would be more cost effective therefore a growth bid of £324k has already been submitted for consideration in the 2007/8 budget process. This bid would be reduced if part of the Council's Waste Performance and Efficiency Grant were utilised. The grant is expected to be £406k, which is split 50% capital and 50% revenue. Work needs to be undertaken to confirm whether these allocations could be used to offset the growth requirement for 2007/08.
16. Officers are currently developing a LATS strategy so that the Council's landfill diversion targets can be managed to minimise financial impact. Whilst this proposal has been developed before this work and the current budget process for 2007/08 has been completed Members could decide to agree for

cardboard recycling to be extended, as there are clear advantages of rolling-out this service to the 40,000 properties that could receive it.

Winter Arrangements

17. When the alternate week collections are in operation, each crew works on the same round each week, simply alternating between grey and green bin collections. There are ten rounds operating the alternate week service, with five collecting green and five collecting grey each day. This is designed to fit in with the kerbside recycling rounds and ensure that residents have the same collection day each week regardless of the type of collection.
18. Evidence gathered during the winter suspension last year showed that the weekly weight of kerbside material collected dropped by 18% whilst residual waste to landfill rose by 11%. Kerbside weights increased again following the re-launch of the alternate collections in March 2006. This drop in kerbside materials had a detrimental effect on our annual recycling rate and potential savings from landfill charges.
19. Whilst the green waste generated through the winter period is less than in the spring or summer, feedback from other authorities offering similar collections indicates that there are still significant amounts of green material (particularly woody material that can not be home composted) being presented. If the Executive decided to continue with alternate collections during the winter period it would also be possible to collect Christmas trees after the festive period. This would be beneficial as many trees are fly-tipped every year. The extension of cardboard recycling would also reduce the amount of biodegradable waste being presented whilst significantly increasing the amount of cardboard being recycled post Christmas holidays.
20. If agreed the Council would still provide a weekly domestic collection operation during the two week Christmas period so that the expected excess could be collected. The following table details collection arrangements during the Christmas period:

Number of Properties	Week Commencing 18/12/06	Week Commencing 25/12/06	Week Commencing 01/01/07	Week Commencing 08/01/07
30,000	Green Collection	Grey Collection	Grey Collection	Grey Collection
30,000	Grey Collection	Grey Collection	Grey Collection	Green Collection

21. Alternate week collections would commence week commencing 8 January 2007.

22. It would be necessary to commence discussions with the Trade Unions to ensure that staff are fully utilised on waste related activities should green waste rounds finish significantly earlier than normally experienced. The staff could assist with new bin deliveries, missed bin collections and with the extended cardboard collection service.

Communications

23. The marketing and communications team (M&C) have written the following communications strategy designed to reach the following audiences:
- All households, especially residents with special requirements such as disabled or elderly people
 - Temporary residents such as students
 - Members
 - Staff
 - Local media
 - Stakeholders and partners

Leaflets

24. There will be three separate leaflets to three distinct audiences, distributed to specific addresses as happened in spring 2006:
- One targeted leaflet to the 30,000 people in the week 1 streets for the garden waste collections including 'thank you's' for helping recycle, a calendar of the different collections, Christmas details and bank holiday arrangements
 - A second identical leaflet, but with a different calendar for the 30,000 people in the week 2 streets
 - A leaflet to the 22,500 non-garden waste areas including 'thank you's' and encouraging recycling at HWRCs, the Christmas details and the bank holiday arrangements. This leaflet will include details of the Council's commitment to provide recycling to all areas when practicable.
 - There will also be leaflets for the cardboard roll out and bags distributed door-to-door 5,000 at a time for eight weeks from the start of the New Year.
25. Other ways to disseminate the winter collection message include

- Press releases
- Website updates on the homepage
- Availability of senior staff for radio and press interviews
- Approach to local media for features
- Publicity in voluntary sector publications
- Publicity in student publications and outlets
- Your City scheduled for January 2007
- News and Jobs
- News in Depth
- CouncilNet

Communicating with disabled residents and non-English speakers

26. In line with the council policy *Making Connections: How to Make Communication Accessible and Inclusive* all the leaflets will be provided in accessible formats and in a community language on request. The M&C team will liaise with relevant advisory groups where possible given the timescales involved in this communication.
27. All the leaflets will contain the following text in at least 16-point font size: "Please contact us if you would like this information in an accessible format (for example, in large print or by email) or another language." In line with the council's policy, accessible formats will usually mean large print, audiotape or e-mail. The need for other accessible formats such as BSL video, braille and easy read will be assessed and a decision taken given all the relevant factors, such as: the urgency of the situation, how long it will take to provide the information in the format or language required, how much it would cost and the implications for the customer for providing the information verbally/face-to-face rather than in written form. This also applies to providing information in a community language, such as British Sign Language, Urdu, Turkish, Cantonese and Bengali.
28. Officers will also work with the Council's Equalities Team to ensure that all opportunities are maximized regarding consultation about how the service is provided.

Consultation

29. Consultation has been held with residents throughout the year and the feedback received is that the addition of cardboard recycling where possible would be welcomed.

Options

30. Members could decide not to progress with the extension of the cardboard service although this would have a detrimental impact on the Council's recycling performance. Members could also decide not to continue with alternate collections during the winter period although this would also impact negatively on the Council's recycling performance whilst increasing the amount of biodegradable waste sent to landfill.

Analysis

31. The proposed changes will increase the Council's recycling performance whilst reducing the amount of bio-degradable waste sent to landfill.

Corporate Priorities

32. This proposal meets the Corporate Priority titled '***Decrease the tonnage of biodegradable waste and recyclable products going to landfill***'.

Implications

33. The following implications have been noted:

Financial

34. Extension to Service Provision

Due to the timescales involved in developing this report it has not proved possible to finalise the potential contribution, which could be made from uncommitted elements of the Waste Performance and Efficiency Grant. An updated position on this area will therefore be provided at the Executive. As a result the following costings are based upon a scenario where no contribution is available.

As the proposed arrangements from January to March are temporary in nature it is appropriate for funding to be met from reserves. The current reserve projections have recently been boosted through an additional dividend from the Council's holding in YorWaste and as such sufficient headroom currently exists for the costs associated with January implementation to be met from this source. However due to the one-off nature of such funding applying £66k to the January implementation will reduce the level of funding available to meet budget pressures in future financial years.

The projections which will form the basis of the draft budget proposals presented to EMAPs in December (which following consultation will be considered by Executive in January for referral to Council in February) currently include £324k per annum to cover the cost of this extension to the council's recycling provision with an indicative £201k for staffing and £123k for other costs (primarily vehicle related) A breakdown of these costs is included as Annex A. As such this proposal does not represent an expense over and above that which was already anticipated for 2007/08.

The procurement of the vehicles will follow standard EU tendering regulations.

35. Communication Strategy

The costs associated with the communications strategy will be met from existing budgets.

Human Resources (HR)

36. Subject to approval by the Executive, there will be full consultation with trade union officers and individual employees on the proposed revised winter working arrangements. There will also be a need to recruit additional staffing.

Apart from the above, there are no other HR implications.

Equalities

37. The only implications for equalities is regarding communicating with customers any changes made to waste and recycling collections, in alternative formats and languages as detailed above.

Legal

38. If the Executive is minded to approve the recommendations, there are legal obligations to be met regarding the procurement of additional vehicles. Appropriate advice will be sought from Legal and Procurement Officers to ensure procedures are in accordance with statutory requirements and our own Standing Orders.

Crime and Disorder

39. Clearly litter & rubbish is a priority that has been identified through SYP consultation on behalf of neighbourhood policing teams in most of the 11 wards where neighbourhood policing has been fully implemented. Environmental cleanliness forms a key part of creating safer neighbourhoods as it reduces the likelihood of the "broken windows" theory influencing crime & disorder patterns. i.e. if an area starts to look run down then this can affect attitudes to the neighbourhood resulting ultimately in more deviant behaviour. Enhancing the recycling scheme may reduce the likelihood of residents dumping rubbish that is not routinely collected thus assisting in developing a cleaner & less problematic environment.

Information Technology (IT)

40. There are no IT implications.

Risk Management

41. The key risks associated with the proposals in this report relate to a) the short timescales available to procure the vehicles and staff and to plan the implementation of these service changes b) the extent of communication required with customers and c) the uncertainty of funding.
42. To mitigate these risks vehicles can be hired until replacements are procured whilst a communication and implementation plan has been included as part of this report. Officers are confident that this will be sufficient to inform our customers of the revised arrangements whilst delivering the new service within the proposed timescales. Whilst the funding of this proposal needs to be clarified it is likely that there will be an opportunity to take advantage of the Council's Waste Performance and Efficiency Grant to reduce the overall cost to the Council whilst there will also be savings incurred by diverting waste from landfill.

Recommendations

43. Members are asked to consider the proposed changes to the Council's Refuse and Recycling Service and decide if these are to be implemented as detailed in the report.
44. If the proposed changes are agreed Members are also asked to agree for £66k to be released from reserves and for a further report to be brought back to the Executive to confirm the future funding arrangements.

Reason: To improve recycling performance and reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfill.

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Report Approved



Date 26/10/06e



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All

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Annexes

Annex A - breakdown of the growth bid

Annex B – Waste Performance and Efficiency Grant and Landfill Tax Savings

Background Papers:

Final Report of the Recycling and Reuse Scrutiny Sub Committee: Recycling and Reuse – Removing Bulky Items from the Waste Stream (Meeting of the Executive 24th October 2006)