

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON NEW WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICE CONTRACT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the consultation arrangements that are in place in respect of the new waste management contract and consider feedback received during the recent door-to-door canvassing campaign in respect of recycling.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The key lines of enquiry used by the Audit Commission to assess the effectiveness of waste management services identified that the needs of citizens and users should be at the heart of the design and delivery of the service and that appropriate arrangements should be in place for consulting, engaging and communicating with service users and non-users.
- 2.2 We have a variety of communication channels and approaches in place to promote recycling and seek the views of residents. These methods are also being used to collect information about the preferred configuration of the new waste and recycling contract.
- 2.3 The methods include:-
- The Door-to-Door Canvassing Campaign in respect of recycling
 - Focus Group sessions with residents
 - Engagement with community groups such as social clubs, Cubs, etc
 - Presentation to Parish Councils
 - Involvement with schools to complete surveys and participate in recycling schemes
 - Exhibitions, workshops and public events at venues such as libraries, woodlands, summer shows and carnivals, including the Recycling Roadshow
 - Analysis of service complaints and comments.
- 2.4 This report analyses the customer feedback from the door-to-door canvassing campaign and details topics to be explored by customer focus groups. Feedback from the focus groups and other channels detailed above will be considered at the next meeting.

3 DOOR-TO-DOOR CANVASSING CAMPAIGN

- 3.1 The Council received funding from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to undertake a canvassing campaign to encourage households to maximise the use of the local recycling services. This campaign was undertaken by Enventure Consultancy.
- 3.2 Two recycling co-ordinators and seven recycling promoters were recruited from the local area to work over a period of eleven weeks, commencing in July. These individuals visited all properties and carried out surveys through a short conversation with residents and provided advice. The overall contact rate achieved by the campaign was 36%. Re-visits were carried out in a number of areas; contact rates in Barling Magna and Hawkwell were, however, still very low.
- 3.3 90% of residents claimed to use the kerbside recycling scheme. It became apparent, however, that some are not fully aware of the range of materials they can recycle in the blue box. In particular, most residents were unaware that they could recycle white page directories and clean foil.
- 3.4 Of the residents that claimed to use the kerbside recycling scheme, 91% claimed to recycle newspapers, 78% claimed to recycle food and drink cans, 82% claimed to recycle glass bottles and 85% claimed to recycle glass jars.
- 3.5 When asked "What would make you recycle more", 62% of residents responded that they would like to see a wider range of materials collected at the kerbside.
- 3.6 Overwhelmingly, residents would like to have the collection of plastic and cardboard included within the kerbside recycling scheme. In addition, a large number of residents would like the Council to provide a free green waste kerbside collection scheme.
- 3.7 Consistency of information needs to be maintained in order to encourage residents to recycle. Residents are discouraged from recycling if they feel that the information provided is contradictory.
- 3.8 The key concerns raised by residents during the course of the campaign were complaints about the collection crews, in particular the fact that recycling receptacles were not always properly returned to their original location. Some concern was also expressed about the recycling banks always being full, the size and design of the blue boxes and some service issues at the Recycling Centre for Household Waste in Rayleigh.
- 3.9 The doorstepping campaign clarified to residents the materials that could and could not be recycled using the current recycling schemes around the district. There are still, however, a number of improvements that need to be made, namely to increase the range of materials collected at the kerbside for recycling, to ensure collection crews are fully briefed on the materials which can be collected and that they perform their duties cleanly and carefully, that

recycling banks need to be emptied more frequently and that the recycling receptacles need to be improved.

4 FOCUS GROUP

- 4.1 We will be running two focus group sessions later this month with specialist consultants. Details of the areas to be explored are outlined in the appendix to this report.
- 4.2 The consultant will be fully briefed to explore the various options and, if considered appropriate by Members of the Sub-Committee, other issues can also be explored.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that a summary of the findings of this research will be available in November in order to assist Members of the Sub-Committee to determine the configuration of the new contract.

5 KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE CAMPAIGN

- 5.1 The following section provides an outline of the key issues raised from the recycling promoters conversations with the residents.

5.2 Kerbside Collection Scheme

Overwhelmingly, residents would like the collection of plastic and cardboard materials to be included within the kerbside collection scheme. There were a number of items being collected via the kerbside scheme which should not be collected, and, conversely, items which should be collected via the scheme which were being left behind. The communication to residents and the collection teams needs to be consistent in order to make the service clear and ensure that there is not any confusion over the materials that can and cannot be collected. Residents are less likely to recycle via the scheme if this information is not communicated effectively. Residents also found the Bank Holiday collection dates confusing.

5.3 Garden Waste Scheme

Most residents wanted the garden waste scheme to be a free service instead of a buy-in scheme and some of those that had opted for the buy-in scheme were unhappy about the length of time taken for the receptacles to be delivered (over six weeks in some cases).

- 5.4 Some of those residents who do not have access to the buy-in green waste scheme and who instead have a periodic Saturday green waste collection in a skip, were unhappy with the location of the collection points. In particular, residents of Great Wakering were unhappy with the Sports Centre collection point, as this is a busy area, where parking can sometimes be difficult and the amount of traffic can make it dangerous.

- 5.5 In addition, some residents reported that the collection vehicles do not always remain at the sites for the allocated 45 minutes.

5.6 Collection Crews

A large number of residents raised complaints about the collection crews, particularly in relation to the collection receptacles. Many complained that the crews treated the boxes in such a way that it caused them to split or break and many complained that boxes were not returned to the same place that they were left, and were placed in the middle of driveways (causing vehicle obstruction) on the road, or further up the road away from residents' properties. This is not only very inconvenient for residents but, in some cases, raises health and safety concerns. Many residents also complained that the collectors often left a mess, in some cases broken glass, which again raises health and safety concerns.

5.7 Recycling Banks

A large number of residents complained that the Recycling banks were always full. Many residents also reported that they did not use the kerbside collection scheme, but took all their recycling to the recycling banks. The reason for this is that they visit the recycling banks to take plastic bottles for recycling and so take their other materials for recycling at the same time.

- 5.8 Some residents also commented that the plastic recycling banks should have clearer instructions about which items could and could not be put into the banks and others commented that they would like to be able to recycle a wider range of plastic items (eg food trays).

- 5.9 Many residents also said that they would like Rochford District Council to introduce recycling banks for cardboard, as they cannot recycle cardboard at the kerbside, so the only option is to take it to the Recycling Centre for Household Waste in Rayleigh.

5.10 Materials

A large number of residents would like to have plastic and cardboard recycling facilities at the kerbside. Some residents also wanted to know about recycling of other materials such as aerosols and batteries. These materials can be recycled at the Recycling Centre for Household Waste in Rayleigh, although we do not get the tonnages and, therefore, recycling credits for the materials recycled here as it is owned by Essex County Council. In spite of this, the diversion of the waste has the positive impact of reducing the total waste arising figure for the district.

5.11 Receptacles

A number of residents complained about the blue boxes which are provided for recycling. The main comment was that they would prefer lids to be provided for the boxes. Additional comments included boxes with

compartments, wheeled receptacles, larger boxes and that the blue boxes were too heavy. Residents were informed, where applicable, that they are entitled to an additional blue box.

5.15 **Recycling Centre for Household Waste**

The Recycling Centre for Household Waste in Rayleigh is the responsibility of Essex County Council, nonetheless, the comments from residents about the Centre are relevant to Rochford District Council as it may affect some residents' attitudes to recycling.

5.16 In addition to comments about the operation of the centre, issues were raised about the location in Rayleigh, which for many residents is quite a distance away. Consequently, many residents commented that they would like another Centre within the District which was closer.

5.17 Some residents that do use the Centre, take all their recycling there at the same time, so although they are recycling, this is credited to EEC and not Rochford District Council.

6 KEY MESSAGES

6.1 The collection of plastic and cardboard should be considered as part of the Kerbside Collection Scheme.

6.2 Communication needs to be improved both with the contractor and with householders. Appropriate action is being taken by Officers to address these issues.

6.3 A free garden waste scheme should be considered. Some collection points may be inappropriate.

6.4 Collection receptacles are not always handled and returned appropriately by the contractor. This issue is not covered in the existing contract specification but is addressed in the new contract.

6.5 The collection receptacles are not appropriate for all customers. These issues will be further explored with the customer focus groups.

6.6 Some issues were raised about the Rayleigh Household Waste Site and these have been referred to ECC for consideration.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That, subject to comments from Members, the customer focus groups are consulted on the issues outlined in the Appendix.
- (2) That Members consider the key messages from the door-to-door canvassing campaign on recycling.

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Background Papers:-

Rochford Doorstepping Report by Enventure Consultancy.

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Public Consultation – Waste Management Services

(Aug/07)

The Council is considering collecting household waste in different ways from April 2008. Answers to the following questions will help us shape the new service.

- ☐ How actively do you participate with our current recycling and waste minimisation schemes (please tick all that apply)
 - ☐ I don't participate
 - ☐ I regularly use the Council's kerbside scheme
 - ☐ I regularly use the bring banks
 - ☐ I compost my own kitchen and garden waste
 - ☐ I take my old 'yellow pages' directories to schools participating in the yellow woods scheme
- ☐ Which materials would you like to see collected at the kerbside for recycling?
- ☐ How often do you think the recycling collection should be (weekly or fortnightly)?
- ☐ How important do you think it is for the council to spend more money on recycling (promotions, infrastructure, operations, etc) and reducing the amount of waste produced in the District?
 - ☐ Very important
 - ☐ Quite important
 - ☐ Not very important
 - ☐ Not at all important
 - ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Are you prepared to pay more Council Tax in order to have a broader collection of materials? If so, how much would you be prepared to pay?
- ☐ In the new contract Rochford are planning to continue to collect food waste on a weekly basis, but in order to minimise the cost impact of implementing some of the service changes some waste can be collected on alternate weeks. Do you agree or disagree with this suggestion?
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Neither
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ In some parts of the UK, general waste, including food waste, is collected one week and recyclable materials the next. This means your rubbish is collected every other week. How happy would you be for this system to be introduced here?
 - ☐ Very happy
 - ☐ Quite happy
 - ☐ Not very happy
 - ☐ Not happy at all
 - ☐ Don't know
- ☐ In your opinion which is the best way to collect food waste and garden waste?
 - ☐ Collect them both together in a wheelie bin
 - ☐ Collect food in a separate container and garden waste in sacks
 - ☐ Maintain the current arrangement of placing food waste in the general waste and a buy in service for garden waste
 - ☐ None of the above

- ☐ How important is recycling to you personally?
 - ☐ Very important
 - ☐ Quite important
 - ☐ Not very important
 - ☐ Not at all important
 - ☐ Don't know

- ☐ Do you think the recycling blue box is:
 - ☐ Too big
 - ☐ Too small
 - ☐ About right
 - ☐ Don't know

- ☐ Does the size of the box affect your usage of the scheme? (i.e. if it were bigger would they recycle more?)

- ☐ What do you usually do when your recycling container is overflowing?

- ☐ One way of increasing the amount of materials recycled and the value of the materials obtained is to ask residents to separate waste in to separate containers. This means that you could have up to four containers as part of your kerbside collection that may be collected on different weeks. For example:- kitchen waste, garden waste, dry waste and general waste. Would you support this suggestion?
 - ☐ Strongly support
 - ☐ Tend to support
 - ☐ Neither
 - ☐ Tend to oppose
 - ☐ Strongly oppose
 - ☐ Don't know