

## **HAWKWELL RECYCLING TRIAL- PHASE TWO UPDATE (Min 447/99)**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 At the meeting on the 18 November 1999 Members of the Transportation and Environmental Services Committee determined that the Hawkwell recycling trial be adapted to collect three waste streams.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on the trial and reports to Members the results of a questionnaire sent to all households on the trial round. The report also asks Members to consider the future of the trial. Recycling is a discretionary function.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 In August 1999, the Council introduced a trial recycling scheme on one refuse collection round comprising 1470 properties in the Ashingdon and Hawkwell area. For the first phase of the trial households were given a green 120 litre wheeled bin in which to collect their recyclable materials. This was collected on alternate weeks to their grey bin.
- 2.2 Following a consultation exercise amongst the residents and consideration by Members, in February of this year the trial was further developed to collect three waste streams. The same households were issued with a blue box in which to collect their recyclable materials. The frequency of collection is as follows:-
  - The 60 litre blue boxes are collected every week. Dry recyclables – newspaper, cardboard, cans, plastic bottles and textiles.
  - The 120 litre green bins are emptied on alternate weeks to the grey bins. Compostable waste – compostable garden waste and fruit and vegetable peelings.
  - The 240 litre wheeled bins, for residual refuse, are collected on alternate weeks to the green bins

### **3 OPERATIONAL ISSUES**

- 3.1 The contract for the collection of blue boxes was won by Cory Environmental Ltd., who have their own materials recovery facility (MRF). The collection of the green and grey bins continues to be undertaken by Serviceteam Ltd.

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- 3.2 Both contractors are responsible for quality control to minimise the contamination levels in both the blue boxes and green bins. This is done in the following way: -
- Where there is a small amount of contamination this is returned to the householder, once the receptacle has been emptied, with a letter to the householder explaining what can and cannot be recycled.
  - Where the receptacle contains a large amount of contamination the container is not emptied, and an explanatory letter is issued to the householder.
- 3.3 This has resulted in good quality and uncontaminated materials being collected. At the time of writing this report no load of recyclable or compostable materials has been rejected.
- 3.4 Some residents who have had material returned or their bin or box has been rejected have telephoned to complain about the situation. 19 households have contacted the offices since February to complain about excess grey bin waste not being taken. Advice has been given to these residents by telephone, which has usually been sufficient.
- 3.5 Officers have offered and have undertaken home visits to any residents that have complained about rejected material or excess grey bin waste not being taken. This has given the opportunity to discuss problems and give more specific advice. Around 10 households have received a home visit and detailed recycling advice. Each of these households has been to contact the Council again if they continue to experience problems in order to reassess how the scheme is affecting them. To date none have done so.

#### **4 RECYCLING AND PARTICIPATION RATE**

- 4.1 Over 95% of households put their blue box out for collection in any one week. Assessed over a four-week period nearly all households put their blue box out at least once.
- 4.2 The participation rate for the green bins is more difficult to judge but is around 80% at present. Although at least 20% of household waste is compostable kitchen waste (e.g. fruit and vegetable peelings) not all residents are placing these materials in their green bin. The seasonal variation in the use of the bin for garden waste and current reluctance by some residents to use it for kitchen waste results in the bin not being filled rapidly. For some residents, the bin is therefore able to last for more than two weeks before reaching capacity. Compostable garden waste is still a significant proportion of household waste even in winter.

- 4.3 Continual promotion and education is needed to divert the compostable kitchen waste out of the grey bin into the green bin. In other authorities households have been issued with a small kitchen bin to collect such waste.
- 4.4 The recycling rate on the trial round is currently 36% (19% from organic material 17% from dry recyclable materials); this figure is expected to increase over the summer months, primarily due to the increase in garden waste. The first phase of the recycling trial (dry recyclable only) achieved a recycling rate of approximately 18%. A possible reason for the slight decrease in the percentage of dry recyclables collected is that with green waste also being collected, there is now a greater volume in the grey bin in which to deposit waste.
- 4.5 Ecologika, the Council's waste strategy consultants, have expressed positive comments about these results and the general organisation of the trial. This trial will add, on its own, 1.14% to this Council's overall recycling rate of 4% for the whole District. The trial is also demonstrating that it is possible to achieve high levels of diversion of waste from landfill. It also confirms that the Council's target of 40% recycling rate across the District could be achieved, subject to finance being available.

## **5 FEED BACK FROM RESIDENTS**

- 5.1 At the time of writing this report, a total of 93 complaints/enquiries have been received from members of the public since the introduction of phase two. These are summarised below. This compares to phase one of the trial when 188 complaints/enquiries were received.

Complaint/enquiry type	Number
Grey bin excess not taken	19
Green bin excess not taken/green bin too small	8
Green bin rejected	10
Unhappy about fortnightly collections	6
Non recyclable material returned.	3
Grey bin too small	2
Don't like Blue boxes/lids	6
Boxes not emptied	8
Request for an additional blue box	3
General advice	11
Other*	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>93</b>

\* e.g. bin not replaced correctly; limitation of types of plastic collected etc.

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- 5.2 In April, a questionnaire was sent to all 1470 households on the trial. A total of 759 were returned, 52% compared to 63.5% for the first phase of the trial. A preliminary analysis has now been completed and the results are shown in Appendix 1. All the questionnaires received have been placed in the Members room.
- 5.3 A summary of residents written responses on the questionnaire are detailed below: -
- 22.6% would like their grey bin collected every week.  
14% think the blue box is heavy to lift or the lid comes off too easily.  
14% think the box is too small.  
14% would like glass collected.  
5.4% would like a bigger green bin.  
3.9% would like extra grey bin waste to be collected.  
3.2% would like their green bin collected every week.  
1.5% do not like having three containers for waste.
- 5.4 With respect to boxes being too heavy the Council operates an assist scheme for persons unable to either wheel bins out for collection or carry their box to the boundary of their property. From waste analysis previously undertaken the average household will produce approximately 5kg (11lbs) of dry recyclables for collection in the blue box per week.
- 5.5 Question 21 which asked if households would like the trial to continue after the end of July 2000 was, following consultation with Ward Councillors and Group Leaders, particularly brought to residents' attention in the covering letter. Of those households who returned their questionnaire 83% would like to see the scheme continue.

## **6 WAY FORWARD**

- 6.1 At the Compulsory Competitive Tendering Panel on the 29<sup>th</sup> December 1999 Members agreed that a commitment to the continuation of the trial should, if possible, be given up to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001. This is to coincide with the start of the new refuse collection contract. However, through consideration by the Members Budget Monitoring Working Group and Council, no budget has been identified for this. At present the trial is due to continue until the end of July this year.
- 6.2 However, the following need to be considered:
- Following discussions with contractors costings have been received and to extend the trial until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001 would cost in the region of £15,000.
  - If the trial is discontinued what will happen to the bins and boxes either through a decision not to extend until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001

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or at that date should Members decide not to implement the recycling provisions in the new refuse collection contract? Some residents may want to keep their blue boxes for recycling or storage. However, it is unlikely that many would want to keep their green bins and if they did some would be tempted to put the bin out with refuse for collection in addition to their grey bin. There is insufficient space to store all the green bins at the depot long term and they would need to be collected from residents and sold. The cost for collection of the bins and their resale value is being investigated and it is hoped to be able to give a verbal update to Members at the meeting.

- If the trial were to be stopped, residents may see it as a failure. This may make it difficult to introduce a similar collection scheme to this or other parts of the district in the future.
- A number of residents have stated on their questionnaire that they would be disappointed to see the trial stop.
- There may be issues concerning the quality of the bin collection service at the end of the current contract should the Council decide, through the tendering process, to change the refuse collection contractor.
- Consideration of whether to implement the recycling options contained in the refuse collection contract will depend on the tenders received and future budget decisions.

6.3 Should the trial continue, consideration will need to be given to large households. Members previously decided that the provision of additional grey bins should be held in abeyance until the removal of green waste from the refuse stream has been assessed (Min 447/99). As stated earlier, anyone who has contacted the Council concerned about capacity has been offered a home visit. Where appropriate an additional blue box has been provided.

6.3.1 A staged approach is suggested. It is proposed that households containing 5 or more (approximately 130 on the trial round) should be offered a second blue box on request. Larger families, with six or more in the household (approximately 30 on the trial round), who have reported difficulty storing their waste, will be entitled to more storage capacity. Following a home visit, they will receive a second blue box, but if this is not sufficient they will receive an additional green bin (120 litre). Only if with this additional capacity they still find they have excess non-recyclable waste will they be entitled to a further 120 litre grey bin.

6.3.2 There is sufficient stock held to provide bins and /or boxes to these families. However, from the number of complaints received and the

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results of the questionnaire, it is envisaged that only a few families will take up the offer.

- 6.4 Should the Council decide to proceed with the recycling provisions of the new refuse collection contract in part of the district from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001, it is suggested that the trial area should receive this service.

## **7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Recycling is of national and local importance and is part of the Council's Agenda 21 Strategy. Stopping the trial would reduce the Council's recycling rate.

## **8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The trial still has a significant impact on staffing resources and other work of the Division has suffered. The additional cost of extending the scheme until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001 can be met from the Recycling Credit Reserve, which has accumulated over a period. Should Members wish to end the scheme in July 2000 the cost of recovering the green bins will also have to be met from this reserve.

## **9 PARISH IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The trial is situated in the Ashingdon and Hawkwell Parishes.

## **10 RECOMMENDATION**

- 10.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RECOMMENDS**:

- (1) a. Families with five or more in the household will be entitled to an additional blue box on request.  
  
b. Families with six or more in the household, who report difficulty storing their waste, will be entitled to more storage capacity. First they will receive a second blue box, if this is not sufficient, they will receive an additional green bin. Only if they still have excess non-recyclable waste will they be entitled to a further 120 litre grey bin.
- (2) That the trial continues until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001, to be funded from the Recycling Credit Reserve.
- (3) If the trial is to continue over the Christmas period, provision is to be made to ensure residents will receive their normal collection frequency, the cost to be met from the Recycling Credit Reserve.

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- (4) If the trial is extended until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001, and budget is subsequently agreed to allow implementation of the recycling provisions within the new refuse collection contract, then the trial round should receive the new contract recycling service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001.

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**Background Papers**

None

For further information please contact Matthew Rowland – Jones on (01702) 318069.