

**GARDEN WASTE – REPORT ON TRIAL SCHEME  
(Report by Heads of Environment & Transport)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In January 2003 the council started a trial of a garden waste collection service. The service provided alternating fortnightly collections of household and garden waste using wheeled bins. Valuable information on future recycling performance and public reaction to fortnightly collections has been obtained from the trial.
- 1.2 This report details the outcome of the trial and recommends the district-wide implementation of the wheeled bin based household waste and garden waste service.

**2. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE TRIAL**

- 2.1 The introduction of wheeled bin collections on a fortnightly basis promoted a substantial increase in recycling and contributed to a significant reduction in residual waste for ultimate disposal. An objectives for the trial was to achieve a recycling performance of 19.6% in the trial area
- 2.2 A recycling rate of 47% has been achieved by households in the trial area (garden waste contributes 28% to this overall rate). To place this in context an actual district-wide recycling rate of 15% was achieved in 2002/03.
- 2.3 If this performance were to be achieved district-wide it would exceed the recycling targets of 36% in 2005/06 and meet the 2010/11 target of 45-50% to which the council is committed in the Cambridgeshire Joint Municipal Waste Strategy.
- 2.4 The vast majority of householders experienced no difficulty with the alternating fortnightly wheeled-bin based collections of waste and recyclables. Public reaction to the trial was regularly tested and the results of the most recent survey are reproduced at Annex A.
- 2.5 A major factor in the smooth implementation of the service and in achieving public commitment to the new service was that robust customer service arrangements were in place from the outset. The 24-hour '0800' helpline (manned 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.) worked well but was only needed in the early stages of the project -
- 1,604 calls were received during the first three months of the trial
  - calls peaked at 260 in the first week of the new collection arrangements
  - four months into the trial calls stabilised at around 30 per week, all during normal office hours

- 2.6 Only 23% of calls received were complaints about the collection arrangements. Personal visits were made to householders where queries/complaints could not be resolved over the telephone
- 2.7 More detailed information on the outcome of the trial is available in the background document Garden Waste Collection Trial; Progress Report July 2003.

### **3. FUTURE WASTE COLLECTION SERVICES**

- 3.1 The trial has demonstrated that the alternating fortnightly wheeled bin service is effective in delivering outstanding recycling performance and has the overwhelming support of the householders. Where householders have been resistant or have experienced difficulties our customer relations activity has worked well.
- 3.2 The council now needs to take a view on how it will deliver its waste collection services in the short to medium term. It is a signatory to the Cambridgeshire Joint Municipal Waste Strategy which identifies improved recycling as a major contributor to waste management within the county. Accordingly, future arrangements must deliver good recycling performance.
- 3.3 Cabinet will be considering a separate report in respect of harmonisation of arrangements for the collection of dry recyclables ('green boxes service') and this will make a contribution to improved recycling performance. However, the trial has demonstrated that the move to a fortnightly wheel bin based collection of residual household waste is a major influence on householders' participation rates in the green box service and use of local recycling facilities.
- 3.4 The sack collection system currently used provides no great incentive to householders to engage with the recycling services provided by the council. At best green box participation rates of 70% may be achieved, although to maintain this level substantial ongoing public awareness and education campaigns are required. The participation rate can quickly fall to below 50%.
- 3.5 In the trial area participation rates were consistently over 90%. It is estimated that annual district-wide collection of dry recyclables would rise from 6,500 tonnes to 9,500 tonnes (46%) as a result of the introduction of fortnightly wheeled bin collections of residual household waste. This step change in the collection of dry recyclables together with the capture of garden waste, and ultimately compostable kitchen waste, is what is required to deliver the recycling targets to which the council is committed.
- 3.6 Experience from elsewhere has confirmed that the introduction of a weekly wheeled bin collection actually increases the residual waste taken to landfill, often by up to 30%. Sack based collections services have already attracted the attention of the Health and Safety Executive as there are significant manual handling risks associated with this method of collection. There is a strong possibility that sack collections will eventually be declared an unsafe working practice.
- 3.7 Based on the evidence of the trial it is clear that the implementation of alternating fortnightly collections of residual household waste and

waste for recycling/composting, using wheeled bins, is the most effective way to deliver waste collection services. Other districts in Cambridgeshire are now also adopting this approach to waste collection.

- 3.8 However, Members should be aware that the trial also has confirmed that the initial estimates of the resources required for a district-wide service would need to be increased by a further four collection vehicles and crews. This arises mainly from the participation levels achieved and should be viewed in the context that the service will deliver a recycling performance that will achieve 2010/11 recycling targets.

#### **4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 The trial has demonstrated that households which seek to maximise their recycling find that the 55 litre box green box is not big enough. This could be addressed by the introduction of a third wheeled bin, to replace the green box, or by providing neighbourhood mini-recycling facilities.
- 4.2 Other partners to the joint waste strategy are keen to pursue funding for a third wheeled bin from the latest government challenge fund. The council could associate itself with this bid and/or explore neighbourhood recycling facilities using equipment that is widely used on the continent.
- 4.3 The council takes waste collected by the green box service to the MRF (materials recycling facility) at Peterborough. A financial review of the operating cost of this facility is being undertaken by its owners (Peterborough City Council) and operators (Shanks Waste Solutions). Initial indications are that the charge for receiving materials at the MRF will rise from £15 per tonne to possibly £37 per tonne.
- 4.4 Currently the council receives a recycling credit of £32 a tonne from the county council and, therefore, based on the £15 disposal charge receives a net income of £17 per tonne for material taken to the MRF. This will become a cost of £5 per tonne if the new charge is implemented, possibly from December 2003. Negotiations are continuing and alternative disposal arrangements also are being explored.
- 4.5 Mention has already been made in 4.2 above of the latest government challenge fund to support waste minimisation/recycling. Our neighbouring councils were successful in the previous round in securing the capital required for the introduction of their garden waste services. If the decision of the Cabinet is to proceed with the district-wide roll-out of the garden waste service a bid could be made to the challenge fund for support for the associated capital expenditure.
- 4.6 It is hoped that the government shortly will approve the Animals By Products Order which will establish the regulatory framework allowing kitchen waste to be mixed with garden waste for composting. The county council have recently awarded a contract to Marshalls at Ellington for the processing of compostable material collected by the district council. Their processing facility is being updated to meet the

requirements of the new regulations. The separation of kitchen waste will further enhance our recycling performance.

4.7 The garden waste trial currently is funded until March 2004.

## 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The MTP includes provision for the roll-out of the garden waste service based on estimates prepared in advance of the trial. That estimate now has been revised in response to experience from the trial. The capital requirement increases from £2.78 millions to £3.45 millions reflecting the requirement for additional vehicles. The overall capital requirement would be reduced if a bid to the government challenge fund were successful.

5.2 The change in revenue budget of this additional capital expenditure and associated operational costs, inclusive of increased disposal costs of dry recyclables, is summarised below:-

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09
additional revenue	262	438	669	670	670	670

5.3 The above figures assume a phased roll-out during 2004/05 and 2005/06 (tranche 1 in July 2004 and tranches 2 and 3 in November 2004 and April 2005 respectively). Further detailed consideration needs to be given to the geographical areas in each tranche of the roll-out.

5.4 In the event of a decision being taken not to proceed with the roll out of the garden waste service all additional capital and revenue expenditure post 2003/04 would be saved; there may also be a further small saving in the base revenue budget. However, the deferred purchase of bins used in the trial will need to be funded in 2003/04 at a cost of £240k.

5.5 The above revenue implications take account of the potential change in gate fee at the Peterborough MRF only insofar as they relate to increased volumes of dry recyclables generated as a consequence of the introduction of the garden waste service. The overall additional revenue requirement from the gate fee increase follows and has been split between 'unavoidable', (existing service currently provided by Operations Division), 'harmonisation' (consequence of bringing Newsletter service in house) 'service development' (extension of service to flats/rural properties etc.) 'and 'growth' (increased yield arising from roll out of garden waste service) :-

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09
unavoidable	29	88	88	88	88	88
harmonisation	0	44	44	44	44	44
development	0	12	12	12	12	12
growth	0	34	51	66	66	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>210</b>

5.7 Assuming that Cabinet approve the proposal in the separate report on their agenda relating to the in-house delivery of the green box service then the overall change to the approved MTP resulting from the

increased gate fees and a decision to proceed with the garden waste service amounts to:-

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09
additional revenue	-69	356	587	588	588	588

- 5.8 The costs assume that all household waste is collected in wheeled bins. No allowance has been made for handling 'side waste', i.e. bags and boxes of additional waste placed with wheeled bins for collection at the same time. Accordingly, Cabinet should be aware that a rigorous enforcement regime would be adopted and side waste would not be collected.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The Cabinet are recommended to:-

- (a) approve the district-wide roll out of the twin wheeled bin alternating fortnightly collection of household waste and garden waste;
- (b) consequent upon their decision in respect of recommendations (a) authorise the changes to the MTP contained in para 5.7 of this report;
- (d) authorise the Director of Operational Services to seek funding from the government challenge fund to support the capital cost attaching to recommendation (a);
- (d) authorise the Director of Operational Services to seek funding from the government challenge fund to meet the capital cost of providing a third wheeled bin for the collection of dry recyclable;
- (e) authorise the Director of Operational Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor with responsibility for Service Delivery, to determine operational arrangements for the implementation of the service developments referred to in these recommendations; and
- (f) in the event of a decision not to proceed in respect of recommendation (a) to note the required expenditure of £240k in 2003/04 for the purchase of wheeled bins used in the trial.

## Background Papers

Garden Waste Collection Trial; Progress Report July 2003  
Garden Waste Questionnaire – August 2003  
Cambridgeshire Joint Municipal Waste Strategy

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## ANNEX A

### Initial Feedback From Garden Waste Questionnaire

In August 2003 a postal questionnaire was sent to all households participating in the Garden Waste Trial. 9000 questionnaires were sent out and over 4000 of these have now been returned.

Below is a breakdown of the answers to some of the key questions asked, based on the 3200 questionnaires currently processed.

#### **Q1. Do you put your green waste bin out for collection?**

95.8% of all respondent said they use their green waste bin?

#### **Q2. If no, why are you not making use of your green bin?**

Of those that don't use their bin the main reasons why not were: -

- 0.6% - 'No garden'
- 0.3% - 'Lack of space for bin'
- 0.1% - 'Too much trouble'

#### **Q3. How often have you put your green bin out for collection?**

55% said they put their green bin out every fortnight in winter (Jan-March)  
85.5% said they put their green bin out every fortnight in summer (April-Aug)

#### **Q6. Have you ever had additional green waste that would not fit into your green bin?**

35.5% of householders answered yes to this question.

#### **Q8. Normally, how full is your grey bin when you put it out for collection?**

Full –	55%
Three Quarters Full –	23%
Half Full –	15%
Quarter Full –	6%

#### **Q10. Have you had extra refuse that will not fit into your grey bin?**

Yes – 28%  
No – 72%

#### **Q11. If your answer to question 10 was yes, how many extra sacks of refuse have you had?**

1 Sack	– 10%
2 Sacks	– 11%
3 Sacks	– 4%
4 Sacks	– 1.5%
More than 5	– 1.5%

**Q13. Do you have a green Recycling Box? –**

94% answered yes to this Question

**Q14. Do you Use your Green Box? –**

91% answered yes to this Question

**Q15. Generally, how full is your green box for each collection?**

Overflowing –	69%
Full –	20.3%
Three Quarters Full –	2.2%
Half Full –	1.3%
Quarter Full –	0.2%

**Q16. If the option were available, would you prefer a green bin for your dry recyclables?**

69% said they would prefer a wheeled bin.

**Q23. Since the beginning of the trial, have your visits to a Household Waste Recycling Centre: -**

Increased –	3.6%
Remained the same –	27.1%
Decreased -	45.3%

**Q.24 Have you had any difficulties with the wheeled bin system?**

No – 77.5%  
Yes- 22.5%

(Currently collating the various difficulties expressed)

**Q27. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with the wheeled bin collection service?**

Very Satisfied –	58%
Satisfied –	30%
Neutral –	6%
Unsatisfied –	4%
Very Unsatisfied -	2%