

ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
5 OCTOBER 2010

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**re<sup>3</sup> UPDATE AND RECYCLING FIGURES**  
**[Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection]**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Council is in a partnership along with Wokingham and Reading Councils that provides for the disposal of our waste until 2031. The partnership was developed as part of a Private Finance Initiative and had a value at the time of commencement in excess of £600M over the term of the 25 year contract. This arrangement gives rise to predicted refuse disposal savings to each party in excess of £25M when compared to the 'do nothing' option over the same period.
- 1.2 Save for the rectification of minor building construction matters, we have now moved into the longer and more challenging delivery phase of the project.
- 1.3 The project is managed by the Joint Waste Disposal Board under the chairmanship of Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes. The Board is comprised of two Executive Members from each Authority. Reporting to the Board is a Project Director (a nominated senior officer with a part time role) and a full time Project Manager. Senior officers from each Authority meet under the leadership of the Project Director to ensure overall delivery.

**2 SUGGESTED ACTION**

- 2.1 **That the Panel notes this re3 and recycling update report.**

**3 KEY ISSUES**

- 3.1 The Board meets quarterly. It has its own operational budget and its challenge in the current economic climate is to identify potential savings. Savings can be gained through operational efficiencies and finding cheaper waste disposal alternatives to landfill. The Board have looked at their operational budget needs for 2011/12 and have identified savings of £54k (24% of total net budget). Discussions are also ongoing at an officer level with the contractor WRG with a view to finding savings in their operational costs, alternatives to landfill and other business opportunities such as the potential sale of spare capacity in the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF).
- 3.2 The hope was that in the current year the project would be achieving a recycling rate of 40%. The latest information suggests that this target may not be reached. There are several reasons for this:
- The delay in the opening of Lakeside Energy from Waste site
  - The decline in waste tonnages being disposed of at the Household Waste Recycling Centres (down from 239 tonnes in 2001/02 to 193 tonnes in 2009/10)
  - The impact of the recession generally
  - Waste diversion and minimisation

- 3.3 A further factor that has not helped in relation to achieving this target is the level of contamination of the recyclable materials being put into the MRF (in Bracknell Forest from the contents of the blue bins) for processing. The plant is working at its optimum speed but it is trying to cope with an average contamination rate of 20%. Through changes to the operation it is intended to draw out more of the contamination over the coming months but there is a responsibility upon the collection authorities to do more to help. A significant cause of the problem is due to residents across the partnership putting their recycling material in small shopping bags. Whilst the plant has provision for bag splitting it struggles with small tightly sealed bags. Problems also occur when paper and cardboard goes in wet. In Bracknell Forest the use of blue wheeled bins helps with the process but we still have to do more to help ensure that residents use their bin for the right materials and ideally don't use bags.
- 3.4 Another challenge for WRG is finding sustainable and economically viable outlets for whatever is collected. It is not acceptable for the Partnership to dispose of materials at any fiscal or environmental cost. Accordingly, the final destination of all material is carefully monitored. What ever the final destination source, it will invariably require a product delivered to a given standard. Accordingly WRG have often to meet tight tolerance limits or risk having the load rejected. This is particularly the case with plastics. We select out the higher value plastics and the tolerance limits are very tight. There is still little market in the UK for many of the forms of plastic in use and therefore there are few places that will take such material.
- 3.5 Notwithstanding the above the project is projecting an end of year recycling rate of 37-38%. The recent introduction of a mixed wood service at Longshot Lane and Smallmead has had a major impact on performance. The wood trials are showing good results in respect of extracting waste for re-use. A trial will also soon commence at Longshot Lane to extract more recycling material from the general waste stream (i.e. over the wall). The results of all such trials will be reported to the Joint Waste Board in due course. It is expected that such initiatives will improve recycling rates by a further 1.87% but this will still be below the 40% target. Other initiatives are being developed and this will continue to be so over the term of the contract.
- 3.6 As of mid-September the latest outturn figure for re<sup>3</sup> for the year was £5,888,772 against a budget of £5,832,480. The pressure has been reported through the budget monitoring process. The forecast takes account of the increase in business rates, the rate of inflation applied via the contract being higher than budget and a reduced tonnage in the first quarter.

#### **4 OTHER ISSUES**

- 4.1 Waste disposal is directly linked to waste collection. Officers are currently in the process of evaluating the bids for a new refuse contract for the Borough from August 2011. The opportunity has been taken as part of the process to build in stronger links between the two service areas. The new collection contractor will for example have to commit themselves to helping reduce contamination rates as collected from the kerbside.
- 4.2 As WRG have found it challenging to achieve recycling targets so have the Council. All targets were set against a background of an expectation of increasing household disposal rates. This is no longer the case. The table below shows the situation

locally as regards the overall tonnages and our performance:

	2008/09	2009/10
NI191 - residual household waste (kg/hh)	677.46	646.69
NI192 - % household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting	40.44	37.83
NI193 - % of municipal waste sent to landfill	56.34	44.48
Total household waste collected (tonnes)	52459.88	47973.36
Total household waste recycled, reused and composted (tonnes)	21214.07	18146.58

- 4.3 Whilst the overall fall in waste tonnages is making the achievement of our 40.4% recycling target harder, we are doing well against our targets for residential waste per household (2009/10 target 675 max - achieved 646.24 kg). We have also seen a big improvement with the coming on line of Lakeside in respect of the percentage of waste landfilled (achieved 44.5% in 2009/10 with Lakeside versus 56.3% previous year).
- 4.4 It evident that whilst we have done well as a Borough thanks to the support of our residents we have still got a long way to go. We still see avoidable contamination of our recycling collection. Waste is going into the green residual waste bins that could be recycled. Bracknell Forest Council has commissioned Waste Watch to undertake door knocking in two poor performing areas and this work is complete. This will help us to improve our communication to help residents to understand what can and cannot be recycled. In addition leaflets, bin stickers and calendars have all been revamped to include a strong message about the correct materials to recycle. Having regard to all of the initiatives already in place locally there is little excuse for not recycling but it is evident that education and the promotion of clear messages is perhaps the only way to effect continued improvement. Many look to the Council to collect more of their sorted waste but without sustainable outlets doing so would only be possible at very high cost.
- 4.5 Our experience with plastic for example is being fed back to Government as part of the consultation on waste. Like other Councils we are keen to inform them of the barriers to recycling. We also would like to see a shift in responsibility to put more obligations on the retailers when they specify packaging so that there is less wastage.

#### Background Papers

None

#### Contact for further information

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#### Document Reference

CO/DMT/ECCO&SPanel/2010/ re<sup>3</sup>UpdateandRecyclingFigures (a)