

TO: EXECUTIVE
27 JANUARY 2014

RESULTS OF TRIAL RECYCLING INCENTIVE SCHEME
Director: Environment, Culture and Communities

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2012 the Council made a successful funding bid to DEFRA to enable us to set up our Trial Recycling Incentive Scheme. This report considers the results of the trial and seeks clarification as to the future intent of this initiative. The options available are either to abandon the project or to embed it into our ongoing arrangements.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Executive notes the success of the Trial Recycling Incentive Scheme and that in light of this resolves that the Council should continue to develop and promote the scheme as part of its waste management service.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The incentive scheme has proven to be very popular. It has also had a positive impact on the quality of recycling and the number of households using the blue bin recycling service.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 To cease the trial and withdraw the incentive scheme.

5. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 The Council made a successful bid to DEFRA for Reward and Recognition funding in May 2012. The Council sought and was granted £108k to create and launch a unique recycling scheme in order to draw out learning that might be used to help inform other councils. Work on the detail as to how the scheme would work began in summer 2012; the necessary equipment was purchased and installed on the freighters and the scheme was launched on 1 April 2013.

- 5.2 The key objectives of the incentive scheme were:

- (i) to increase the number of households participating in the kerbside recycling service from 75% of all residencies in the borough to 82% within 2 years and
- (ii) to reduce contamination (incorrect materials) being put into the blue bins from 13% to at least 8% over the same period.

The scheme also had to be accessible to all residents and the rewards being given were to be directly related to the services offered or supported by the Council. The scheme drew upon the use of the Council's existing e-plus Smartcard technology and thereby encouraged the development of a further benefit for card holders. As we come to the end of the trial we can report that both of these targets and objectives were achieved.

- 5.3 There are now over 11,000 households on the scheme. This is almost a quarter of the households in Bracknell Forest and the number of residents joining the scheme

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continues to grow as does the uptake of the rewards. To date, just over 1200 rewards have been claimed; two thirds of which have been in the last 6 months. As the scheme has developed so has the range of rewards and this is planned to continue.

- 5.4 The most recent addition to the scheme has been the good causes sponsored by SITA. The Scheme has already benefitted 6 local causes i.e. Priestwood Tea Break, Kerith Social Justice Department, Brakenhale School, Cruse Bereavement Care, Sandhurst Day Centre and Sandhurst Corp of Drums. The initiative has proven popular and it also encourages the promotion of the scheme to those residents who have not yet registered but who could help the nominated scheme.
- 5.5 Looking back over the trial period the trial has given rise to other benefits. Clearly the scheme provides the Council with increased opportunities to positively promote recycling at the same time as giving something back to the residents in recognition of their efforts. Additionally, when people join the scheme they are asked if they have an email address that they would be happy for us to contact them on. Some 75% of the scheme members have provided an email address and this enables us to contact them quickly and easily with updates or messages about waste minimisation and recycling. Significantly for the Council unlike other schemes one of the benefits to users of our scheme is that we hold the membership database and it's therefore not commercially available. As the database continues so does our ability to target specific recycling messages to our residents. There remains more potential to develop our marketing and promotional activity through this route as is also the case with the use of social media. Subject to our resource capacity we will look to utilise this for the same purpose, perhaps drawing on some of the marketing resource that is hopefully to be produced soon by the re3 partnership. If we are to meet the challenging recycling targets and reduce the cost of waste disposal we have to find more ways to influence social attitudes.
- 5.6 The feedback about the initiative from residents has been very positive. It is very evident that the scheme has helped promote the use of services by some residents who might not otherwise have felt inclined or been able to afford to do so. The positive reaction to the scheme is also evidenced by excellent response rates to surveys sent out to scheme members. On average, our online surveys are getting between a 30% and 40% response rate. This is a very good return rate for any survey but the detail in the responses themselves is also very helpful. It is evident that the vast majority of our scheme members are keen recyclers and are willing to make more effort to maximise their recycling and to recycle correctly.
- 5.7 Much of the budget available was spent went into the development and introduction of the technology to enable the delivery of the scheme. As a result we now have an on board computer system to record individual bin collections so the points can 'seamlessly' be credited to a registered scheme member. The IT management also system allows for the recording of a range of information about collections. We can now for example target our promotional activity to areas where households that are not recycling or perhaps where they are trying to recycle the wrong materials. AS we develop this knowledge it will enable us not only to target specific messages but also monitor its effectiveness. To help reduce costs as we go forward all new bins are now issued with tags. They come into use once the resident has enrolment into the scheme. The same technology and software has also been developed to run the brown bin scheme.
- 5.8 From a more strategic perspective recent changes to the Waste Regulations that come into force on 1 January 2015 require that all local authorities review the way

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they collect recycling. Our review has been completed and agreed by the Executive at its last meeting. Our review concluded that the collection of paper, card, plastic bottles and cans in the blue bin is the most appropriate approach for extracting and recycling these materials from our waste stream having regard to all options and constraints. The review concluded that because we have access to the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) at Smallmead through our re3 contract, that the collection of the approved contents of the blue bins is simply not technically, environmentally or economically practicable. The incentive scheme is therefore now a very useful and effective tool to help ensure we achieve the legal requirements in respect to the collection of these materials.

- 5.9 Finally, analysis of waste in the green bins carried out in July 2014 has confirmed that recyclable waste found in the refuse has decreased by almost 1000 tonnes. This represents a saving of circa £90k that would have been incurred in the cost of landfilling this waste since the incentive scheme began. Looking forward the analysis shows that there is the potential to save a further £100k if all of the recyclable material still going into the green (landfill) bins was to be diverted to the blue bins. With the work undertaken during the trial it is evident that the only way we are going to achieve this is for more effective engagement with the residents. To this end, a self-funded promotion initiative is to be launched over the summer months. The evidence gained from the initiative is that being able to continue to offer this very successful scheme will not only help to reduce costs but it also provides a very effective way to help engage with residents and get community recognition for some very deserving schemes.

6 **ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The contents of this report are noted.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The marginal costs involved in running this scheme can be met from within existing budgets. There are financial benefits to the Council in respect of the Waste Contract by increasing recycling and reducing contamination, although these are very difficult to quantify.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 Not applicable the scheme is available to all residents

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 If the Council does not reach national targets it could find that any fine to the UK government are passed on.

7 **CONSULTATION**

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 The report takes due account of the feedback of the scheme since its launch.

Method of Consultation

7.2 Direct contact and on-going email communication

Representations Received

7.3 Comments have helped inform the report

Background Papers

Executive report dated 13 November 2012 – Recycling Incentive Scheme

Executive report dated 18 November 2014 – Waste Regulations 2011 (Amended 2012)

Contacts for further information

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