

**TO: ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL  
12 JANUARY 2016**

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**THE WASTE CHALLENGE  
Director of Environment, Culture and Communities**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Council is both a waste collection and a waste disposal authority. The waste disposal function is administered through the re3 partnership.
- 1.2 We are under an obligation to reduce waste and achieve recycling targets. In so doing we are required to provide for the reasonable needs of residents in respect of facilitating the collection and disposal of their waste. The costs associated with waste are significant and growing year on year particularly with demographic growth. We have powers to direct how waste is presented for collection. The Council currently supplies the green and blue bins and provides for up to an average 240L per week (kerb side) collection service. This is the current 'standard' entitlement (360L if the resident has a brown bin) compared to just 80/90L before the introduction of wheeled bins.
- 1.3 This report reviews what we currently do in relation to the provision of waste collection and disposal and why. It also outlines the main challenges in taking this challenging agenda forward, mindful of the need to renew or extend our Waste Collection Contract from 1 April 2019.
- 1.4 The paper is brought forward so as to get a common point of understanding of the complexity of the issues raised and encourage a wider debate. The discussion will help inform the contents of a new Waste Collection Strategy.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **That the Panel reflects and comments on the position as outlined in the report with a view to informing the future approach of the Council in respect of the waste agenda, and**
- 2.2 **That individual Members consider how all Members of the Council can help ensure the Council achieves the recycling targets within available budgets and legislative restraints.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Council has to work towards helping the UK achieve the EU Waste Framework Directive 2020 recycling target of 50% by 2020, 60% by 2025 and 65% by 2030. There is also a new target that limits landfill to 10% by 2030 and even the future role of EfW is being questioned in the context of the Circular Economy approach now adopted by the EU. A ban on bio (food) waste going to landfill was a possibility but the 2030 target includes for volumes of food waste to be halved where it is technically, environmentally and economically viable.
- 3.2 Unless we improve on what is currently being achieved and develop new initiatives we are unlikely to do much better than we are at present. Should the national target

not be met by 2020 the country is facing the threat of fines from the EU of circa £500k a day. In England the national performance is now about 44.7% and rising very slowly. Should fines be levied there is no reason to believe that the Government will not seek to pass them on to 'poor performers'.

#### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The 'do nothing' option is not considered viable in the circumstances. The waste disposal budget is currently £6.5m and is forecast to be in excess of £7.5m by 2020. The more that can be prevented and/or diverted from landfill the less this will cost. The Council also has to determine its response to the challenge presented so as to inform the decision it has to make in 2019 as regards the future waste collection contract arrangements.

#### **5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

##### **Overview**

- 5.1 In the year before the introduction of alternate weekly collections in 2006, the Council sent almost 40,000 tonnes of waste to landfill (72%) and disposed of a total of 55,400 tonnes of household waste. In 2014/15, our residents disposed of 52,000 tonnes of waste. Of this we sent circa 12,600 tonnes (24%) a year to landfill and 17,300 tonnes (33%) to the Lakeside energy from waste (EfW) facility. The remainder 22,100 tonnes (42%) was recycled, composted or otherwise processed. Over that same period we have seen an increase in the number of properties being serviced and a major downturn in the economy. Whilst the overall average amount of waste collected per household has fallen over the same period from 1.23 tonnes to 1.08 tonnes a year the amount being collected through the residual (green) bin has increased.
- 5.2 Waste disposal is now costing this Council circa £6.5m a year and is expected to increase to £7.5m by 2020 mainly due to demographic growth and inflationary cost increases including landfill tax. We have achieved significant improvements in recycling since 2006 but it is a fact that the recycling rates cannot now be so easily influenced. At both the national and local level we seem to be at a point where many residents still think too little about the amount of waste being placed in their landfill bin and also (in our case) put over the wall at the Longshot Lane Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC). The make up of our waste is also changing and packaging is becoming lighter. As a result landfill tonnages as a percentage of total waste are not falling as they need to and overall costs continue to rise. It is a simple fact that the more that is recycled or diverted the less it costs and the greater the potential for income from sales of the materials (subject to the market).
- 5.3 The cost of landfill tax on residual waste is now £82.60 per tonne and will increase next year to £84.40 and will continue to do so relative to RPIX. Landfill is the most expensive form of disposal. By comparison energy from waste currently saves us £33 per tonne; composting £73 per tonne and recycling £93 per tonne.

##### **Analysis**

- 5.4 The Council undertakes a periodic waste analysis to help with planning future recycling initiatives and to target poor performing recycling areas. The last waste analysis was undertaken in July 2014. The waste was taken from random bins

## Unrestricted

presented for collections in certain streets categorised by Acorn Groups. Waste from flats was not analysed.

- 5.4.1 Flats are a concern in themselves when it comes to waste management. Guidance is given to developers through the planning process for properties that are converted through that process. However, often the facilities that are built are little more than an afterthought, placed in some otherwise almost unusable part of the site. On such sites there tends to be little 'ownership' and as a consequence waste and recycling practices are often left wanting. We are seeing an ever increasing percentage of flats being built borough wide. However, there are other issues particularly in the Town Centre, where flats are provided via the conversion of existing offices as permitted developments. In such situations there are no planning conditions that can be applied to secure proper waste facilities and management arrangements. How to deal with the problems associated with flats (new and existing) does need particular consideration. The guidance the waste team provides to Planning is being rewritten.
- 5.5 The analysis of the results of the 2014 green bin survey identified the following relative to what could have been recycled through the existing arrangements. (NB: decisions on the basis of one survey need to be taken with caution).

Item	Annual tonnage	Potential saving
Cans, plastic bottles, paper and card	1,169 tonnes	£109k
Garden waste	900 tonnes	£66k
Textiles	609 tonnes	£99k
WEEE	242 tonnes	£39k
Glass	1,002 tonnes	£163k
Totals	3,922 tonnes	£476k

- 5.6 By far the highest single identifiable component found in the bins was food waste. The total amount of food waste discarded in the green bins is around 7,800 tonnes per annum). Around 3,590 tonnes of this food waste was found to be items such as vegetable peelings and similar items which could have been composted at home at a saving of circa £580k compared with landfill costs.
- 5.6.1 As the table above shows some 3,922 tonnes could have been recycled via the existing recycling facilities/arrangements. Taking account of the food that could be composted at home this represents a theoretical maximum estimated annual saving of circa £1.05m against current costs.
- 5.7 In addition, whilst some 82% of our residents are regularly recycling, we are finding that circa 12.5% of what is put in the blue bin is contamination, i.e. the wrong form of material. The MRF is built to remove contamination but the Contract targets for this are being exceeded which means additional processing costs are incurred. This results in a cost to BFC of circa £25k per annum (1,400 tonnes). Clearly there is scope to improve this and work has been undertaken within the Borough over the last 6 months to try to reduce this percentage. Unfortunately, getting residents to change their habits is far from simple. We have found that face to face interaction is by far the best approach.
- 5.8 A further consideration to keep in mind with any proposals is the compositional requirements of the waste and that we are contracted to send a minimum of 16,500 tonnes of our waste to the Lakeside EfW facility.

## The Challenge

- 5.9 The current arrangements provide most householders with a weekly waste collection service with materials being segregated to either a blue bin (permitted recyclables) or a green bin (residual/landfill). A brown bin (garden waste) is available on an opt-in rechargeable basis. Accordingly, the average household has a 240L weekly waste bin capacity. If they buy into the garden waste scheme, this adds a further 120L (averaged over the collection period). The Council policy does not allow for excess residual waste left outside the bin but does currently allow for occasional extra recycle.
- 5.10 The challenge facing all councils is how to collect waste in the most economic way and how best to dispose of the waste collected. Some like BFC provide a range of bins for pre-determined and segregated waste. Our approach is to extract the high end materials where there is an established market for it to be recycled. If the consensus is that based on current performance the 'stay as we are' option is not viable then there are hard choices to be made.
- 5.11 The existing Contract with SITA runs until 31 March 2019. It is then extendable for a further 7 years. Under the current arrangement the Council purchased the trucks. As we look forward to 2019 whether or not we extend with SITA we have to determine what and how we want waste collected in advance of tendering and with sufficient time to order a new fleet. The existing Contract arrangements can be changed through negotiation. We can introduce change at any time before.
- 5.12 In the meantime, the service was contracted on an assumed level of growth over the 7 year term from 46,874 to 50,074. We are now providing a service to 48,112 (April 2015) properties, slightly behind the forecast given at the time of tendering. However, it's already clear that the nature of the waste and increased percentage of flats being constructed is forcing a rethink as to how best to continue to collect the waste. In addition, the latest housing projection for March 2020 is 53,330 dwellings. Should this prove the case then in addition to there being the need for collection round changes we may need to fund an additional vehicle before 2019. This begs a question of what type, for what purpose would it be needed and would it be needed in the same way post 2019?
- 5.13 We have asked for options leading up to and post 2019 assuming that we continue to collect materials as we do now, plus the collection of food waste.
- 5.14 Estimating the savings that might arise should a food waste collection service be introduced is difficult because it has been found in other councils that residents, when segregating food waste, realise the amount they are wasting and reduce it. From the waste bin analysis there is circa 7,800 tonnes of food waste in the landfill bins. This currently goes to either landfill or EfW. Our Contractor's national experience suggests that an average of 1.6kgs of food waste per household per week could be recovered based on current trends. This amounts to 76 tonnes per week or 3,952 tonnes per annum. If we assume a 10% saving in food waste due to residents changing their lifestyle habits, a further 10% is composted at home and 50% (3,129 tonnes) of the remainder is then collected the conservative net saving would be circa £228k. This is not enough to cover the additional revenue costs associated with its collection.
- 5.15 As already mentioned it has been widely reported that the UK Government is facing fines of £500k per day if it does not reach EU recycling targets. There is no detail at present as to how this may apply to the UK or how if it did how the Government might seek to recover it. Working on very simple assumptions the number of collection

authorities not achieving 50% as at end of March 2015 was 335. The annual value of fines would be £182.5 million. If these fines were simply divided across these councils, then those like us would be facing a fine of £545k per annum.

- 5.16 We are currently recycling circa 39.3% of waste including both kerbside, bring sites and HWRC waste. Based on the 2014 survey results, if we could begin to capture just half of the recoverable materials in the landfill bins through either the existing blue bins and bring site arrangements we could recycle another 1,967 tonnes. If we could also encourage the diversion of circa 1,564 tonnes by home composting/encouraging less food wastage we could then be achieving a recycling rate of 44.5%. This could result in additional savings to those in the table below of circa £494k but to do this would be challenging.

### **Looking Forward**

- 5.17 The recycling figures include not only the kerbside waste from domestic properties, but also schools, street litter and leaves and allocated HWRC recycled waste. The recycling performance of many of our schools leaves scope for improvement. There are requirements and targets in the Street Cleansing Contract with respect to litter. Some two years or so ago the Environment Agency stopped councils composting street sweepings (leaves, aggregates) and it had to be sent to landfill. Working across re3, in partnership with FCC, some successful trials allow the different materials to be cleaned and segregated and it can then be included once again in our recycling figures. This should add at least 1% to our recycling performance figures.
- 5.18 Work continues to be undertaken to try to recover and recycle more of the waste at FCC facilities such as those at Longshot Lane HWRC (e.g. carpet/mattress recycling and waste that goes over the wall) but such changes will only make small differences to the overall percentage.
- 5.19 The government has been lobbying for changes in how recycle rates are calculated so as to allow for the inclusion of bottom ash from EfW facilities where the end product is then recycled. In our case were the rules ever changed this could add another 6% to these figures.
- 5.20 Should it be agreed that any beneficial use arising from EfW bottom ash be taken into account then with additional effort there is a reasonable prospect that the Council will achieve the 2020, 50% target (collecting as we do at present). If bottom ash is not to be included then there is little prospect of achieving this target unless the performance of the HWRC and MRF can somehow compensate for the shortfall. However, even if bottom ash were to be included in time for 2020, it seems most unlikely that we will not achieve the next target set for 2025 unless the council changes how it deals with waste and there are many lifestyle changes in society.
- 5.21 National experience, based on the collection and disposal options available to us confirms that if the overall capacity of the bins and the collection offer is not changed then the prospect of achieving the targets is remote. It is only by introducing a food collection service, being firm in its collection policies and reducing the residual bin capacity that the Council can hope to achieve the targets. Just adding a food service to our existing collections arrangements would simply provide more overall capacity to each home as well as more space in the residual bin for materials that should be recycled.
- 5.22 The only way to reduce the capacity is to either change the frequency of the residual bin collection service or to replace the existing 240L bins with 180L (or smaller) bins. The estimated cost to replace all bins is £1.3m (excluding disposal costs of the old

bins). One of the concerns often expressed with a lessening of frequency of collection of the residual waste is the concern about smells and flies. With a weekly food waste collection offer this removes the main source for such problems. The use of Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP), e.g. nappies, should never be a problem as they should be bagged anyway. In some councils such products are collected as part of an opt-in arrangement in much the same way that we collect clinical waste now but there are other options.

### **Effecting Change**

- 5.23 The recent residents' survey indicated that only 6% of households want to return to weekly collection. Getting residents to understand the need and reasoning behind any further change will require a well thought through and managed communication plan, sufficient resources and a corporate commitment.
- 5.24 In the immediate short term it is evident that much more effort is needed to encourage a general change in habits and better use of the existing arrangements. The current staffing arrangements within the waste and recycling team are being reviewed to take account of the learning arising from the appointment of two self funded seasonal posts last year. These posts were created to try to improve recycling levels by having more direct interface with the public and helping them understand more about what can and cannot be recycled. The benefit of work is being evaluated. Additionally SITA provides resource to assist with recycling as part of their contractual requirements but also because of their commitment to assist as a key partner to the Council. As part of re3 there are some shared resource opportunities there.
- 5.25 The promotions budget in 2015/16 is very limited allowing for little more than the cost of the bin hangers and a few leaflets.
- 5.26 In delivering any potential changes we have to work with re3 and our partner authorities. A joint officers group for the respective service heads has recently been formed to address the various issues that we all face. There are currently no food handling facilities at either Longshot or Smallmead and we need to take due account of the implications and options that may arise.

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

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Not sought for the purposes of this report.

### Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 Not sought for the purposes of this report.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 Not applicable.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Not applicable.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

### Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 Not applicable at this stage.

### Method of Consultation

7.2 The strategy will be made public via the Bracknell Forest Council website/consultation portal.

### Representations Received

7.3 Any representations will be considered in the finalisation of the strategy.

### Background Papers

None.

### Contacts for further information

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