

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
11 JUNE 2009

‘WASTE NOT WANT NOT’ – REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICES
(Working Group Lead Member)

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report seeks the Overview and Scrutiny Commission’s adoption of the report of a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel relating to its strategic review of waste and recycling. One of the recommendations contained in the report has been amended since the Commission previously raised a number of queries on the draft report at its meeting held on 1 April 2009.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the amended report of the review of waste and recycling undertaken by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel be adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for sending formally to the relevant Executive Member.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 A working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel has undertaken a strategic review of waste collection, recycling and disposal which is a major service area affecting all residents of the Borough and has a significant impact on the environment and sustainability implications. The work included the review of progress of the new waste Private Finance Initiative re³ contract and also the experience of the first year of the Alternate Bin Collection (ABC) scheme but not the change to ABC allowing all dry kerbside recyclables being placed in blue wheeled bins as this occurred after the review was completed.
- 3.2 Key objectives of the review have been to develop an appreciation of the types of waste collected and methods of collection and disposal; understand how the re³ project will deliver projected savings; ascertain whether the ABC scheme can be improved; identify options for further reducing the amount of waste generated by households and businesses and to increase recycling; and identify for adoption where appropriate, best waste management practice in relation to the collection of waste and recyclable materials.
- 3.3 The scope of the review has included waste collection, recycling and disposal; detailed consideration of the ABC scheme (including waste composition and bin size); identification of possible methods of reducing food waste; examining the options for increasing the use of the community recycling sites; and understanding how the Longshot Lane Civic Amenity site is operated and managed.
- 3.4 On 16 March 2009 the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed the final draft of the Working Group’s report and recommended that it be adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for sending formally to the

relevant Executive Member. However, when subsequently considering the report at its meeting on 1 April, the Commission did not adopt the report but raised a number of related queries and comments which are set out in Appendix 1 to this report together with the response of the Working Group and Panel. This response suggests one amendment, to recommendation 5.2 of the report as set out below.

- “An investigation be carried out into the feasibility of giving all residents the option to request 140 or 240 litre wheeled blue bins if they have insufficient space or demand for the larger 240 litre bin or the 140 litre bin is not large enough to accommodate paper and card waste in addition to cans and plastic bottles.”

3.5 The original recommendations in the report are attached to this report at Appendix 2. The full report is not appended owing to its large size and therefore Commission Members are requested to bring with them to this meeting the agenda for the meeting of the Commission held on 1 April which contains the full report. The report may also be viewed on-line on the Council’s website and copies can be made available to Members on request.

Background Papers

‘Waste Not Want Not’ – report of the review of waste and recycling published in the agenda of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 1 April 2009.

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Waste not want not - Review of Waste and Recycling Services

'Waste Not Want Not' – Working Group Report

Response to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's queries and comments in respect of the above report:

1. Recommendation 5.2 - needs to be clear whether there is an associated cost implication. It also needs to reflect the experience of some residents that smaller blue bins which used to be sufficiently large, are no longer large enough since they are for cardboard and paper too.

Response – The Working Group did not consider financial implications but there may be some attached to this recommendation. The mixing of all kerbside collected dry recyclables in one wheeled bin was introduced after the review work was completed so it is not taken account of in this recommendation. However, it may be beneficial to add a reference to it as it is relevant to bin size. Re-wording of recommendation 5.2 as follows may be appropriate:-

“An investigation be carried out into the feasibility of giving all residents the option to request 140 or 240 litre wheeled blue bins if they have insufficient space or demand for the larger 240 litre bin or the 140 litre bin is not large enough to accommodate paper and card waste in addition to cans and plastic bottles.”

Change to the Report suggested

2. Recycling of glass - could the report comment on the feasibility of having kerbside collections of glass? Commission Members were aware of the health and safety issue and the complications with clearing away broken glass from the kerbside, but thought that if some of the top performing authorities have kerbside collections, and as some older/infirm residents struggle to take bottles to recycling banks, the report should comment on this.

Response – The Working Group was advised that residents have indicated that they are not in favour of kerbside collection of glass owing to the danger broken glass poses to children and pets. The glass bring recycling banks are successful and as residents have been accustomed to using them for many years the officers see no merit in changing the system. Two bullet points in paragraph 3.44 of the report comment on the recycling of glass. These are:

- Bracknell Forest was among the best performing local authorities for glass recycling via bring recycling banks.
- Some local authorities were ceasing the recycling of glass bottles as it did not contribute to biodegradable waste targets. Locally, only 5% of glass bottles were placed in landfill bins so kerbside collections of such bottles would make little difference and would incur extra costs.

No change to the Report suggested

3. High performing local authorities - did the Working Group consider visiting any of the high-performing local authorities listed in paragraph 3.65 of the report?

Response – no the Working Group did not visit any of these councils, the majority of which are some distance away. Identifying best practice was only one of five objectives of the review and the Working Group considered that the information gathered was sufficient to give waste and recycling officers a steer regarding best practice.

No change to the Report suggested

4. Tetrapaks - could the report have a recommendation encouraging companies to do more on recycling of tetrapaks?

Response – the Working Group did not feel that there was any merit in encouraging companies to take further action in respect of recycling of Tetrapaks at present as there are no Tetrapak recycling plants in the UK. There is already a scheme funded by Tetrapak for two years that involves collection of Tetrapak waste from five bring recycling banks in the Borough which is then shipped to Sweden, the nearest recycling plant (see paragraph 3.36 of the report).

No change to the Report suggested

5. Recommendation 5.7 - Could it be expanded to recommend that recycling facilities at shopping centres are restored (a Commission Member advised that some of these had recently been removed by the Council).

Response – the Working Group was advised that the Council would be reducing the number of paper and card bring recycling banks in the Borough following the implementation of the use of blue wheeled bins for all kerbside collected dry recyclables as the banks were being abused by small companies at some recycling locations leading to the Council incurring clearing costs.

No change to the Report suggested

6. Paragraph 3.21 - Could there be another recommendation for the Council to further promote the use of traditional nappies?

Response – The Council operates the ‘Smartie Pants’ Nappy Incentive Scheme (which involves £30 cash back to Bracknell Forest residents taking up the use of washable nappies, subject to certain qualifications). Bracknell Forest also supports Real Nappy Week, an annual event held every spring to promote the use of real nappies, by holding a Real Nappy Tea Party to provide residents with all the facts regarding use of traditional nappies. The Council’s website offers advice on where to buy real nappies and it encourages the use of real nappies in its Hints and Tips on the Art of Waste minimisation. If the Overview and Scrutiny Commission feel that this is insufficient, further promotional work could be recommended but there may be resulting cost implications.

No change to the Report suggested

7. Paragraph 3.41 – Commission Members would welcome a more explicit recommendation to encourage supermarkets to reduce packaging, and possibly replace plastic bags with paper bags, and to take more responsibility for their actions and the environment.

Response – The Working Group’s research found that supermarkets are taking action (paragraphs 3.52 to 3.60 of the report) and there is a growing number of initiatives in place e.g. one major supermarket chain has just announced a new trial on allowing customers to unload, and unwrap / unpackage items in test stores and deposit waste and another has introduced some compostable packaging. Although it is possible to recommend that the LGA be requested to encourage supermarkets to further reduce packaging and implement corporate social responsibility practices to minimise the harm caused to the environment, this would be unenforceable and immeasurable.

No change to the Report suggested

8. Paragraph 4.9 - says the Council should consider best practice in these high performing authorities and possibly adopt it. Can there be a recommendation to go with that statement?

Response – Recommendation 5.4 appears to address this matter.

No change to the Report suggested

9. Commission Members asked for the review scoping document to be attached to the report.

Response – This can be done although Section 2 of the report includes most of what is contained in the scoping document.

No change to the Report suggested

5. Recommendations

It is recommended to the Executive Member for the Environment that:

re³ Project

- 5.1 Should the opportunity arise through the re³ contract, 'in-vessel' composting of food waste be explored;

ABC Scheme

- 5.2 All residents be given the option to request 140 litre wheeled blue recycling bins, (currently only available to Old Age Pensioners), in place of the standard 240 litre bin as they may have no need for / storage space for the standard sized bins;
- 5.3 Action be taken to tackle the increase in fly-tipping;
- 5.4 The waste management practice of the top CPA rated councils and those with the highest levels of recycling and composting be explored to identify best waste and recycling practice for possible adoption in Bracknell Forest;
- 5.5 The Working Group continue to monitor ABC and recycling developments following the move to placing all dry kerbside recyclables together in wheeled blue bins and report its findings in a follow up report in approximately 12 months' time;

Minimise Waste / Increase Recycling

- 5.6 As those on low incomes may not be in a position to buy brown bins or garden refuse sacks leading to garden waste being placed in landfill bins, the cost benefit options of providing them free of charge to those on income support be explored;
- 5.7 The feasibility of providing recycling banks at hospitals, churches and charities, also usable by the public, be investigated;
- 5.8 The Government be lobbied to promote the recycling of additional articles in order to procure more recycling opportunities and achieve sustainability;
- 5.9 The Council be mindful of, and take steps to support, LGA and DEFRA waste reduction campaigns;
- 5.10 Schemes for collecting waste and recyclables from small businesses, such as bin sharing, be investigated and facilitated;
- 5.11 The Social Care and Learning Department be asked to approach schools concerning the provision of educational programmes to promote recycling and waste reduction, possibly in partnership with 'Waste Watch';

- 5.12 The feasibility of introducing a holistic Council-wide Borough slogan and / or logo to promote waste reduction and recycling for use on all paperwork, publications, bins and Council owned vehicles be considered;

Food Waste

- 5.13 Measures to reduce food waste through education and promotion, such as encouraging residents to support the national 'Love Food, Hate Waste' campaign and working with the WI, be pursued;
- 5.14 Opportunities to make further food digesting Green Cones available to residents at a subsidised cost be pursued;
- 5.15 The LGA be requested to advise the national headquarters of major supermarket chains that BOGOF offers and multi portion packs are leading to food waste and ask them to pursue alternatives such as price reductions;
- 5.16 Subject to satisfactory checks with the local Water Board, the use of food waste disposal units to facilitate food waste reduction by residents living in smaller properties with confined space or flats be promoted;

The Council's Town Centre Offices

- 5.17 Alternative bin arrangements in the Council's offices, such as the replacement of personal bins with compartmentalised bins to facilitate recycling, be pursued;
- 5.18 A recycling plan for the new civic hub be developed when the operational fit out stage is reached; and

Satisfaction Levels with the Waste and Recycling Collection Service

- 5.19 Further residents' feedback in respect of the waste and recycling service be sought through whatever means are considered to be appropriate.