

Warwickshire Waste Partnership – 25th July 2006

Future Waste Collection Systems in Warwickshire

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy on behalf of the Officers Group

Summary

This report sets out the findings of the Waste Collection Project Team on the changes to collection systems and the supporting infrastructure which will be required to meet the challenging recycling targets set out in the Warwickshire Waste Strategy.

Recommendation

1. That Members note the contents of this report.
2. That Members agree, in principle, to the adoption of a common approach to future waste collection systems across Warwickshire.
3. That Members seek agreement from their respective Councils on the proposals.

1. Background

- 1.1 Warwickshire's Municipal Waste Management Strategy sets out the preferred methods for disposing of Warwickshire's waste, but also highlights the need to raise recycling levels within the County to at least 40-45% by 2010.
- 1.2 All five District and Borough Councils have successfully increased their individual recycling rates over the last few years by introducing garden waste collection schemes and extending and improving their kerbside recycling programmes for other materials. The County Council has also seen a substantial increase in the amount of waste recycled through its Household Waste Recycling Centres.
- 1.3 Despite the progress made to date, a further step change will be required in the short to medium term in order to meet the target of 40-45%. A Waste Collection Project Team was established to investigate the best ways to achieve that target and what changes in collection schemes and recycling infrastructure would be necessary Councils. The team was comprised of officers from the County Council and all five District and Borough Councils. The team met twice in May

and reported their findings and recommendations to the Waste Strategy Implementation Board on 9th June 2006.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 The issues discussed by the team (including separate discussions with Stratford District Council who were unable to attend the Project Team meetings) included:-
- (i) Individual contract arrangements.
 - (ii) Optimum collection frequencies.
 - (iii) Materials to be included.
 - (iv) Collection of kitchen and garden waste.
 - (v) Containers (Health & Safety).
 - (iv) Collection methods – MRFs.
- 2.2 Stratford on Avon and Warwick District Councils have employed consultants to investigate options for operating a joint contract which could combine several service areas including:-
- (i) Grounds Maintenance.
 - (ii) Refuse Collection.
 - (iii) Kerbside Recycling.
 - (iv) Street Cleansing.
- 2.3 Both Councils have indicated that they are considering moving to alternate weekly collections. The main contract elements for both Councils are due for renewal in 2008, with the principal exception of Stratford's Street Cleansing Contract which is due to expire in August 2007 unless a way can be found to extend the Contract until April 2008. If a joint contract goes ahead, the contract documents will need to be drawn up in time to start the procurement process in September, 2006.
- 2.4 At present none of the other District or Borough Councils is considering externalising their main refuse collection services. However, in respect of recycling, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council uses ECT Recycling to collect dry recyclables from the kerbside (ECT's contract is due to end in 2008, but could be extended for a further five years), while North Warwickshire Borough Council uses Abitibi Consolidated to carry out a similar service under a five year contract until 2011 with a possible two year extension.
- 2.5 The new contracts being drawn up by Warwick and Stratford allow both authorities to establish collection schemes for the short to medium term in line

with the requirements of the Waste Strategy, but these refuse and recycling services will need to be supported by the appropriate infrastructure. A commitment to providing the necessary treatment and disposal facilities through the implementation of the Waste Strategy is therefore essential at an early stage. Due to established contracts and in-house arrangements, the other three WCAs in the north of the county have both stability and a certain degree of flexibility in the delivery of their waste management services. Given the separate conditions which exist, the Partnership may wish to consider a twin track approach to the delivery of new collection systems and their supporting infrastructure, with the initial focus on the south of the County.

- 2.6 Stratford and Warwick have indicated a desire to move towards alternate weekly collections of domestic waste, recyclables and garden waste. The group also discussed the optimum collection frequency for dry recyclables and concluded that a fortnightly collection of dry recyclables should be sufficient, particularly if the container is large enough. Three collections every two weeks is still an increase on the traditional weekly bin/bag collection. A move to weekly recycling collections would be more expensive and risk sending out the message that a weekly collection must be maintained, when the correct division of waste between three containers should make alternate weekly collections more than adequate. The Project Team also felt that all the District and Borough Councils in Warwickshire should ultimately aim to move to a uniform collection system.
- 2.7 For alternate weekly collections to be successful (and acceptable to the public), enough waste needs to be removed from the “black bin” to obviate the need for weekly collections. In order to achieve this, the Project Team concluded that as much biodegradable waste as possible should be collected from “green bins” and that plastics (as many types as possible) and cardboard must be recycled through the multi-material kerbside services. The ultimate aim is to make recycling as simple and as trouble free as possible for the householder. The integrated collection of biowaste (including kitchen waste) removes most of the health and odour concerns over alternate weekly collections while the addition of cardboard and plastics to “dry” recycling schemes tackles the problem of volume and capacity in the bins. It was felt by the group that simpler collection schemes which recycle most “wet” and “dry” waste would almost certainly lead to greater participation by residents and lead to higher recycling rates for all types of waste.
- 2.8 The question of whether separate collection schemes and/or containers should be provided for kitchen waste was also considered by the Project Team. It was felt that containers (even biodegradable bags) would encourage contamination and cause potential confusion and that separate collections were potentially expensive, unworkable and unlikely to be taken up by householders. The move to accepting kitchen waste in the bins currently used for collecting garden waste would be relatively inexpensive for the collection authorities as it could be easily and quickly integrated into current schemes. This would, however, require a change from open windrow composting to in-vessel processes which would be more expensive. The Project Team believed that the benefits of such a move would extend beyond simply diverting kitchen waste; alternate weekly collections would be made much more palatable and overall recycling rates of all materials were likely to increase as a result. These assumptions would be further

investigated as part of the business case for the procurement of biowaste (i.e. in-vessel) treatment facilities outlined in a separate report elsewhere on this agenda.

- 2.9 Finally, the Project Team discussed the various merits of different containers and collection systems. Kerbside collection systems tend to be linked to the types and sizes of containers used and the changes to one may affect the provision of the other. For example, wheeled bins cannot be used where materials need to be sorted at the kerbside. Likewise, small boxes and bags are less effective if materials are commingled. One important (and possibly overriding) consideration for future collection schemes is a recent HSL (Health & Safety Laboratories) report on behalf of the HSE, which concluded that kerbside boxes over 40 litres should not be used for kerbside recycling schemes (most local authorities, including those in Warwickshire, currently use larger boxes) and indicated that there should be a move away from manual handling and sorting at the kerbside in favour of commingled collections using plastic wheeled bins.
- 2.10 Commingled collection schemes using wheeled bins are potentially more efficient and cost effective for the Boroughs and Districts than the present arrangement of sorting waste at the kerbside (although glass collection is problematic under such systems). It does, however, require Materials Recycling Facilities located within the region to sort the waste. Rugby are currently looking at building and operating their own Materials Recycling Facilities (MRF) (which could potentially have the capacity to take waste from neighbouring authorities) and North Warwickshire's Contractor Abitibi has plans for a facility in Swadlincote, Derbyshire and nearby Tamworth has a well developed bulking and transfer station, with potential for future expansion. Stratford on Avon District Council is also looking at locating a MRF within its District but its plans are only at an early stage. As mentioned earlier in the report, a twin track approach initially concentrating on Warwick and Stratford's new contracts (whether combined or not) in order to provide sorting facilities to support possible new collection arrangements in the future, may be the best way forward. Sufficient future capacity to service new collection arrangements in Rugby, Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire could potentially be supplied by Rugby's MRF and/or North Warwickshire's Contractor, Abitibi.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 The key points agreed in principle by the Project Team were:-
- (i) Alternate weekly collections of recyclables and residual waste is economically preferable to weekly collections if plastics and cardboard are included.
 - (ii) Alternate weekly collection of all materials should be sufficient – there is no need for weekly collections if plastic and cardboard are also included.
 - (iii) It is preferable to collect cardboard separately (as part of a dry recyclable collection) instead of including it with green waste collections.

- (iv) Move from kerbside sort and boxes for recyclables to commingled collections using wheeled bins and processing the collected materials through a MRF.
- (v) Collect kitchen waste (biowaste) and garden waste in the same container to be processed in an in-vessel composting facility (no kitchen container to be supplied for biowaste).
- (vi) In the future, aim to provide uniform collection services across the County using similar sized and coloured containers, accepting the same materials and emptied at the same frequencies. This will allow for easier and more cost-effective promotion, monitoring and enforcement of the services.

3.2 In order to provide the right infrastructure in the correct locations, the District and Borough Councils will need, in future, to be able to adapt their collection services in order to utilise facilities such as MRFs and in-vessel composting sites. An agreement to adopt a common approach to refuse and recycling collections across Warwickshire (as set out in 3.1 above) will allow the short, medium and longer term aims of the Waste Strategy to be better planned and more effectively implemented.

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Background Papers

None

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