

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Waste & Recycling Task & Finish Group 2nd July 2009  
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### REVIEW OF REFUSE AND RECYCLING SERVICE PERFORMANCE

#### Purpose

1. This report is the first stage report of the strategic review of the council's integrated recycling and refuse collection service (the service). Its purpose is to brief members of the Waste & Recycling Task & Finish Group on the performance of the service.
2. The report outlines:
  - the current configuration of the service
  - the performance of the service against a range of performance measures
  - the services strengths and weaknesses together with the opportunities and challenges it faces
3. Subsequent reports will consider a range of service configuration and procurement options.

#### Background

4. The refuse collection and street cleansing services were packaged as a single service and subject to compulsory competitive tender (CCT) in 1999. This was a direct result of the termination of the street cleansing service, which had been subject to CCT in 1997 and let to a private contractor, following the contractor's failure to perform the service to the required standard.
5. The retendered refuse and street cleansing service was won by the Council's in-house direct services organisation (DSO), now the environmental operations section within Health & Environmental Services, and has been operated as a directly managed, rather than contracted out, service since then. As such there is no contract in place and therefore no legal requirement to retender the service.
6. In 2003 the refuse collection service was totally reconfigured with the introduction of the current alternate weekly wheeled bin service and fully integrated with the kerbside recycling collection service.
7. The kerbside recycling collection service was subject to CCT in 2000 for a 5-year contract period extendable by agreement to 2010. Due to the volatility of the market in recyclables, the council took the decision that the council's DSO should not bid for this contract. The contract was subsequently awarded to a private contractor, Cleanaway Ltd (now part of Veolia Environmental Services) and was reviewed and extended in 2005 until October 2010.
8. Since inception of the contract in 2000, the range of materials collected has been extended with the addition of glass in 2001 and plastic bottles in 2008, each requiring variation agreements and price reviews. The contract was reviewed and extended in

2005 until October 2010. In view of the uncertainties associated with the impact of the growth agenda, the extension included a price review, scheduled for 2008. This was subsequently rolled into the plastic bottles variation. There is no provision to further extend the kerbside recycling contract past October 2010.

## Considerations

### CURRENT SERVICE CONFIGURATION

9. Table 1 shows the configuration of the current service.

	Kerbside Dry Recycling	Organic Waste	Residual Waste
Materials	Cans, glass, paper, plastic bottles	Kitchen and garden waste, cardboard, card	Non-recyclable/compostable waste
No of Households	60,000	60,000	60,000
Organisation & Expiry date	Veolia Environmental Services - Oct 2010	SCDC – n/a	SCDC – n/a
% Households served	100%	100%	100%
Collection frequency	AWC – week1	AWC – week1	AWC – week2
Vehicles utilised	11 Kerbsiders+ Van	13 RCVs + Mini-freighter	
Number of crew	11 Crews (11 Drivers + 17 Loaders)	13 Crews (14 Drivers + 26 Loaders)	
Receptacles	100% 55 lt box	97.8% 240 lt wheeled bin 2% Communal bin 0.2% paper sack	97.8% 240 lt wheeled bin 2% Communal bin 0.2% plastic sack

**Table 1: Integrated recycling and refuse collection service – current configuration**

10. As can be seen, the vast majority of households are served by alternate weekly collections of dry recyclables, organic waste and residual waste using a combination of 55 litre boxes and 240 litre wheeled bins. A small proportion of households (<0.2%) receive separate weekly sack collections of residual and organic waste. These are only provided where there is physically no space available to store wheeled bins.

### CURRENT PERFORMANCE

11. Appendix 1 shows the performance of the service and trend analysis as measured against national and local performance indicators.

### Finance, Efficiency and Value for Money

12. In considering finance, efficiency and value for money, the national indicator BVPI 86 (The cost of waste collection per household) end of year performance for 2008/09 was slightly above target (actual £54.56, target £54.24). The target is set as the budget estimate for that year. It should however be noted that this indicator takes no account of the different characteristics of individual areas, such as the wide variations between rural and urban areas in distances travelled in delivering services and the differences in socio-economic characteristics and deprivation levels. Indeed, it takes

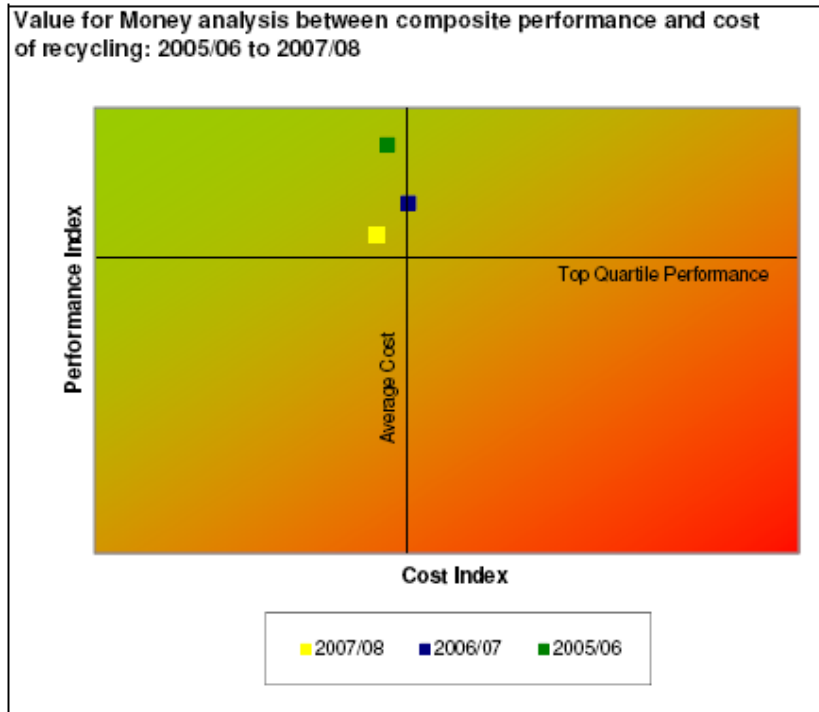
no account of the nature or extent of service provided e.g. range of materials collected for recycling/composting, recycling performance, customer satisfaction and so disadvantages those high performing authorities providing a comprehensive range of recycling opportunities such as South Cambridgeshire. It is therefore of limited use in comparing how the service performs when compared with similar services in similar environments.

13. In an effort to provide a more meaningful comparison the service has therefore been benchmarked against the SPARSE (the Sparsity Partnership for Authorities Delivering Rural Services) group<sup>1</sup> although once again, even within this group, there is a wide variation in the range of services provided.
14. When compared with the SPARSE group, BVPI 86 shows that although the cost of collection has increased yearly since 2002/03, the most significant increases occurring between 2003/04 (£36.07 per household) and 2004/05 (£44.20 per household), this increase has reflected the major service reconfiguration that occurred during 2003 and 2004 as the service was changed to AWC and the associated cost of infrastructure to support the changes i.e. collection vehicles, wheeled bins.
15. Even allowing for this major service reconfiguration our quartile performance in relation to cost amongst SPARSE authorities has improved from third quartile in 2005/06 to second quartile in 2007/08. However, the quartile comparison is still subject to the weaknesses outlined in paragraph 12 above of BVPI 86.
16. The SPARSE group has attempted to remedy these weaknesses by providing a Value for Money analysis of composite performance, which takes account of recycling rate, waste arisings and customer satisfaction and unit costs for waste management as a whole.
17. Graph 1 produced by SPARSE, presents the results of this value for money analysis from 2005/06 to 2007/08, the latest period for which figures are available. The vertical line of the x-axis shows the average cost, the y-axis the top quartile performance index. The position of the yellow square (2007/08) in relation to the blue (2006/07) and green (2005/06) squares charts both the change in costs and performance compared with other authorities.
18. The graph demonstrates:
  - The service has consistently been in the optimum top left hand quadrant i.e. above top quartile performance at below average cost.
  - 2005/06 – lower than average cost of recycling and performance higher than the top quartile
  - 2006/07 – Average cost of recycling and performance higher than the top quartile (lower than 2005/06 performance)
  - 2007/08 – lower than average cost of recycling (lowest throughout the period) and performance higher than the top quartile (lowest throughout the period)
19. Data for 2008/09 is not presently available. The introduction of plastics and the price review will increase cost of collection in 2008/09. Satisfaction levels have risen following the introduction of plastics and with maintenance of dry recycling performance which goes against the downward trend experienced across Cambridgeshire Districts, South Cambridgeshire's composite performance could

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<sup>1</sup> The SPARSE group includes authorities with a population density of two persons per hectare or less.

remain top left quadrant, however that is by no means certain. Although, through available benchmarks, the existing service is seen as cost effective, reducing costs per head from current levels would have a further positive affect on the value for money assessment; almost certainly ensuring the Council remains in the top left quadrant.



- Key points to draw from the table:
- 2005/06 – renewal of the kerbside contract resulting in a price increase.
  - 2006/07 - £3.50 of the increase in cost attributable to the cost of pension fund top-ups

**Graph 1: SPARSE Value for Money Analysis 2005 - 2008**

20. In addition to the SPARSE analysis, a costs per head comparison with 15 other local authorities which are our nearest statistical neighbours in terms of population, age profile of population, density, sparsity etc has been made. The results of this are presented in the table 2 below and show that our waste collection costs were the 10<sup>th</sup> lowest out of 16. As with the BVPI 86 this comparison is still subject to the weaknesses outlined in paragraph 12.

	2008-09 £ per head (SCDC)	2008-09 £ per head (Nearest Neighbour Group average)	Ranking vs nearest neighbour group	2009 –10 £ per head (SCDC)	Ranking vs nearest neighbour group
Waste Collection	23.48 (23.23*)	23.22	10th lowest out of 16	27.49*	Not Available

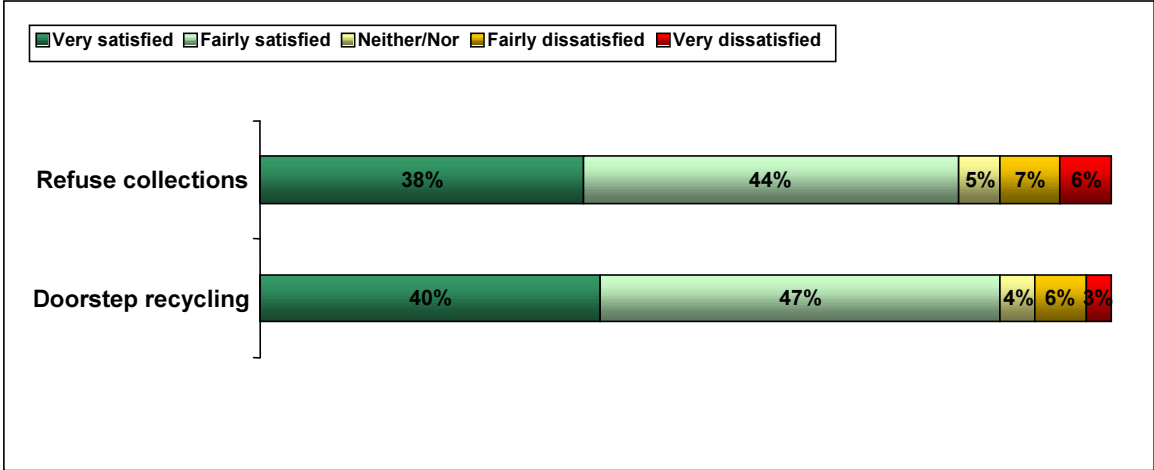
\* excludes pension cost

**Customer Service**

21. The BVPI General Survey is carried out once every three years. BVPI 90a presents the % of residents satisfied with household waste collection and BVPI 90b presents the % of residents satisfied with recycling facilities. Unfortunately, the last survey was carried out in 2006/07 and is therefore of limited use in considering current levels of customer satisfaction.

- 22. Similarly, no specific attitudinal or behavioural consultation with service users has been carried out since the introduction of the current AWC service in 2003/04. There is therefore a lack of information about user expectations and perceptions of the current and future services.
- 23. As a result, in 2008 Health and Environmental Services (H&ES) commissioned CELLO **mruk** research (an independent market research organisation) to conduct a survey with customers and residents to establish their satisfaction with services provided by the H&ES, including satisfaction with waste and recycling services in the district. The survey was conducted between November 2008 and January 2009 i.e. after the implementation of the kerbside plastic bottle collection service.
- 24. A total of 750 telephone interviews were achieved. In terms of the accuracy of the survey results, if grossed up to represent the views of the total population of residents in South Cambridgeshire, the results are accurate to within a sampling error of  $\pm 4\%$  at the 95% confidence limit. Interviews were split evenly between customers and residents and 375 interviews were carried out with each subgroup.
- 25. The results of the H&ES survey were in summary:

- Overall, respondents were satisfied with all the waste and recycling services provided or supported by SCDC. Satisfaction was highest with doorstep recycling – 87% of respondents were satisfied with this aspect (SE246) with 40% stating they were very satisfied (4% neither/nor, 9% dissatisfied)
- Four fifths were satisfied with refuse collections (82%) (5% neither/not, 13% dissatisfied)
- Half the respondents (50%) said they had seen an improvement in doorstep recycling over the past twelve months and a third (31%) have seen improvements in refuse collections.



**Graph 2: Satisfaction with waste and recycling services (H&ES 2008 survey) (sampling error of  $\pm 5\%$  at the 95% confidence limit)**

- 26. The results of the H&ES survey when compared with 2006/07 BVPI General Survey results show that satisfaction levels for refuse collection have decreased from 84% in 2006/07 to 82% in 2008/09, although this result is within the survey margin of error. Satisfaction with doorstep recycling collections has increased from 69% in 2006/07 to 87% in 2008/09.

27. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published the 2009 Place Survey results on 23rd June. The unweighted results for South Cambridgeshire DC, which are therefore subject to possible change, together with county and national comparisons are shown in table 3 below:

Place survey question	SCDC result	Cambridgeshire Districts range	National	Quartile
Satisfied with refuse collection	78%	70% - 82%	78%	Not available
Satisfied with doorstep recycling	79%	65% - 81%	70%	Not available

**Table 3: 2008/09 Place Survey Results (DCLG) (sampling error of  $\pm 3\%$  at the 95% confidence limit)**

28. Unfortunately, the % neither/nor results and quartiles have not been published by DCLG. It is therefore not possible to extrapolate from these figures the % dissatisfied with either service.
29. The results for SCDC are towards the top end of the range in Cambridgeshire and compare very favourably with satisfaction levels nationally.
30. Allowing for the relative margins of error of both surveys, the results of the H&ES 2008 survey are consistent with the results of the DCLG Place Survey 2009.

#### Service Quality/Provision

31. Appendix 1: Integrated Recycling & Refuse Service – Performance & Trend Analysis demonstrates that the service is in the top quartile of performance in relation to NI 191 (kg residual waste per household) and NI 192 (Household waste recycled and composted).
32. The trend for NI 191 is downwards i.e. positive, from 516kg in 2005/06 to 454kg in 2008/09.
33. However, performance is in the bottom quartile for dry recycling rates (Ranked 94<sup>th</sup> out of 122 SPARSE authorities) and the percentage of waste recycled or composted has remained relatively static over the same period.
34. Table 4 presents the provisional top 10 councils for recycling and composting in 2008/09. Provisional figures show for recycling and composting percentages, South Cambridgeshire would have appeared to have dropped out of the Country's top ten recyclers/ composters for the first time since the alternate weekly refuse and recycling scheme was introduced in 2003/04. It is expected that South Cambridgeshire will fall within the top twenty local authorities.

Expected ranking in 2008/09 (2007/08)	Local authority	Recycling /composting rate 2007/08	Provisional recycling /composting rate 2008/09	Recycling Service
1 (8)	Staffordshire Moorlands	52.87%	63%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWC</li> <li>• Organic - wheeled bin collection</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry recycling - wheeled bin</li> </ul>
2 (63)	Cotswolds	43.29%	60.95%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWC</li> <li>• Organic wheeled bin collection</li> <li>• Dry recycling - box</li> </ul>
3 (1)	East Lindsey	58.4%	60%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWC</li> <li>• Organic - wheeled bin collection</li> <li>• Dry recycling -wheeled bin</li> </ul>
4 (10)	South Shropshire	52.06%	57.8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWC</li> <li>• Organic wheeled bin collection</li> <li>• Dry recycling - box</li> </ul>
5 (2)	South Hams	57.07%	57.65%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWC</li> <li>• Organic wheeled bin collection</li> <li>• Dry recycling - bags</li> </ul>
6 (5)	Huntingdonshire	55.14%	57.4%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWC</li> <li>• Organic - wheeled bin collection</li> <li>• Dry recycling -wheeled bin</li> </ul>
7 (4)	Teignbridge	55.58%	57%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWC</li> <li>• Organic wheeled bin collection</li> </ul> Dry recycling - box
8 (6)	Uttlesford	54.5%	57%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWC</li> <li>• Organic - wheeled bin collection</li> <li>• Dry recycling -wheeled bin</li> </ul>
9 (3)	North Kesteven	55.94%	55.7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWC</li> <li>• Organic - wheeled bin collection</li> <li>• Dry recycling -wheeled bin</li> </ul>
10 (11)	Waveney	51.62%	55%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWC</li> <li>• Organic - wheeled bin collection</li> <li>• Dry recycling -wheeled bin</li> </ul>
<20 (7)	South Cambridgeshire	53.21%	53.59%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWC</li> <li>• Organic wheeled bin collection</li> </ul> Dry recycling - box

Source: [www.letsrecycle.com](http://www.letsrecycle.com)

**Table 4: provisional top 10 councils for recycling and composting in 2008/09**

35. Nationally and within the RECAP partner authorities there has been a downward trend in the amount of paper recycled, corresponding with a downward trend in the overall daily newspaper market. The newspaper industry Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) reported a monthly year on year drop between December 2007 – December 2008 of 5.2% (ABC National Daily Newspaper Circulation December 2008). This has been exacerbated by a reduction in the weight of newsprint used.

- 36. The introduction of plastic bottles to the kerbside recycling service in late 2008 undoubtedly lead to an increase in other materials recycled, helping to offset the reduction in paper and bucking the national and RECAP trend by maintaining overall recycling rates. However, overall this suggests that the current service is operating at or near its maximum potential capacity.
- 37. Table 4 however clearly demonstrates that although overall recycling performance has been maintained in a challenging environment, relative recycling performance has started to fall back as other local authorities catch up and indeed overtake SCDC, SCDC having fallen out of the top 10 performers for the first time since 2003/04.
- 38. **Participation rate** i.e. the number of households regularly using the kerbside recycling service, is one of the key indicators of service provision. The participation rate highlighted in Appendix 1, 87% for the green box, show that participation in the kerbside recycling service is high and comparable with national trends. Green bin participation monitoring has not been recently carried out. High composting rates, high capture of garden waste and anecdotal feedback shows that participation in the green bin scheme is high i.e. greater than 87%. Research<sup>2</sup> by Waste Resources Action Program (WRAP) indicates that authorities operating AWC schemes have recorded participation rates in the range of 80-95%.
- 39. **Capture rate** i.e. the proportion of a targeted material present in the waste stream that is actually collected for recycling/composting rather than disposed of as residual waste, is another key indicator of service provision. The maximum capture rate i.e. 100%, requires all residents to place 100% of every targeted material into their appropriate container for recycling/composting on every occasion, resulting in 0% remaining in the residual waste stream.
- 40. The capture rate highlighted in Appendix 1 indicates that although 68% of targeted material is being collected for either recycling or composting, 32% is still being left in the black bin and sent to landfill.
- 41. These figures relate to targeted materials and exclude those materials that cannot be targeted as the service is currently configured e.g. other dense plastic such as tubs, pots, trays, other non-bottle plastic packaging (33.65 kg/hh/yr) and multi-layer cardboard such as cartons (5.24 kg/hh/yr). Based on the current participation rate of 87% and assuming all available non-bottle plastic packaging and cartons are captured an additional 2,030 tonnes of material would be recycled. In theory, based on 2008/09 figures, if non-bottle plastic packaging and cartons had been recycled the amount of residual waste per household (NI 191) would have fallen by a further 18.9kg to 435.7kg/hh/yr and the percentage recycled, composted or reused (NI 192) would have increased by 3.5% to 22.35%.
- 42. Table 5: Capture Rate by Material Type – 2008 breaks the overall capture rate down by targeted material type.

Targeted Material Type	Capture rate
Paper (Green Bin)	54% (30%)
Glass	90%
Tins/Cans	63%
Garden Waste	96%
Kitchen Food Waste	26%

<sup>2</sup> Wrap (2007), Alternate Weekly Collection Guidance



Cardboard (Green Bin)	81%
All targeted materials	68%

**Table 5: Capture Rate by Material Type - 2008**

43. Although capture rates for garden waste (96%), glass (90%) paper (85%) and cardboard (81%) are very high; the rate for kitchen and food waste (26%) is particularly low. Of additional concern is that 30% of paper is being placed in the green bin instead of in the green box. The reasons for this are unclear and although this paper is being composted and hence diverted from landfill, recycling is preferable from an environmental viewpoint, as well as providing the service with a potential income stream in the form of material value and recycling credits.

### **CHALLENGES FACING THE SERVICE**

44. The service has significant achievements to its name and has demonstrated a considerable ability to rise to the many external and internal pressures placed upon it. Flexibility of operation has been critical to achieving the successes.
45. This remains a fast changing service with a very high public and political profile. The pace of legislative change shows no signs of abating e.g. possible reconfiguration of recycling targets to an emissions/carbon base; health & safety challenges in relation to manual handling, noise etc. This taken together with the projected growth in development in the area means that the Council must ensure that the service is best positioned to deal with the challenges of the here and now and importantly those of the future.

### **Member Aspirations**

46. Within the Council's corporate 3 A's the Council has committed to:

*"Extending and encouraging the use of recycling opportunities."*

47. The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services has worked with her Cabinet colleagues in defining the benefits and outcomes they wish to see from this review. These are now embedded within the remit of this Task & Finish group (See previous report) and are reproduced below:

*"To obtain the best quality of service that the Council can afford"*

Whilst attaining the following benefits and outcomes listed below in priority/ weighted order.

- *A cost effective & efficient service*
- *A high level of customer satisfaction/perception*
- *Providing future flexibility to respond to external influences*
- *Minimising environmental impact.*

### **Future Targets**

48. The revised Joint Municipal Waste Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 2008 – 2022 was adopted as council policy in October 2008. The revised strategy seeks to maximise the opportunities for the diversion of recyclable and biodegradable

materials from both the municipal and commercial and industrial waste streams and sets the following minimum targets:

- To recycle/recover 50-55 % of household and commercial and industrial waste by 2015.
  - To recycle/recover 55-60% of household and commercial and industrial waste by 2020.
49. One of the priority benefits and outcomes looked for by Members is: minimising environmental impact. In considering the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Joint Municipal Strategy, Cabinet indicated that they would wish to obtain a higher, more challenging, target for South Cambridgeshire DC than the countywide target contained within the strategy.
50. The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services has since indicated that she would like the authority to meet or surpass a 65% recycling and composting rate in 2012. Latest figures from other authorities would suggest this is a plausible and achievable target for South Cambridgeshire.

### **The Growth Agenda**

51. The Revised Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East of England was published in May 2008. It sets out the regional strategy for planning and development up to 2021 and creates a long-term vision for the region.
52. Planning for this growth will not simply be about delivering homes, but building sustainable new communities with the right infrastructure and service configurations to work toward minimising waste and hence making substantial contributions to reducing the impact of climate change.
53. The RSS envisages the construction of an estimated 15,000 new homes within South Cambridgeshire by 2016. Many of the proposed developments will differ significantly from any other development in the district in terms of their scale, density and urban design constraints.
54. The average housing density in Northstowe, for example, a new town of 9500 homes, is likely to be between 40/50 units/hectare, with a town centre density up to 100 (compared with the average density of dwellings completed between 2001 –2004 of 29.4 dwellings per hectare<sup>3</sup>). Up to 60% of these properties are likely to be purpose built flats or maisonettes, posing new challenges to the design and delivery of services and possibly precluding the use of current methods of refuse and recycling collection.

### **Mechanical and Biological Treatment (MBT) Facility**

55. Cambridgeshire County Council's (CCC) new MBT plant will significantly reduce the amount of household waste landfilled. The plant will begin to accept residual waste i.e. black bin, in Autumn 2009. This waste will pass through a series of mechanical and biological processes to extract as many different items as possible for recycling. The processes include:
- (a) Magnets for steel
  - (b) Eddy current separators for aluminium
  - (c) UV light detectors and air jets for plastic bottles

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<sup>3</sup> Cambridgeshire County Council Strategic Planning Research and Monitoring Team

- (d) Gravity separators for glass bottles
- (e) Air currents for lighter fractions such as plastic films (markets for the recycling of mixed plastic is being actively pursued)

It is anticipated that the MBT plant, once fully operational, will be able to remove all remaining non-organic materials i.e. cans, glass, plastics (bottles, food trays and films) etc. from the residual waste stream.

- 56. Once all the recyclable material has been removed, the organic-rich residue will then be conveyed to a composting hall where two giant wheels with scoops will continually turn the material as it moves down the hall. In approximately 7 weeks the residue will mature into compost-like material and will be removed and screened. This material can then be used to grow biofuels or to restore old sand and gravel quarries.
- 57. CCC's position is that despite the potential of the MBT plant to remove a wide range of recyclable material from the residual waste stream and to treat the remaining organic fraction, it is vital that collection authorities such as SCDC continue to recycle as much as possible through their kerbside recycling collections, recycling points and recycling centres. The materials collected from these facilities are of a much better quality than those collected from the MBT plant, which means:
  - There are more markets for this material to be turned into new materials and products.
  - It can be sold for a higher price, which helps keep council tax as low as possible.
  - In addition, the MBT plant has been designed to manage the amount of household waste landfilled based on current recycling levels.
- 58. The input specification of residual waste for the MBT plant requires a minimum 65% organic fraction. The current residual waste stream is in the region 67% - 68% organics. CCC has therefore no restriction on the range or quantity of materials, both organic and non-organic, that SCDC can either leave in or remove from the residual waste stream, other than to maintain current recycling levels. Those materials not collected at the kerbside can be removed from the residual waste stream and diverted from landfill by the MBT plant.

### **Meeting Customer Expectations**

- 59. Enquiries are regularly received from residents requesting the opportunity to recycle a wider range of materials at the kerbside, in particular the ability to recycle mixed plastics (trays, tubs and pots), cartons and batteries.
- 60. Since Cambridge City Council announced plans to introduce a third wheeled bin for dry recycling we have also received requests/suggestions from residents to introduce a similar scheme, although enquires are numerically small in number.
- 61. As part of the next stage of this strategic review it is proposed to undertake a consultation exercise with service users to identify those 'softer' issues surrounding needs and expectations, perceptions, barriers and improvements that are not readily identified through the customer satisfaction or Place surveys or other performance management measures and which any future service configuration must take account of.

## **Quality of material for End Market Users/processors**

62. It is essential that recyclable materials, if collected by SCDC, are of a high quality i.e. uncontaminated, in order to make them as attractive as possible to reprocessors. This maximises the potential markets for this material to be turned into new materials and products and maximises the material's value, so keeping collection costs and council tax as low as possible.
63. This is particularly important given the historical volatility of the recycling market and at times of depressed values when supply can often outstrip demand, resulting in reprocessors being able to pick and choose which material to accept. Discussions with end markets/processors have confirmed the importance of collecting uncontaminated recycle, which reduces the risk of rejection and price reduction.

## **SUMMARY**

### **Strengths**

64. **Finance, Efficiency and Value for Money**
- (a) SPARSE authorities quartile performance in relation to cost of collection has improved from third quartile in 2005/06 to second quartile in 2007/08 in spite of significant cost increases arising out of the introduction of AWC's.
  - (b) The service has consistently been in the optimum quadrant of the SPARSE Value for Money analysis i.e. above top quartile performance at below average cost.
65. **Customer Service**
- (a) Survey results indicate overall satisfaction with all the waste and recycling services provided or supported by SCDC
  - (b) High survey respondent satisfaction with doorstep recycling – 87%, with 40% stating they were very satisfied.
  - (c) Four fifths were satisfied with refuse collections (82%).
  - (d) 50% of respondents said they had seen an improvement in doorstep recycling over the past twelve months
  - (e) 31% have seen improvements in refuse collections.
  - (f) Satisfaction with doorstep recycling collections has increased from 69% in 2006/07 to 87% in 2008/09.
66. **Service Quality/Provision**
- (a) Top quartile of performance in relation to NI 191 (kg residual waste per household)
  - (b) Top quartile of performance in relation to NI 192 (Household waste recycled and composted).
  - (c) Downward trend for NI 191 i.e. positive, from 516kg in 2005/06 to 454kg in 2008/09.
  - (d) High participation rates in both the kerbside recycling service and green bin service
  - (e) Very high capture rates for garden waste (96%), glass (90%) paper (85%) and cardboard (81%)
  - (f) Current kerbside sort ensures high quality of materials collected resulting in more stable end markets
  - (g) The percentage of waste recycled or composted has remained relatively static despite national and regional declines

- (h) High quality materials collected reduces risks associated with market volatility
- (i) Flexible, responsive service

**67. Weaknesses**

- (a) SPARSE Value for Money analysis - 2008/09 composite data not available at present time but position may be negatively affected by additional costs associated with the implementation of kerbside plastics bottle recycling although a corresponding positive affect may result from the improvement in customer satisfaction and recycling rate obtained.
- (b) The percentage of waste recycled or composted has remained relatively static over the same period.
- (c) A stand still recycling rate will see South Cambridgeshire lag behind other local authorities (SCDC has fallen outside top 10 performers for first time since 2003/04)
- (d) The current service is operating at or near its maximum potential capacity.
- (e) Unable to take advantage of range of other potential materials, which cannot be targeted through dry recycling scheme as the service is currently configured e.g. other dense plastic such as tubs, pots, trays, other non-packaging plastic
- (f) 32% of targeted materials still being left in the black bin and sent to landfill.
- (g) The rate for kitchen and food waste (26%) is particularly low.
- (h) Lack of information on service user expectations and perceptions

**68. Opportunities**

- (a) Potential to increase composting rate through higher kitchen waste capture
- (b) Potential to increase recycling rate through higher paper capture
- (c) Potential to increase recycling rate through the introduction of additional materials into the kerbside scheme (e.g. non-bottle plastic packaging, cartons)
- (d) Reduce cost of collection through change to collection configuration
- (e) Use of MBT plant to remove further recyclable and organic material from residual waste stream at no additional cost to SCDC
- (f) Consultation with service users to explore 'softer' issues surrounding expectations and perceptions to assist and inform future configuration of the service

**69. Challenges**

- (a) Declining quantities of paper and other targeted materials in waste stream
- (b) Declining position relative to other local authorities, despite maintaining performance
- (c) Waste & recycling issues continue to have very high public and political profile
- (d) Constantly changing legislative environment requiring flexible responses
- (e) The current service is operating at or near its maximum potential capacity.
- (f) Growth area – Northstowe, Cambridge southern fringe, northwest, east. Proposed developments will differ significantly from any other development in the district in terms of their scale, density and urban design constraints posing new challenges to the design and delivery of services and possibly precluding the use of current methods of refuse and recycling collection.
- (g) Possible reconfiguration of recycling targets to an emissions/carbon base; health & safety challenges in relation to manual handling, noise etc.

## **Recommendation**

70. The task & finish group is requested to consider the information contained in this performance review, advising the Portfolio Holder on what they believe to be the priority areas to be tackled to achieve the outcomes looked for within the remit of the group.
71. It is recommended that these priority areas include the items below and Officers are requested to ensure these matters are part of the re-configuration options evaluation:
- (a) Increasing the capacity of the service
  - (b) Increasing capture rates
  - (c) Introducing additional materials into the kerbside scheme
  - (d) Reducing the cost of collection through changes to collection configuration.
  - (e) Improving on the dry recycling rate
  - (f) Maintaining the alternate weekly collection principle.
  - (g) Maintaining and improving customer satisfaction still further
  - (h) Ensuring high quality recycled material is delivered to the re-processors/end market, thereby reducing the risk of rejection, price reduction and effects of market volatility.
  - (i) Ensuring that future health & safety risks are considered and either eliminated or reduced so far as is reasonably practicable.
  - (j) Maintaining flexibility to respond to change and external influences
  - (k) Overall, exploiting current strengths and opportunities whilst addressing weaknesses and meeting challenges

## **Background Papers:**

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