

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Waste & Recycling Task & Finish Group 2 July 2009
AUTHOR/S: Corporate Manager (Health & Environmental Services) /
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Officer

CONSULTATION PROPOSALS - REVIEW OF REFUSE AND RECYCLING SERVICE

Purpose

1. This report outlines proposals for consultation with users of the council's integrated refuse and recycling collection service (the Service) as part of the strategic review of the service currently underway.

Background

2. The strategic review of the Service is exploring what the Service should look like from October 2010 onwards and how it should be procured to ensure it continues to provide Best Value for the council and its customers.
3. The first stage of the strategic review considered the performance of the Service and identified its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.
4. The performance report identified consultation as a key opportunity to involve service users in the future development of the Service, in particular as a means of identifying those 'softer' issues surrounding user 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.

Considerations

5. The council's market research contractor, CELLO **mruk** research, has been commissioned to undertake a qualitative research project to look at the 'softer' issues as a means of consulting with service users to assist and inform the future configuration of the Service.
6. It is proposed to use a series of focus groups as an effective way of examining attitudes and perceptions in-depth. An independent moderator is to be used as a means of probing and establishing views held and the reasons why they are held.
7. It is proposed to undertake at least 3 focus groups. This will ensure a range of residents from across the district can take part. Three groups will also allow a control element, for example if two groups have widely differing conclusions, a third group can help establish which are the more commonly held conclusions.
8. Generally, in terms of best practice, the optimum number of people to attend a focus group is considered to be 8/9 people. It is therefore proposed to recruit up to 12 respondents per group to ensure 8/9 respondents attend. The groups would last up to an hour and a half and would be conducted in the evening at suitably located venues, taking into account accessibility by potential attendees.

9. Face-to-face methods will be used to recruit for the focus groups. This approach will allow interviewers to build a rapport with potential attendees and ensures attendees are aware of the requirements of the research. Attendees would have all or some of the responsibility for recycling in the household. Quotas will be set for age, gender, property type (house/flat) and frequency of recycling using data from the South Cambridgeshire Acorn Profile to ensure a mix of the types of people representative of South Cambridgeshire.
10. As an incentive to residents to attend the meetings, a fee will be paid as a thank you for giving up their time in order to take part and to cover transport costs. This is standard practice within the market research industry and is intended to enable all residents an equal opportunity to attend.
11. CELLO **mrुक** research is working with council officers to develop and finalise the research objectives and the topic guide for the focus groups. The topic guide will be used as the basis for discussion at the meetings and will ensure a co-ordinated and structured outcome to each meeting and to the project as a whole.
12. CELLO **mrुक** research will compile a report bringing together the discussions from the focus group meetings. The report will include an executive summary of the findings, respondent comments throughout and analysis to explicitly respond to the research objectives. It would explore and comment on differences between sub-groups.
13. The report will then be used to inform the second stage of the strategic review, namely service configuration.
14. Table 1 below shows an indicative timetable for the project.

ACTIVITY	DATES	MRUK's responsibility	Council's responsibility
Project design agreed	By 26 th June	✓	✓
Quotas agreed with client	By 30 th June	✓	✓
Recruitment	6 th – 17 th July	✓	
Circulate topic guide	6 th July	✓	
Finalise topic guide	17 th July	✓	✓
Focus groups take place	20 th – 24 th July	✓	
Report writing	27 th – 31 st July	✓	
Circulate report	3 rd August	✓	

Table 1: Consultation project timetable

Implications

15.	Financial	The cost of the consultation exercise will be met from within existing budgetary provisions
	Legal	None identified
	Staffing	Support from within existing staff resources
	Risk Management	None identified
	Equal Opportunities	None identified

Effect on Strategic Aims

16.	Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.
	The consultation exercise is an integral element of the review of the refuse and recycling service, a service which demonstrates the council's commitment to the achievement of this aim
	Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all.
	The consultation exercise is an integral element of the review of the refuse and recycling service, a service which demonstrates the council's commitment to the achievement of this aim
	Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.
	The consultation exercise is an integral element of the review of the refuse and recycling service, a service which demonstrates the council's commitment to the achievement of this aim
	Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all.
	Commitment to providing a voice for rural life.
	The consultation exercise is an integral element of the review of the refuse and recycling service, a service which demonstrates the council's commitment to the achievement of this aim

Recommendation

17. The Task and Finish group is asked to note the proposals for user consultation as part of the review of the recycling and refuse collection service.

Background Papers: None

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