

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environmental Services Portfolio Holder 16 March 2010
AUTHORS: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Corporate Manager (Health & Environmental Services)

RECONFIGURED REFUSE AND RECYCLING SERVICE POLICIES

Purpose

1. This report considers how the council's existing refuse and recycling policies are applied to the two stream co-mingled dry recycling service (the blue bin service) to be operated alongside the existing alternate weekly green and black wheeled bins with effect from 11 October 2010.
2. It also considers consequential clarifications to the existing refuse and recycling policies where appropriate in order to ensure clear and consistent policies are applied throughout the reconfigured refuse and recycling service.
3. This is not a key decision because it does not raise new issues of policy but simply applies and clarifies existing policies where appropriate.

Background

4. The Strategic Waste & Recycling Task and Finish Group completed the strategic review of waste and recycling services in 2009. It resulted in a proposal to re-configure the existing service, which would lead to an enhanced level of service for residents at substantially less cost. The proposal was also judged to be the best at achieving the previously agreed member priorities and outcomes required of the review.
5. The results of the review were presented to Cabinet on 12 November 2009 and then to Council on 26 November 2009, at which Council resolved:
 - a. That household waste and recycling services be reconfigured to provide a two stream co-mingled dry recycling service alongside the existing alternate weekly green and black-wheeled bins, by the replacement of the existing kerbside box recycling service with a blue 240lt wheeled bin and 40lt inner caddy (fitting inside the blue bin) collected on alternate weeks by 'twin-pack' collection vehicles on the same day as the existing green bin;
 - b. That the dry recyclable materials to be collected by the new service include paper (telephone directories; newspapers & magazines; general paper) within a inner caddy and mixed dry recyclables including cans and tins (steel and aluminium); aerosols; glass; plastic bottles; hard plastic (pots, tubs, and trays); cartons (tetra packs); cardboard; aluminium foil placed in the blue wheeled bin. Further materials to be added (i.e. plastic film) as processing facilities allow.

Considerations

6. All blue bin policies should be consistent with existing refuse and recycling policies and designed to ensure a fair and equitable service is provided to all residents. They should enable the council to provide an effective and efficient service and be flexible enough to respond to a wide range of everyday situations.
7. As with the existing green box scheme, the blue bin service will not be an opt-in service. Blue bins will be delivered to residents and there is an expectation that all residents will use them for their dry recycling.
8. Although legal powers are available to the council to require residents to use the refuse and recycling services as specified, the emphasis has been on providing help and advice to residents to overcome any problems they may have, making use of the overwhelming support for recycling throughout the district. As a result the council has only had to make use of these powers on one previous occasion, which was during the introduction of alternate weekly wheeled bin collections in 2003.
9. It is therefore essential that the policies underpin the communications plan for the blue bin service and any subsequent actions, whether formal or informal, required to resolve resident enquiries and difficulties.
10. The various elements of the blue bin service have been considered so as to determine how the existing refuse and recycling policies should be applied.

Standard Service

11. From October 2010, the council's refuse and recycling service (the 'standard service') will consist of the alternate weekly collection of:
 - a. 240 litre black wheeled bin for residual waste i.e. waste that cannot be recycled or composted, collected one weekAnd the following week collection:
 - b. 240 litre green wheeled bin for organic material i.e. kitchen and garden waste for compostingAnd:
 - c. 240 litre blue wheeled bin for dry recycling with integral 40 litre inner caddy for paper
12. It is essential that the new service is available to all households throughout the district. In general therefore all households will be delivered a 240 litre blue wheeled bin and integral 40 litre inner caddy prior to the start of the new service at no additional charge to the householder.
13. It is accepted that, as when the alternate weekly-wheeled bin service was introduced in 2003, there may be a small number of properties that are not suitable for blue bins. The majority of these have already been identified and are on the council's sack collection service.
14. It is therefore proposed that the following types of properties, which are deemed unsuitable for wheeled bins, are individually assessed and alternative storage and collection arrangements made at no additional cost to the householder:

- a. Those properties where there is physically no room to store the blue bin within their curtilage, or
 - b. Those properties where there is no alternative but to take the blue bin through the house from its storage point to the collection point, or
 - c. Those properties where alternative storage and collection arrangements are required for the efficient and effective delivery of the service to residents e.g. hard to reach properties such as flats
15. In order to maintain consistency with existing refuse and recycling policies it is recommended that:
- a. Only SCDC procured blue bins will be emptied
 - b. The blue bins and inner caddies will remain the property of the council
 - c. Householders should only mark the blue bin and inner caddy with their house number or house name to enable bins to be easily identified and returned to the correct collection point
 - d. Blue bins and inner caddies damaged by the council will be replaced at no charge to the householder.
 - e. Stolen bins and inner caddies will be replaced at no charge to the householder if the theft is reported to the Police and an incident number obtained.
 - f. Lost or damaged blue bins and caddies (other than those damaged by the council) will be replaced but the council's current bin charging policy will be applied
 - g. Assisted collection arrangements will be made on the grounds of disability

Collection Point

16. The current 'standard' collection point for wheeled bins is the edge of the curtilage nearest the road, except where alternative arrangements have been agreed after assessment e.g. Assisted collections; communal bins; where a public highway would be unreasonably obstructed etc.
17. Cambridgeshire County Council as Highway Authority has given permission for bins to be placed temporarily on the footpath prior to collection, providing they are then removed as soon as possible after collection in order to avoid causing an obstruction. This has led in some instances to residents removing bins from the collection point after collection and storing them on grass verges or common parts causing obstruction and giving rise to complaints from neighbours over unsightliness.
18. Residents will therefore be encouraged to store bins within the curtilage of their property wherever practicable.

Materials to be collected in the blue bin

19. In accordance with Council resolution on 26 November 2009:
- a. Mixed dry recyclables will be collected in the blue bin, including cans and tins (steel and aluminium); aerosols; glass; plastic bottles; hard plastic (pots, tubs, and trays); cartons (tetra packs); cardboard and aluminium foil.
 - b. Paper, including telephone directories; newspapers & magazines; general paper, including shredded, will be collected within the inner caddy of the blue

- bin.
 - c. Further materials e.g. plastic film, will be added as (viable) processing facilities allow.
20. The communication plan will stress that shredded paper and unwrapped junk mail should be placed in the inner caddy with all other paper items. Paper in the inner caddy will be covered by the blue bin lid and thereby protected from the elements. As a result, the risk of littering, particularly by shredded paper, will be minimised. However, collections will be monitored and if littering is a problem, advice to residents will be reviewed.

Collection of blue bin side waste

21. The policy on bin 'side waste' i.e. excess material placed at the side of the green or black bin is that such material is not collected. Only material placed inside the bin is collected.
22. The justification for this policy is:
- a. A waste prevention measure to encourage residents to recycle and compost as much as possible.
 - b. Health and safety considerations over the lifting of such material over the high 'rave' of the collection vehicles used. (The 'rave' is the cill at the rear of the collection vehicle over which material has to be lifted).
23. The policy on green box 'side waste' is that excess dry recycling material is collected provided it is presented in a returnable container, usually a plastic bag. This is because green box collections are made by vehicles fitted with low-sided troughs, which allow excess material to be lifted directly into the trough without compromising health and safety considerations.
24. As the blue bin scheme is designed to enable residents to maximise their recycling, the blue bin 'side waste' policy should be consistent with the current green box 'side waste' policy justifications i.e. designed to enable the collection of excess paper and other dry recyclable material, thereby maximising recycling, without compromising health and safety considerations.
25. The two compartment 'twin-pack' collection vehicles to be used on blue bin collections are fitted with a low 'rave' on the paper compartment but a high 'rave' on the dry recyclable compartment.
26. As a result of the low 'rave' on the paper compartment there are no health and safety concerns over the lifting of the inner paper caddy or any excess paper directly into the paper compartment. It would be possible therefore and indeed preferable to collect excess paper separately rather than mixing it with other recyclables in the blue bin, which would reduce its value, or risk it being placed in the green or black bin and therefore lost to recycling.
27. It is therefore proposed that if the inner paper caddy is full, residents should place any excess paper alongside the blue bin in a returnable container for collection.
28. Regarding excess dry recyclable material, for health and safety reasons it would

not be possible to lift the materials directly over the high 'rave' of the collection vehicles into the dry recyclable compartment. However, any excess materials placed along side the blue bin in a returnable container could be decanted into a 'slave' blue bin and then emptied in the usual way. Alternatively residents could request an additional bin, although post implementation the council's delivery charge would then apply.

29. It is therefore proposed that if the blue bin is full, any excess dry recyclable material should be placed along side the blue bin in a returnable container for collection.
30. It should be stressed that the proposed 'side waste' arrangements for both excess paper and dry recyclable materials are consistent with the existing 'side waste' policies for green and black wheeled bins and green boxes.

Additional Blue & Green Bins

31. The refuse and recycling service is designed to enable residents to maximise their recycling and composting. However, the purchase, delivery and extra collection of additional bins and/or caddies will have resource implications for the council. The additional bin policies need therefore to recognise this.
32. Requests for additional blue or green bins should therefore be individually assessed to identify the most appropriate provision, whilst addressing resident's needs. If additional capacity is required it could be met by adjusting the type and capacity of bin provision i.e. provision of a single larger bin, which could be a more efficient and effective solution, rather than the provision of an additional bin.
33. In view of this it is proposed that requests for an additional blue or green bin are individually assessed and any additional capacity required met by the most efficient and effective option e.g. provision of a suitably sized additional or upsized bin. In either case, the council's current bin charging policy will be applied wherever additional blue or green bin capacity is provided.
34. Regarding requests for additional blue bin inner caddies, it is considered that the proposed 'side' waste policy outlined in paragraph 27 above should address any issue of additional paper capacity, without the council having to purchase and deliver additional caddies. It is therefore proposed that additional caddies are not provided at this time.

Additional Black Bins

35. It is essential that black bin capacity is limited in order to encourage residents to minimise their waste wherever possible and maximise their recycling and composting.
36. Currently, additional black bins (maximum one per household) are restricted to those households which have a family size of six or more and/or are able to demonstrate the need for an additional bin. This has led to confusion amongst some residents that households with a family size of six or more will automatically qualify for an additional black bin.

37. Experience since 2003 has shown that households of fewer than six are unlikely to be able to clearly demonstrate a need for additional capacity. Many larger households requesting additional capacity have been found on assessment not to be using the green bin and green box to their full potential and so have been unable to clearly demonstrate a need.
38. In order to encourage residents to minimise their waste wherever possible and maximise their recycling and composting and to clarify the existing additional black bin policy:
 - a. All requests for additional black bins will be individually assessed and only those households who are using the blue and green bins to their full potential and are able to clearly demonstrate a need will qualify for additional black bin capacity.
 - b. Additional black bin capacity will be met by the most efficient and effective option e.g. provision of a suitably sized additional or upsized black bin, or other suitable service provision.
 - c. The council's current bin delivery charge policy will be applied wherever additional black bin capacity is provided at the resident's request.

Downsizing Bins

39. Although the 'standard service' uses 240 litre bins, there is a range of alternative sizes available, albeit at additional cost to the council e.g. 140 litres, 360 litres, and 1100 litres. These are used for those properties unsuitable for the 'standard service'.
40. Operational experience since 2003 has shown that smaller bins have a shorter operational life than 'standard' 240 litre bins. They are more prone to working loose from the bin lifting mechanism and either falling into the collection vehicle or onto the road and cracking, resulting in increased replacement costs.
41. Where properties are suitable for the 'standard' 240 litre bin service, the question arises as to whether residents should have the option of downsizing and if so whether the council's bin delivery charge should apply.
42. Allowing residents of such properties to downsize blue and/or green bins could act as a disincentive to maximising their recycling and composting. The council would incur additional procurement and administrative costs, irrespective of whether the council's bin delivery charge policy was applied. The issue of whether to upsize the bins on change of occupancy would also arise.
43. There is no requirement for residents to put their bins out every week; indeed residents could be encouraged to only put their bins out for collection when full, which would be operationally more efficient.
44. In the case of downsizing black bins, once the new blue bin service is introduced, with the additional materials that can be recycled, there is an argument that there will be less black bin waste and therefore a legitimate reason to downsize, without necessarily compromising the incentive to maximising recycling and composting. Indeed, offering residents the option could encourage greater use of the blue and green bins.

45. However, the council would still incur additional procurement, delivery and administrative costs. Whilst applying the council's bin delivery charge and the potential increase in recycling could help to offset these costs, the experience of a neighbouring authority that has recently introduced blue bins and does allow downsizing, suggests that potentially several thousand smaller bins would have to be purchased at considerable extra cost.
46. The issue of whether to upsize bins on change of occupancy would also still arise, although it could be argued that incoming residents accepted the utilities and other services as provided. The council's bin delivery charge could be applied to any upsizing request, but again, additional procurement and administrative costs would still be incurred.
47. In view of these considerations it is therefore proposed that residents are not given the option of downsizing or subsequently upsizing the black, green or blue bins from the 'standard service'.

Contaminated Bins

48. The composting and recycling facilities that are and will be used to process collected material have contamination thresholds i.e. limits on the amount of non-specified material that can be accepted within a load before that load is rejected as contaminated.
49. In order to maximise the quality and amount of material that can be successfully composted it is essential that the contamination thresholds are not breached. To date, the quality of collected materials has been acceptable and no loads have been rejected.
50. This has been achieved by ensuring that contaminated containers i.e. those that would risk breaching the contamination thresholds, are not collected. In practice, this is only likely to apply where there is gross contamination. It would not apply for example to an otherwise uncontaminated green bin that, perhaps unknown to the householder, had a crisp packet or can in it.
51. Where such contaminated containers are not collected the householder is notified of the non-collection and the reasons for this by means of a card. Follow-up visits, by a support officer, are also available to help and advise residents as to the correct use of the service.
52. It is therefore proposed that the existing policy of not collecting contaminated bins i.e. those that would risk breaching contamination thresholds, is maintained and that residents continue to be advised of the reasons for non-collection, including the nature of the contamination.

Implications

53	Financial	Any identified considerations have been included in the body of the report. An Equalities Impact Assessment of the refuse and recycling service has been carried out. The recommendations of this
	Legal	
	Staffing	
	Risk Management	

Equal Opportunities	report are being evaluated against the current assessment
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Effect on Strategic Aims

54	Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.
	Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all.
	Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.
	Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all.
	Commitment to providing a voice for rural life.
	The recommendations will contribute to the delivery of the best quality service the Council can afford and contribute to high levels of recycling and customer satisfaction/perception whilst minimising environmental impact thereby contributing to the above commitments.

Recommendations

55. It is recommended that the portfolio holder for Health & Environmental Services reaffirms the following refuse and recycling policies and clarifications as they are applied to the reconfigured refuse and recycling service with effect from 11 October 2010:
- a. As a general policy all households will be delivered a 240 litre blue wheeled bin and integral 40 litre inner caddy prior to the start of the new service at no additional charge to the householder.
 - b. The following types of properties, which are deemed unsuitable for wheeled bins, will be individually assessed and alternative storage and collection arrangements made at no additional cost to the householder:
 - i) Those properties where there is physically no room to store the blue bin within the curtilage, or
 - ii) Those properties where there is no alternative but to take the blue bin through the house from its storage point to the collection point, or
 - iii) Those properties where alternative storage and collection arrangements are required for the efficient and effective delivery of the service to residents e.g. Hard to Reach properties such as flats
 - c. Only SCDC procured blue bins will be emptied.
 - d. The blue bins and inner caddies will remain the property of the council.
 - e. Householders should only mark the blue bin with their house number or house name to enable bins to be easily identified and returned to the correct collection point.
 - f. Blue bins and inner caddies damaged by the council will be replaced at no charge to the householder.
 - g. Stolen blue bins and inner caddies will be replaced at no charge to the householder if the theft is reported to the Police and an incident number obtained.
 - h. Lost or damaged blue bins and caddies (other than those damaged by the council) will be replaced but the council's bin charging policy will be applied

- i. Assisted collection arrangements will be made on the grounds of disability.
- j. The 'standard' collection point for blue bins is the edge of the curtilage nearest the road.
- k. Mixed dry recyclables will be collected in the blue bin, including cans and tins (steel and aluminium); aerosols; glass; plastic bottles; hard plastic (pots, tubs, and trays); cartons (tetra packs); cardboard and aluminium foil
- l. Paper, including telephone directories; newspapers & magazines; general paper, including shredded paper, unwrapped junk mail will be collected within the inner caddy of the blue bin.
- m. If the inner paper caddy of the blue bin is full, any excess paper will be collected if placed along side the blue bin in a returnable container.
- n. If the blue bin is full, any excess dry recyclable material will be collected if placed alongside the blue bin in a returnable container.
- o. Requests for an additional blue or green bin will be individually assessed and any additional capacity required met by the most efficient and effective option e.g. provision of a suitably sized additional or upsized bin. In either case, the council's bin charging policy will apply wherever additional blue or green bin capacity is provided at the resident's request.
- p. Additional paper caddies will not provided at this time.
- q. All requests for additional black bins will be individually assessed and only those households who are using the blue and green bins to their full potential and are able to clearly demonstrate a need will qualify for additional capacity.
- r. Additional black bin capacity will be met by the most efficient and effective option e.g. provision of a suitably sized additional or upsized black bin, or other suitable service provision.
- s. The council's bin charging policy will apply wherever additional black bin capacity is provided at the resident's request.
- t. Downsizing or subsequently upsizing of the black, green or blue bins from the 'standard service' will not be permitted.
- u. Contaminated bins i.e. those that would risk breaching contamination thresholds, will not be collected.

Background Papers:

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Cabinet Minutes 24 February 2003
Council Minutes 26 November 2009

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