

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services)

10 March 2011

BLUE BIN RECYCLING SERVICE – INTERIM PERFORMANCE REPORT

Purpose

1. To report on the interim performance of the Blue Bin recycling service during its first four months of operation (October 2010 – January 2011).
2. This is not a key decision because the report is an information item presenting the findings of the interim blue bin evaluation.
3. It was first published in the January 2011 Forward Plan.

Recommendations

4. That the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder:
 - (a) Notes the performance of the blue bin recycling service during its first four months of operation (October 2010 – January 2011).

Reasons for Recommendations

5. To update the Portfolio Holder on the performance of the blue bin recycling service during its first four months of operation (October 2010 – January 2011) prior to receiving an evaluation of the service in May 2011

Background

6. The blue bin service was introduced in October 2010 following Full Council approval on 26 November 2009.
7. The blue bin service was developed based on the premise that future recycling service configuration should aim:

“To obtain the best quality of service that the Council can afford”

Whilst attaining a number of benefits and outcomes, listed below in priority/weighted order:

- A cost effective and efficient service
 - A high level of customer satisfaction/perception
 - Providing future flexibility to respond to external influences
 - Minimising environmental impact
8. In addition a number of factors contributing to the above benefits and outcomes were considered in the evaluation of the service:

- (a) Increasing capture rates
 - (b) Improving on the dry recycling rate
 - (c) Reducing the cost of collection through changes to collection configuration
 - (d) 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
 - (e) Ensuring that future health and safety risks are considered and either eliminated or reduced so far as is reasonably practicable
 - (f) Maintaining flexibility to respond to change and external influences
9. This report comments on the performance of the blue bin service during its first four months of operation (October 2010 to January 2011) against the benefits and outcomes listed in Paragraph 7 and the contributing factors listed in 8.

Considerations

10. **A cost effective and efficient service**
The introduction of the blue bin scheme has resulted in:
- (a) c£205,000 saving in collection costs during the first four months of operation compared with the same period last year (2009/10).
 - (b) Reduced manual handling for residents and collection crews.
 - (c) An initial increase in missed bin numbers due to the green box crews transferring to SCDC from the previous contractor, learning new rounds and operating a new service. This was anticipated and is being actively managed downwards (currently 38 missed blue bins per week and reducing, out of 30,000 collections, compared with 14 green bin and 19 black bin misses per week).
11. **A high level of customer satisfaction and perception**
- (a) Increase in participation rate from 87% to 93% - the highest participation rate achieved for a rural authority operating a fortnightly refuse and recycling service is 90%¹.
 - (b) Eleven compliments relating to the blue bin scheme were received between October 2010 and January 2011 compared with five compliments during the same period last year. These figures indicate an increase in satisfaction levels following the introduction of the blue bin scheme.
 - (c) Seven blue bin scheme complaints were received, with four relating to missed bins, compared with five green box complaints the previous year.
12. **Providing future flexibility to respond to external influence**
- (a) Since the introduction of the blue bin scheme no material loads have been rejected by the sorting contractor indicating that high quality material is being delivered to the sorting plant.
 - (b) An interim waste analysis found that only 1.2% of blue bin material delivered to the sorting contractor was classified as contamination i.e. not targeted through the scheme, indicating a good understanding and use of the service by residents. The Environment Agency estimate that the average reject rate for a typical facility is 10.85%.
 - (c) The addition of batteries was implemented with ease and at no cost to the council.

¹ WRAP, Kerbside Recycling: Indicative Costs and Performance. Technical Annex

- (d) The pricing mechanism for the sorting and processing facilities is structured to provide certainty in terms of processing costs and materials income, minimising the council's exposure and risk to market fluctuations.

13. Minimising environmental impact

- (a) Between October 2010 and January 2011 a recycling and composting rate of nearly 57% was achieved compared with just over 50% for the same period in 2009/10
- (b) The full year effect of a similar increase would result in an annual recycling rate of nearly 60%.
- (c) Black bin waste has declined by 10% between the period October 2010 to January 2011 compared with the same period in 2009/10, a reduction that has not been reflected by any other council in Cambridgeshire.

14. Next steps

A full evaluation of the blue bin scheme is underway and a report will be presented to the May 2011 portfolio meeting. The following actions are being taken to inform the evaluation:

- (a) Continued resident participation monitoring*
- (b) A full waste analysis of black, green and blue bins. This will identify how much target material remains in the black and green bins and what actions are required to capture it.
- (c) Gather customer satisfaction data
- (d) Collate Co² data to calculate savings due to the blue bin service.

*Participation monitoring during the spring months will be essential in assessing the impact of the blue bin service on the black and green collections. This assessment forms the basis of a separate piece of work, which will be reported at a later date.

Options

- 15. The Portfolio Holder has the option of noting or not the contents of this report.

Implications

16. Financial	The service is on target to deliver the savings required under the Medium Term Financial Strategy
Legal	None identified at this time
Staffing	None identified at this time
Risk Management	None identified at this time
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this time
Equality Impact Assessment completed	A full EqIA was completed as part of the development of the blue bin service A negative impact was identified. An Action has been included in the H&ES 2011/12 Service Plan to address this impact
Climate Change	Positive impact – see paragraph 13 above

Consultations

17. Consultation with service users will be carried out as part of the overall evaluation of the service.

Effect on Strategic Aims

18. The evaluation of the blue bin service will contribute to the delivery of the council's strategic aims and in particular delivery of the best quality service the council can afford with high levels of recycling and customer satisfaction whilst minimising environmental impact

Conclusions / Summary

19. Indications from the first four months operation of the new blue bin service are that it has been successfully implemented and is performing well and will deliver the anticipated benefits outlined in paragraph 7 above.

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

- Report to Strategic Waste and Recycling Review Task and Finish Group, Review of refuse and recycling service configuration – September 2009

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