

GREEN WASTE COLLECTIONS JUNE 2007

RECOMMENDATION: that the Executive be requested to confirm that only one brown bin per property be allowed for Green waste collections,

BACKGROUND

In 2003 Copeland was successful in securing £434,000 from Defra's Waste Minimisation and Recycling Fund to introduce an alternate week refuse collection service with the specific objective of improving recycling by collecting green waste for composting. At that time Copeland's recycling rate was poor. In the English league table of authorities for 2002/3 Copeland was 386th out of 408 authorities with a recycling rate of only 5.3%.

The Government had set statutory recycling targets for all local authorities for 2003/4 and for 2005/6, where failure would result in significant financial penalties and/or intervention. Copeland's targets were to achieve a 10% recycling rate by the end of 2003/4 and 18% by the end of 2005/6. To achieve even the first of these targets required a significant improvement in performance and a step change in the service provided. The Defra funding therefore gave Copeland an opportunity to make the necessary step change in services that significantly improved Copeland's chances of meeting the impending targets.

ALTERNATE WEEK COLLECTIONS 2003

The original proposal to Defra involved implementing the new service in June 2003. However due to European Procurement Procedures for wheeled bins this timescale proved impossible and the project was delayed. As the alternate week collection service started in September 2003, midway through 2003/4, and towards the end of the summer growing season, less than half the expected annual tonnages of green waste was available for collection for that year. With the 10% statutory recycling target looming at the end of the year, green waste collections had to be maximised to ensure the target was met. The decision was therefore taken to distribute additional brown bins for green waste to residents on request.

As this was an entirely new initiative the impact of distributing additional bins was not apparent until the following spring when demand for the service peaked and the refuse crews were unable to complete their rounds. From experience we now know that April/May is one of the peak collection periods for green waste when the majority of residents put out their brown bins for collection. Each of Copeland's collection rounds services between 1100-1200 properties per day.

After accounting for travelling, lunch breaks and tipping off time of approximately 1.5 hours crews have only 30 to 35 seconds per property to service a bin. Where additional bins have been issued the time needed to empty the second or subsequent bins means longer is needed at that property and pressure is then put on the crews to complete their work within the time allocated.

Green waste is also substantially heavier than normal household waste so vehicles reach their weight limits quicker than when collecting black bins. There is sufficient time within a working day for the majority of Copeland's refuse vehicles to tip off (whether collecting refuse or green waste) twice. However in some areas where a significant number of additional brown bins have been issued, a third load has been necessary. A third tip-off is not really possible within a normal working day and puts a severe strain on operations. Where this has been necessary it has led to delayed collections both on the day and sometimes running on through the week as crews struggle to catch up.

These capacity difficulties have also been compounded by the rate of new housing developments in some of the areas covered by the alternate week service. A small amount of spare capacity was built into the original rounds to add new properties; however the distribution of additional brown bins has taken up that capacity on green waste collection weeks.

EXTENDING THE SERVICE 2006

The alternate week service was extended to a further 2200 properties in June 2006. With the benefit of hindsight and to ensure the crew could cope with the number of properties assigned to it properties were issued with only one brown bin. There were though a significant number of properties who requested more than one. Despite the service being provided to these additional properties for only 10 months of the year over 200 kgs of green waste was collected from each property on average. This is in line with national averages for this type of collection.

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

At the end of 2006/7 Copeland's performance on green waste composting (BV82b) is good. 15.6% of household waste was sent for composting in 2006/7 putting Copeland in the top 25% of local authorities for this indicator (the overall recycling rate is 30.9%). At the same time performance on BV84, the indicator measuring the total amount of waste produced per head is poor. In 2006/7, 436.50 kilograms of waste was produced per person, although this is 22 kilograms less than the previous year, the result puts Copeland in the worst 50% of authorities for this indicator. To achieve top quartile performance on this indicator requires significantly more emphasis to be placed on waste minimisation including home composting.

It is suggested that to correct the imbalance in the service provided for green waste collections and to release potential capacity to extend the service to new

properties, a limit of one brown bin per property should be introduced. Residents with large gardens should be encouraged to compost at home rather than relying on additional brown bins to dispose of garden waste. Home Compost bins are currently available at discounted prices (£8, £10 or £20 dependent on size) as part of a Cumbria-wide initiative supported by WRAP.

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