

KERBSIDE COLLECTIONS PROGRESS REPORT

FEBRUARY 2007

BACKGROUND

In September 2006 the Council's in-house Waste team assumed the role of service provider for Copeland's kerbside collection service when Doorstep Collections Ltd withdrew the service they had provided across West Cumbria since September 2003. Scrutiny members will remember that Doorsteps performance had been questionable as the group had been monitoring the service for a lengthy period of time.

At that time Executive wanted to be reassured that an in-house service provider offered Best Value for the Council so agreed that the in-house option was to be an interim solution pending an independent external review.

At the time Doorsteps withdrew their services, Copeland's Waste team had already had preliminary discussions with Officers from the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) about the possibility of securing consultancy support through their Local Authority support programme. The discussions centred around WRAP carrying out a review of the kerbside collection service situation with a view to recommending the best way forward. The Council had previously secured WRAP's support in 2005 to assist in improving the performance of Doorstep Collections, which resulted in the Service Level Agreement being produced and targets agreed. This further assistance was being pursued as, despite the SLA, there had not been a measurable improvement in the performance of, or yield, from the dry recyclables collection service provided by Doorstep Collections. To meet the Executive's concerns over value for money WRAP were therefore asked to evaluate the provision of kerbside recycling services in the Borough comparing the in-house service to an alternative, third party provider.

The evaluation is now complete and the resultant WRAP report is being presented to the Executive on 1 March by an officer from WRAP. Executive members are being asked to approve the report's primary recommendation that the kerbside service remains with the in-house team as the Best Value option for the Council.

INTERIM SERVICE

Due to the speed in which the Waste team had to mobilise a service following the withdrawal of Doorsteps, collections were initially made using the same rounds and routes as had been used previously. Through the existing partnership arrangement with Fraikin, the Waste team were able to hire suitable vehicles at very short notice. They also managed to procure, within a week,

sufficient black boxes to cope with residents requests for new ones should Doorsteps follow through their verbally stated intention to collect black boxes in.

A number of issues came to light very quickly after the Council commenced collections, including:

Trade Collections – Doorstep Collections had been collecting materials from a number of business premises alongside the material from domestic properties. This additional material had significantly inflated the amount of material collected meaning recycling calculations for the Council had been artificially inflated.

Rounds discrepancies – Although the Waste team had detailed rounds lists it transpired that the crews didn't necessarily work to the scripted lists. A substantial number of collections were actually made on a different day to that listed. This meant Copeland Direct would have been passing on incorrect information to customers based on these lists.

Property numbers – Figures provided by Doorsteps prior to the transfer indicated that over 27,000 properties in Copeland were being serviced. A comprehensive review of the information concluded that the actual figure was less than 26,000. The data is used to compile at least 2 Best Value Performance Indicators, which would have been reported as higher than in actuality.

CHANGES/PROGRESS

The Waste team having been frustrated for a long period of time with Doorsteps Performance and their reluctance to make changes were keen to improve the service for the residents of the Borough as soon as possible. The following outlines progress made in improving the service since September 2006.

Publicity, Education & Awareness

Flyers were produced and distributed to individual properties in areas where participation was known to be poor. These provided simple information about the service and giving phone numbers to call to request a new box. Although this was a low key activity, a substantial number of requests for boxes were generated as a result. Areas included in this activity were Millom, Egremont, Seascale and areas of Whitehaven. Structured and targeted awareness raising initiatives are currently underway both locally through the South Whitehaven projects and more widely across Cumbria, both of which should have a positive impact on Copeland's recycling levels.

Participation Monitoring

A participation monitoring study was carried out during October and November as part of the South Whitehaven Waste Projects to measure public participation

in the kerbside recycling schemes. The results will enable the team to target areas of particularly low participation with information and support and as the study is due to be repeated any improvements will be measurable. The study, which used a nationally tried and tested method of measurement, concluded that less than 34% of homes in the South Whitehaven area were using the recycling service available to them.

Rounds Restructure

The inherited rounds had been developed over a 3 year period and new properties had been added without considering proximity to existing areas or to refuse rounds. This meant that vehicles were not being used efficiently and excessive travelling time was reducing the capacity of the service. The rounds were completely rescheduled by the Waste team reducing travelling time and allowing additional properties to be added without adding time to the working day. For properties on the twin bin service the new recycling rounds are largely aligned to brown bin collections so that residents only have to remember one collection day. This widespread change was communicated to all residents with access to the service through the delivery of recycling calendars and accompanying information. The distribution of this information led to a further increase in the numbers of requests for boxes. The delivery of calendars also led to a number of calls from confused residents. It transpired that a number of streets were included in rounds lists as being in receipt of the service and had been for a long time but boxes had never been delivered.

New Areas/Properties

Around 520 new properties have been provided with access to the service since October 2006. This includes properties in Ravenglass, Gosforth, Millom, Haverigg, Egremont and Whitehaven. These additional properties helping to compensate for Doorsteps over reporting, bringing the BVPI's on percentage of properties serviced closer to previously reported figure.

The waste team anticipate adding around 150 additional properties by the end of February mainly from Moresby Parks and Egremont. A site visit is also planned to assess whether properties in The Hill and The Green near Millom are suitable to be included.

Box Requests

Since the service transferred to Copeland's in-house team almost 700 requests for boxes have been received, and further requests continue to be made on a daily basis. Over 450 of those requests have been generated since calendars were distributed in December.

Tonnage Trends

Disregarding the inflated tonnages collected by Doorsteps, since the Council commenced collections in mid September, an increase has been seen in the amount of material collected for recycling. Given the current rate of requests for

boxes and the number of new properties being added to the service this improving trend is expected to continue.

Fuel Use

Early indications show the rounds restructure has been successful in improving the efficiency of the kerbside vehicles. The amount of fuel used by the 3 recycling vehicles in January was around 500 litres less than that used in November before the changes were introduced. This could amount to a cost control/saving of around £4500 for a full year.

CONCLUSIONS

Copeland's business plan projections for the kerbside service, which were based on Doorsteps claimed performance plus a small additional improvement, now appears to have been established on flawed information.

The challenge is to continuously improve, to bring the service into line with those projections based on enhanced performance and to continue to address the issues as has been happening as outlined above.

On a positive note the WRAP report has confirmed the in-house service delivery option as the Best Value option for the Council at approximately half the estimated cost of the benchmarked comparators.

Janice Carrol
WASTE SERVICES MANAGER