

Report from the Chair of the Safer and Stronger OSC and the Kerbside Recycling Task and Finish Group

PARTICIPATION IN THE KERBSIDE RECYCLING SCHEME

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members recognise the work already being done to communicate and promote the kerbside recycling service
2. That the Waste Services Manager explores the possibility of securing WICG Capital Funding with the CSWP and WRAP and working with WRAP to relaunch, promote and communicate the kerbside recycling service
3. That the Council commits to working towards the Waste Collection Commitment
4. That Members note the budgetary implications of providing a more widespread kerbside plastic and cardboard collection across the borough and request that this is explored further
5. That a timely review of the kerbside recycling performance is considered within the 2010/11 OSC Work Programme

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 At its meeting on 4 March 2010, the OSC agreed that the Kerbside Recycling Task and Finish Group would be conducted over 3 meetings, Chaired by Councillor W Metherell. Each meeting covered the following:

- 15 March 2010 – Scoping and Terms of Reference
- 29 March 2010 – Witnesses
- 12 April 2010 – Draft report and Recommendations

1.2 In Spring 2009 when Members of the OSC started to consider the wider Liveability agenda, recycling was identified as an area they wanted to look at in detail. Earlier work included site visits to the County Council's flagship Household Recycling Centres at Flusco, Penrith and a visit to the Shanks Waste Treatment site at Dumfries.

1.3 The Council is measured by a National Indicator in this area. NI192 – Percentage of Household Waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting. The Council is currently meeting a 40% target. The Corporate Plan 2010-11 promises and actions on climate

change promise to increase this to 45%. It also encourages greater participation in kerbside recycling so that 70% of residents that have access to the service use it.

- 1.4 Throughout the Task and Finish Group Members were also able to review a Council Commissioned report by WRAP (the Waste Resources Action Programme). The report analysed recycling performance in Copeland, compared local data with national statistics and made recommendations for improvement. The report resulted from an application from the Council for support from WRAP to investigate the likely reasons for its low and apparently stagnating, kerbside recycling performance. The report considered National and local recycling performance and trends, Barriers to Recycling at home and made recommendations to address these.

The TFG considered these throughout the exercise.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference were to consider the performance of kerbside recycling in Copeland.

The TFG wanted to consider the way in which the service was currently delivered, the recommendations of the WRAP report and to look at ways in which the Council could improve participation in the kerbside recycling service, and increase the tonnages of waste collected through the scheme for recycling.

3. CONSULTATION AND EVIDENCE GATHERING

3.1 WITNESSES

- 3.1.1 Witnesses were invited to the second meeting of the TFG on 29 March 2010. Martin Allman, Waste Prevention Manager at Cumbria County Council and Janice Carrol, Waste Services Manager attended. The TFG had prepared a number of questions in advance.

Martin highlighted the differing roles of the County and the Districts within the Cumbria Waste Strategic Partnership (CWSP). He advised that while the Districts were responsible for collection, the County was the authority responsible for managing disposal of waste. Martin discussed in detail the work carried out at a local level and also, the national campaigns that the waste prevention team localise to raise the profile of recycling.

- 3.1.2 Members heard from both witnesses how;

- a) Copeland offers a very good service but there is a problem with the way it is not being used to its full capacity
- b) Three of the six district Councils in Cumbria carry out alternative weekly collections which work well when used properly.
- c) Barrow until recently had been in a weaker position in terms of kerbside recycling rates than Copeland but had improved its service by working with CWSP to submit a joint funding bid to WRAP. The secured funding then paid for the Council to effectively communicate its new service. The funding also supported the fixed term employment of a Recycling Ranger 'on the ground' who could assist and encourage residents to recycle. This amounted to £93,000.

- d) Working with schools to deliver recycling education programmes is a large part of the Waste Prevention Teams work at the County Council, in partnership with district council officers
- e) Co-mingled collections (where householders have one large bin for all recyclable items) can be expensive to sort, easily contaminated, and when demand for materials is low, their poorer quality means that they are more likely to be stockpiled than kerbside sorted materials. It is more difficult to sell the poorer materials in the global marketplace. This is not a problem in Copeland which does not currently have co-mingled collections.
- f) The kerbside recycling service ought to be seen as the main waste collection service followed by residual waste. Residents need to be clear about what they can recycle before they throw things away.
- g) 'Rewards' for using the kerbside collection service, such as shopping vouchers, rarely work as good incentives to recycle. This has been demonstrated when the CSWP and Copeland have carried out initiatives. There is little uptake, but good customer service is more of an incentive. It is better to be able to promise customers that they can expect the best possible kerbside recycling service.
- h) Regular communications and different types of communications that are visual and simple should be produced regularly. They should also be accessible to all levels of literacy and remove any confusion for customers.
- i) In 2009/10 the budget for kerbside recycling was £450,000. For recycling sites (bring sites) it was £340,000.
- j) In August 2009 the Waste Management Services Department at Copeland looked into the feasibility of providing a kerbside plastic and cardboard collection service across the Borough. The total cost of implementing and running the service in the first year was costed as £287,581.27. This figure includes the initial purchase of two vehicles, and collection containers for all households currently without the service
- k) A weekly kerbside collection would cost an additional £350,000 but will not produce an increase in the tonnage collected, proportionate to the extra cost of the service.
- l) The Council's budget for publicising and communicating the recycling service for 2009/10 was £6000. The minimum recommended by WRAP is £3 per household. There are 29214 households in Copeland receiving kerbside recycling collections, so the current budget works out at 20p per household. At the recommended expenditure, the budget would need to be £87,642.
- m) Customer feedback in South Whitehaven via a postal survey in February 2007 had indicated that 74% of respondents felt that recycling was important. Yet overall participation in the kerbside collection scheme in that area at the time was only 29% of households. (Following an intensive Waste Awareness and Education Programme this increased to 50% of households.)
- n) Households can have as many black boxes for recycling collections as they need. Furthermore customers could be encouraged to pre sort their recycling with more boxes.
- o) Residual waste sent to landfill has been reducing year on year, for the last few years but kerbside recycling tonnage has stagnated.
- p) Working with organisations such as WRAP is key to increasing kerbside recycling through increased publicity and good communications about how to use the service.

3.1.3 The service already publicises and promotes the service in a number of ways. Members heard from the Waste Service Manager how the Council communicates the service;

- a) Publication of an annual calendar including arrangements for Bank Holidays etc
- b) A householder pack
- c) On the Council's website – Your Street
- d) Press Releases when appropriate
- e) Features in the Council's magazine Copeland Matters
- f) Participating in national campaigns
- g) Attending tenants, residents and other interested groups
- h) Packs for new Copeland Homes tenants
- i) Advertising/branding on the waste fleet vehicles

3.2 CUSTOMER SERVICES

3.2.1 The TFG asked the Council's Customer Services department what type of feedback they had received about the kerbside recycling service. They reported the following, which is also supported by the WRAP findings.

- Storage problems – boxes can become too heavy, especially if the paper contents are wet
- Charging for black box lids puts people off despite being a storage solution
- Not returning for missed boxes when the customer is not at fault. Customers are advised that the crew will take extra next time. However this also presents storage problems
- Kerbside collection days not coinciding with refuse collection can be confusing
- A delay in delivering new black boxes to customers in rural areas who are without transport and cannot get to the area offices to collect a box.

3.4 KERBSIDE PLASTICS AND CARDBOARD

3.4.1 The Task and Finish Group considered the collection of plastics and cardboard. 36% of the borough is currently covered by this service and members heard it had been a success where introduced. Members acknowledged the Enventure report, commissioned as part of the South Whitehaven Awareness Project, which highlighted a survey carried out in February 2007 that found 73% of respondents wanted the service. Members also noted that when a wider range of materials are collected from the kerbside, it increases the collection of materials already collected.

3.4.2 However, the Task and Finish Group were mindful of the financial implications and costs to the Council of introducing the service (£287,581.27) and then running it at a cost of at least £165,809.48 per year. Members were advised that financial support for purchasing vehicles and storage materials to set up the service may be available from the CWSP using the County Council's Waste Infrastructure Capital Grant but thereafter the service would have to be sustainable.

3.5 THE WASTE COLLECTION COMMITMENT

3.5.1 Members discussed in detail how the service is communicated to residents and also the importance of householders knowing what happens to their recycling once it has been collected. A key recommendation of both witnesses and the WRAP findings to addressing many of the barriers highlighted was to sign up to the Waste Collection Commitment .

3.5.2 The Waste Collection Commitment is a set of principles for a good waste and recycling service put together by WRAP and the Local Government Association (LGA). The principles are based on public views and the Commitment aims to help improve resident's satisfaction with how their recycling and rubbish is collected.

3.5.3 The principles are;

- Explain clearly what services you can expect to receive
- Provide regular collections
- Provide a reliable collection service
- Consider any special requests that individual households may have
- Design our services and carry out collections in a way that does not produce litter
- Collect as many materials for recycling as we can and explain to you what happens to them
- Explain clearly what our service rules are and the reasons for them
- Tell you in good time if we have to make changes to your services, even temporarily
- Respond to complaints we receive about our services
- Tell all our residents about this commitment to collecting waste

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The Task and Finish Group felt that the current kerbside recycling service was successful where residents were participating. However they expressed concern that in a number of areas it was not being well used and that communication and promotion of the service was a key way to addressing this. Members recognised that the Waste Services Team have already started looking at ways in which the service could be communicated and promoted. They felt that 're-launching' the service - with the support of the CWSP and WRAP - would be beneficial.

4.1.2 Members also thought that signing up to work towards the Waste Collection Commitment would demonstrate a commitment to the service and start to address some of the barriers that had emerged in the course of the Task and Finish Group.

4.1.3 Finally Members felt that the demand for a more widespread kerbside plastic and cardboard service ought to be addressed again and explored further. However they recognised the financial implications associated with introducing this and requested it be considered.