

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING to the CABINET 8 JUNE 2010

(Author: Roger Wilkin, Environmental Services Manager)

OPTIONS FOR INCREASING THE COUNCIL'S RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING RATE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide members with further information and detail concerning the range of options for increasing the NI192 score (recycling and composting) and decreasing the NI191 score (the amount of residual household waste per household) of the Council, as well as an update on progress following the Executive Board report of November 2009.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Council/Committee:

- 2.1 Does not adopt options 1 or 2 until review of the MRF contract is complete, and the long term waste treatment arrangements for Norfolk are clear
- 2.2 Supports the adoption of options 3 and 4
- 2.3 Support continued negotiations by the Environmental Services Manager with a view to taking a firm recommendation on the adoption of option 5 to Cabinet in September 2010

Note: In preparing this report, due regard has been had to equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate. Relevant officers have been consulted in relation to any legal, financial or human resources implications and comments received are reflected in the report.

3. Information, Issues and Options

3.1 Background Information

- 3.1.1 Whilst Breckland Council steadily increased its recycling and composting rate (NI192) rate from 4% in 2002 to 42% in 2008/9, that rate has reached a plateau and the 2009/10 target of 43% has been narrowly missed (42%). Whilst this level of performance is still in line with National Waste Strategy targets for recycling and composting (at least 40% by 2010) it is clear that the target set out in the Council's business plan 2008-14 of recycling 50% by 2010 is some way from being realised. However, a clear national trend toward the reduction in recyclables due to the economic downturn, particularly in relation to the decline in the volume of newspapers and magazines has undoubtedly affected performance locally
- 3.1.2 With the economic downturn, sources of external funding are scarce, with such financial support generally limited to funding in kind through access to consultants and other sources of advice. However, the escalating costs of landfill has resulted in a parallel increase in credits from Norfolk County Council for certain wastes, particularly organic wastes, diverted from landfill and these credits do represent an opportunity to offset some of the costs of new initiatives.
- 3.1.3 In a report to the Executive Board in November 2009, the Environmental Services Manager presented options for recycling initiatives, and committed to carrying out further evaluation of those options. This report represents the culmination of some of that further detailed work, and it puts forward some detailed options for action over the coming year and beyond.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 The putting in place of additional collection schemes to bolster recycling rates is a potential option for Breckland Council. There are a number of waste fractions that are not currently collected separately through the existing alternate weekly or garden waste collection schemes, including food waste and glass. Options for these were set out in the appendix to the November 2009 report. Initial estimates in that report suggested that any such additional collections would be relatively expensive to implement.
- 3.2.2 In considering options for developing waste collections, attention must be paid to the overall impact of any initiatives upon volumes of household waste. There is an obvious benefit in diverting waste from the green residual waste bins to recycling or composting; under such circumstances recycling increases, landfill waste decreases, whilst overall waste volumes (recycling plus residual waste) stay the same. Some initiatives may add to overall waste volumes. For example, whilst collections of garden waste add to recycling and composting rates (N192), the garden waste collected probably was not previously contained within the residual waste bin. Therefore, the overall volume of waste collected (residual plus recycling plus garden waste) is likely to increase as garden waste collections increase.
- 3.2.3 The success of bring bank collection should not be ignored in considering developing new recycling initiatives. Breckland's current extensive network of bring banks has been especially successful at collecting glass bottles and jars, with an estimated maximum of only 15kg of glass per household per year remaining in residual (green bin) waste. It could therefore be reasonably argued that to introduce kerbside collections of glass would be to replace a very cost effective collection system with a more expensive system, with little in the way of additional material.
- 3.2.3 Following further discussions with Pearson's, a trial of the bulky waste material taken into Thetford transfer was planned to commence late January. However this trial, which was expected to increase the recycling rate by less than 0.1% overall, has been postponed pending agreement with Pearson's and Norfolk County Council on a suitable mechanism for verifying the re-use or recycling of all the material relevant to the proposed scheme.
- 3.2.4 In line with the growing spirit of partnership between the two Councils, discussions have taken place with officers of South Norfolk District Council in order to investigate the cost benefits of a collaborative approach to waste and recycling issues. In particular, the viability of a joint trial of household food waste collections has been explored in detail, and the output of these investigations has been built into the options set out as part of this report in appendix A. Further collaboration on issues such as the servicing of bring banks is also to be explored over the coming months.
- 3.2.5 A report was taken to Cabinet on 11 May 2010 recommending that the contract for the materials Recycling facility (MRF) is extended from April 2011 for a reduced period (3 years rather than 5) in order to enable an evaluation of other options within the market for extending recycling and its benefits, with a possible view to tendering for a new contract. This reduced extension period has been agreed by the contractor, NEWS, and has been negotiated in conjunction with partner district councils within this contract. Any new recycling initiatives developed over the coming 3 years will take into account any potential additional opportunities presented by a new or revised MRF contract by 2014.
- 3.2.6 Norfolk County Council's waste PFI contract is expected to go live in 2015 (25 year contract) and will provide capacity for treating up to 170,000 tonnes of waste. Two companies have reached the final shortlist:
- AmeyCespa
 - Cory Environmental Management Ltd / Wheelabrator technologies Inc

Final tenders will be submitted in July 2010, working towards contract award in March 2011. At the time of writing, the preferred treatment option for waste under this contract is a combined heat and power (CHP) plant in the Kings Lynn area, with electricity being provided to the National Grid, and heat being provided to nearby industrial facilities. The implications for collection authorities are unclear at this stage, but there may be less of a driver for increasing recycling via separated collections from 2015 if there are high levels of waste recovery through a CHP facility.

3.3 Options

- 3.3.1 Appendix A details the costs and benefits of the various potential additional collection schemes and other initiatives available.

3.4 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 3.4.1 Options 1 will result in a considerable reduction in residual waste, and a parallel significant increase in recycling/composting rates. In addition, food waste as a biodegradable material is precisely the nature of material that is most undesirable in a landfill; this is reflected in the enhanced recycling credit available for food waste collections. However, the cost of such a collection is very high at up to £400 per tonne collected. This cost does not compare favourably with other recycling and composting schemes, and if rolled out across the whole of Breckland equates to a net revenue cost in excess of £1 million per annum in the long term.

At present there is no strong regulatory or central government driver for collecting this material for Breckland Council, and the targets for diversion set out in the Waste Strategy for England are already being met, and the County Council has proposed thermal treatment of waste as the solution to enable compliance with the landfill directive going forward.

There are likely to be significant developments in the opportunities for waste recycling and treatment over the next two years, with a review of the material Recycling facility (MRF) contract about to commence, and the forthcoming county waste PFI contract being let in 2011. It cannot be guaranteed in the medium to long term that the enhanced recycling credit for food waste will continue, in particular as such waste can legitimately be treated through the proposed combined heat and power facility proposed under this waste PFI contract. This being the case, it is recommended that the food waste collection option is not adopted at this stage, but is reviewed once there is greater clarity concerning developing waste scenario in Norfolk.

- 3.4.2 The available data suggests that existing bring bank arrangements in Breckland are highly successful, and that the level of recyclable glass in green bins is relatively low. The bring bank system does show a reasonable net income, and provides support to various community groups within the district.

The kerbside glass collection option is likely to show only a modest increase in recycling rates, and a modest decrease in residual waste and yet is relatively expensive to adopt. It is likely that much glass will be diverted from bring banks to kerbside banks, which will impair both the financial and carbon efficiency of the bring bank scheme. Carrying out targeted promotion of glass bring bank usage is likely to release much of the recycling and financial potential of the glass currently ending up in green bins, and will result in a modest net income rather than the net cost of a kerbside scheme, and therefore it is recommended that option 2 is not adopted.

- 3.4.3 Option 3 does not tackle the underlying problem of waste going to landfill. Nevertheless it is a neutral cost means of increasing composting, and is popular with many householders. Given that increasing subscriptions to this scheme is relatively straightforward, and there is a predictable positive impact on NI192, it is recommended that option 3 is adopted, subject to the successful conclusion of pricing negotiations with Serco.

- 3.4.4 Option 4 gets to the root of the waste issue, and brings the issue of landfill waste into sharp relief. As the carbon reduction agenda rises as a public sector priority, efforts to reduce waste at source must be renewed and revitalised. This initiative will operate within existing budgets (and possibly modestly increase net income through promoting glass bank usage) through the refocusing of the work of the Environmental Services team and Serco, and will seek to provide credible long-term solutions to the problem of waste. Thus the adoption of option 4 is strongly recommended.
- 3.4.5 There are currently administrative impairments to the recycling of bulky household waste, and there may prove to be significant financial and carbon costs (through additional waste miles) and financial costs in due course. Further detailed analysis is required to ensure that such a scheme is workable, affordable and does actually make a significant positive contribution to waste metrics and the environment. It is recommended that option 5 is not adopted at this stage, but that further work is carried out to firm up fully costed proposals that are acceptable to Norfolk County Council's waste team, report this is reported back to Cabinet in September 2010..

4. Risk and Financial Implications

4.1 Risk

- 4.1.1 A risk assessment has been completed in accordance with the Council's Risk Management methodology and the risks and mitigating factors have been identified in appendix C.

4.2 Financial

- 4.2.1 Proforma B is attached

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 Should any additional waste collection or diversion schemes be adopted, these will require either a variation to the existing Environmental Services contract, or procurement processes in accordance with the Council's standing orders.

6. Other Implications

- a) Equalities: None
- b) Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998: None
- c) Section 40, Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006: None
- d) Human Resources: None
- e) Human Rights: None
- f) Other: None

7. Alignment to Council Priorities

- 7.1 Aligns to Council the following priorities:
To protect and improve the local environment
To ensure the Council manages its finances well to ensure value for money.

8. Ward/Community Affected

- 8.1 All wards potentially affected

Background Papers

Report: Options for increasing the recycling rate, Executive Board 9 November 2009

NWP Defra_LASU Kerbside Waste Analysis Draft Report 06182 I1

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Key Decision Status (Executive Decisions only):

Non-Key decision on Forward Plan

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A: Options for increasing the Council's recycling and composting rate