

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: HEALTH & CONTROL COMMITTEE - 12TH JANUARY, 2000

SUBJECT: RECYCLING INITIATIVES

FROM: ENGINEERING

1.0 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To inform Members of the progress being made on recycling initiatives to meet both national and local targets, particularly those set out in the current and future Service Plans.

2.0 **BACKGROUND**

2.1 On 20th May, 1998 Members of this Committee were presented with a report which detailed various options for expanding recycling within Warwick District (A copy is appended to refresh Members' memories and to inform those who were not on this Committee at that time).

2.2 In addition, the then current Key Issues Strategy for the Environment aimed to develop a policy of sustainability by 'extending the Council's facilities for recycling and promoting initiatives to reuse waste wherever possible and practical'. The actions highlighted were:-

- Increase the amount of waste recycled by increasing the collection of pre-sorted rubbish across the whole District
- Extend neighbourhood facilities
- Increase the range of the types of rubbish which is collected for recycling
- Consult the community on environmental issues, seek public input into future projects, and pilot new approaches to involving the community in its activities
- Raise awareness of environmental issues across Warwick District

2.3 The Refuse Collection Contract was awarded to Serviceteam starting on 1st April, 1998. The original intention was to develop recycling initiatives within this Contract but the proposals put forward by Serviceteam were not considered cost-effective and as a consequence were rejected by this Committee on the advice of Officers.

2.4 Money was made available via the Key Issues Strategy to fund the trials of recycling schemes over the first year of the Contract, utilising any joint expertise.

2.5 A report on funding for improving existing recycling facilities was considered by Members last November.

3.0 **WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

3.1 Currently, this Council operates:

- a kerbside collection for newspapers - available to 40,000 households (taken up by approximately 15%).
- Home composting - provision of compost bins. 52,000 households targeted culminating in a one day sale event (Two events held so far, approx. 3,000 bins sold).
- Bring sites - there are currently 17 sites throughout the District for paper, glass, cans, materials and books which add 1.5% towards our recycling rate.

3.2 Kerbside Collection

- (i) A major relaunch took place in March 1999 with colourful leaflets plus calendar being distributed to 40,000 households in a bid to encourage greater participation. Local residents had previously complained that few knew of the existence of the scheme, and that collection days were confusing.
- (ii) The leaflet set out to address the publicity issue but it proved not to be cost-effective to move away from the existing fortnightly scheme. Serviceteam's proposed costs were too high with no confidence that the participation rate would rise to even partially cover the increased costs.
- (iii) A report on the relaunch was presented to Members on 9th March, 1999.

3.3 Home Composting

- (i) The first one-day composting event was held at Abbey End in August 1998, with a second event at St. Nicholas' Park in March 1999. Some 3,000 bins have been sold to date, but of course there is no way of knowing the amount of material recycled, and any reduction may be offset by new properties producing more waste.

- (ii) However, the events raised awareness of environmental matters and gave residents greater opportunity to recycle material which would otherwise go to landfill. Similar facilities at Princes Drive and Cherry Orchard Civic Amenity sites attract a greater volume of waste and as a consequence affect our recycling rate.

3.4 Bring Sites

- (i) There are currently 17 sites throughout the District but they add only approximate 1.5% to the Council's recycling rate.

4.0 **DEVELOPMENTS TO THE CURRENT SCHEMES**

4.1 Kerbside Collections

- (i) The kerbside collection scheme for newspapers and magazines has been extended to cover a number of extra streets as well as new developments and the village of Bishops Tachbrook. The new leaflets and calendars have been printed and are in the process of being distributed to over 42,000 households.

4.2 Bring Sites

- (i) The development of the new site at the recently opened Tesco store in Warwick has increased the number of sites to 17. It was hoped that a cardboard bank would be installed at the site with Tesco servicing it but they could not find a contractor to undertake its removal.
- (ii) The development of these sites is proving exceptionally difficult, not only in finding new locations but in finding contractors willing to take new materials such as plastics.
- (iii) The specifications for new compounds to be erected at Covent Garden, Spinney Hill, Reardon Court, Valley Road and St. Margaret's Road have been agreed. Construction should be completed by end March 2000. It is hoped that there will be a reduction in vandalism and as a consequence less of a nuisance to local residents who live near to these sites.

5.0 **NEW SCHEMES**

5.1 Water Butts/Compost Bins

- (i) Initial discussions have taken place with Blackwall Limited suppliers and manufacturers of water butts and home compost bins to organise a sale of subsidised items to local residents. It is envisaged that there would be a one-day sales event similar to those held previously for the home compost bins.

- (ii) Prices of £10 for compost bins and £12 for water butts have been proposed, together with an all inclusive management fee of £6,000. Alternatively both the water butts and the compost bins could be sold by mail order have delivery at a cost circa. £17.00 inclusive of VAT. Apart from the management fee, the Council would pay for the cost of the leaflets (approx. £3,000) and their distribution.
- (iii) The aim is to promote the event for the Spring (probably early April). Blackwall are contacting Severn Trent regarding sponsorship of the water butts under the water conservation banner.

5.2 Centralised Composting

- 5.2.1 The sale of compost bins throughout the District has been fairly successful but the number of bins sold emphasises that composting at home is an activity practised by only a small minority of residents. The vast majority of households produce significant quantities of garden and/or biodegradable kitchen waste and this is potentially the largest source of material for recycling.
- 5.2.2 Warwickshire County Council has recently let a contract to compost green waste from some of its Civic Amenity sites at a farm in Lighthorne. It is anticipated that this facility should be operational by the end of February 2000. Negotiations are ongoing with the County Council to extend this facility to the District Councils.
- 5.2.3 Several other local authorities have separate collection schemes for green waste from households and this is an option being explored in detail. Initial indications are promising: North East Lincolnshire Council for example collected nearly 1,000 tonnes of material from just over 3,000 properties in a year.
- 5.2.4 Warwick District Council sold approximately 1,500 garden waste tickets last year, but the majority of garden refuse is deposited at the County Council's two civic amenity sites at Princes Drive, Leamington Spa and Cherry Orchard, Kenilworth. A free collection service would divert this waste from the civic amenity sites, add to the District's recycling figures and lessen the inconvenience to the householders.
- 5.2.5 Serviceteam, as the Council's current refuse and recycling contractor has been asked on several occasions over the last few months for detailed costings of operating such a scheme, on behalf of the Council. Recent and numerous management changes at Serviceteam have meant that despite repeated requests the information has not been forthcoming.

- 5.2.6 It is proposed that a trial scheme be introduced in the Spring, but until full costs are received, the size and nature of the trial cannot be determined nor the proposed method of operation. The scheme would have to be free to the householder to encourage participation, but how the material would be stored and collected would need to be carefully determined to ensure debris is not left on the highway. The current cost of running the paper collection is £45,000 and the cost is not likely to be less than that sum.
- 5.2.7 If such a scheme were introduced, there should be a reduction in fly tipping of garden waste by local residents.

5.3 Multi-Material Kerbside Collection

- 5.3.1 As demonstrated by the introduction of the kerbside scheme for newspapers and magazines, door to door collections ensure far more material is collected than is deposited at recycling centres (a fair amount also goes to the County Council's civic amenity sites). A way of increasing the amount of waste collected for recycling would be to collect materials door to door; glass in particular which is high weight, high volume. In global terms, this would be more environmentally friendly by reducing unnecessary car trips.
- 5.3.2 There is a company who would supply kerbside boxes and a specially segregated collection vehicle on a rental basis so that full trials could be carried out and time costs and effectiveness assessed. However, the staffing would need to be supplied by ourselves using our contractor Serviceteam.
- 5.3.3 Again Serviceteam have been unable or unwilling to supply such costs. There may also be a difficulty in providing sufficient space for storage of materials prior to being sent for recycling, and depending on the range of materials in finding contractors willing to accept the materials.

Ongoing difficulties and delays in finalising Serviceteam's relocation to the alternative site at Saltisford makes it impossible to assess when Serviceteam would have the necessary resources to implement such a scheme if at all.

6.0 KEY ISSUES STRATEGIES

- 6.1 This report is in line with the aims outlined in the Key Issues Strategies.

7.0 SUMMARY

- 7.1 This report brings Members up to date with the current recycling initiatives and those which it is hoped to implement in the next twelve months.

- 7.2 Looking back through previous reports and in particular the substantial report compiled in May 1998, the issues highlighted, are still of concern today. In particular, the state of the markets for the main recyclable materials of paper and glass continue to be depressed and will still be as Councils such as ourselves strive to collect more and more material for recycling. Contractors are unwilling to invest in local authority recycling schemes due to the poor rate of return and the resources required.
- 7.3 Only a minority of local residents are willing to participate in recycling schemes. Only about 15% participate in the paper collection scheme despite high profile launches. Only just over 5% of households purchased a compost bin. New sites for recycling bins are met with hostile reactions and old sites are accepted with reluctance and in some cases fierce opposition. There is no incentive financial or otherwise on the part of householders to participate in any scheme, so our schemes are taken up only by the interested minority.
- 7.4 Serviceteam, the Council's refuse and recycling contractor, despite protestations to the contrary, are not a willing and able partner in helping to promote and implement schemes. Ideas which are put forward by Officers do not come to fruition because of a lack of enthusiasm and expertise on the part of Serviceteam. Officers are unwilling to recommend schemes which require financial commitment from the Council which centre around Serviceteam's competency in being able to carry them out.
- 7.5 Despite the information of the Waste Management Forum comprising Officers and Members of Warwickshire County Council and the Warwickshire Districts, there is little practical liaison between all the separate Councils. The launch and marketing of the County Council compost bin was made in isolation of any on-going projects that the District Councils were involved in. Joint events would raise the recycling profile.
- 7.6 Finally, the backing from Central Government is still not visible. The packaging regulations has not reduced the amount of packaging which still accompanies products. The failure of Tesco's in finding a contractor willing to take cardboard emphasises this. Recent newspaper articles identify the Government's admission that it is unlikely that the 25% recycling target set in the early 1990's can be met by the majority of Local Authorities. The average recycling rate is circa. 9%. Our current rate is just under 8%.
- 7.7 Although this Council is doing more in terms of recycling, than it was in the early 1990s, the amount of waste we are collecting is increasing due to the extensive housing developments now being built. As a consequence, our recycling rate is marginally reducing although the volume of material recycled is increasing, in percentage terms there is a marginal decrease due to the increased volume of household waste emanating from the new development and as we fail to attract those new householders to participate in our schemes.

7.8 It is recognised that in order to increase public participation in recycling schemes, there is a need to raise awareness through publicity, education and actions. The Schools Litter Campaign has been developed to include an element of recycling. Waste Management leaflets are handed out to all new residents. Local radio is used to publicise our schemes and services. It is hoped that the latest relaunch of the paper collection scheme will prompt many into joining.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

It is RECOMMENDED that Members note and approve the following items:-

- (i) the relaunch of the kerbside paper collection
- (ii) the development of a collection scheme for green waste
- (iii) a water butt/home compost sale
- (iv) the investigation and trial of a multi-material kerbside collection, looking at best practice and the experience of other comparable Authorities

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Background Papers

Minutes of the Health & Control Committee held on 17th November, 1999
Council Minute 483

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Areas in District
Affected: All