

TO: ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7th October, 2003

SUBJECT: SCRUTINY OF RECYCLING

FROM: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the progress to date on developing and implementing the Council's Recycling Strategy and to suggest areas where Members may wish to carry out further, more detailed scrutiny of the service.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee has decided that one of its major roles this year will be to carry out a detailed review of Recycling within the District. At the last Committee meeting on 9th September, 2003, Members asked that officers draw up a preliminary report outlining the issues which Members may wish to address. The aim of this report is to give Members a summary of the work which has been planned and carried out to date, to suggest key areas for focus and to allow Members to decide on the scope of the scrutiny investigation.
- 2.2 As Members will be aware, the Council has a Recycling Strategy which was approved by the Executive in October, 2001 which aimed to meet or exceed the Government's targets of recycling 18% of the District's household waste by 2003/4 and 27% by 2005/6. The original action plan included a number of options for recycling green waste, but the decision was taken to expand the pilot scheme which had been successfully operated in Whitnash for eighteen months to cover a total of 24,000 households.
- 2.3 The Council was able to provide the green bins for the garden waste collection service through a local Public Service Agreement with Warwickshire County Council (under which we are required to recycle 9,500 tonnes of waste) who funded the purchase of the green bins. The local PSA also enabled the District Council to swap the bags used for the kerbside paper collection scheme and purchase 52,000 red plastic boxes instead, again funded by the County Council.
- 2.4 The Council also took the opportunity to review the existing Contract arrangements for collecting recyclables from the kerbside and made the decision in August, 2002 to remove that element of the Refuse & Recycling Contract and to let a new Contract covering all kerbside recycling services. The new Contract went out to tender later that year and was awarded in the New Year to ECT Recycling Ltd – a not for profit organization which specialises in kerbside recycling services. The expanded green waste collection service started in March, 2003 and ECT took over the kerbside paper recycling service the following month. The new Contract has been operating now for over six months and preparations are well under way for the introduction of the first phase of the new multi-material collection service starting in April, 2004. Half the District will be covered in the initial phase with the whole District receiving multi-material kerbside collections from April, 2005.

- 2.5 In addition to the new kerbside services, the Council continues to operate a network of static recycling centres collecting paper, glass, textiles and cans from eighteen sites across the District. These sites are serviced by external Contractors on the Council's behalf and recycle over a thousand tones of waste every year.
- 2.6 There are a number of aspects of the Recycling services operated by Warwick District which Members may wish to examine in greater detail, including:

Collection of Garden Waste: including the decision to provide the service to 24,000 households, why consultants were engaged and their recommendations, what alternatives are provided (discounted composters, free wood chipping etc) where the service is not operating, charging for the collection of garden waste under the Refuse Collection Contract, options for future expansion (including alternate weekly collection of green waste and domestic refuse).

Performance: the Council's performance on recycling against national and local targets as well as our performance relative to neighbouring authorities and national rates (the provisional recycling rate for the first quarter of 2003/4 was 29% compared to 11% in 2002/3). The improved performance of the Refuse Collection Contract should also be considered.

Problems: areas and cases where recycling can be problematic and the alternative solutions which may be considered (blocks of flats, rural areas) and accessibility problems for elderly or disabled residents (assisted collection arrangements are offered for both the major elements of the kerbside recycling contract) and problems caused by the use of the red boxes and green wheeled bins.

Partnership Arrangements: including the working arrangements within the Council (Leisure & Amenities – composting etc., Action 21, the role of the Waste Management Steering Group) and external relationships with other local authorities, the County Council, the Waste Management Forum, Consortium arrangements, recycling credits and the local Public Service Agreement. Also, Members may wish to investigate the role of national Government and the impact of the Challenge Fund, Landfill Tax Credits, the Performance Reward Grant and other external influences.

Public Perception: the Public's view on the progress which the Council has made, how the Public was consulted prior to the implementation of the Recycling Strategy, the work being undertaken to improve education and to raise awareness, wider campaigns at regional and national level and future methods for publicising recycling and gauging the public's reaction to the measures taken now and in the future.

- 2.7 Members may also wish to consider how these various elements should best be investigated further. The available options include scrutiny of discrete aspects of the recycling services by individual Members or small groups, further detailed officer reports, public consultation exercises, presentations by Contractors (including Question and Answer sessions) and benchmarking and comparison with other authorities.

3. **POLICY AND BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 3.1 Recycling is a high priority area for the Council with an increasingly high profile and challenging Government targets to be met in both the current financial year and in 2005/6. The achievement of these targets is a key objective under the Corporate Strategy.
- 3.2 The development and implementation of the Council's Recycling Strategy has significant cost implications, but the services planned or already in place will be in line with current budget forecasts.

4. **OUTCOME(S) REQUIRED**

- 4.1 It is RECOMMENDED that Members note the contents of this report and decide on a framework for the full scrutiny investigation of Recycling by this Committee.

Richard Dobbs
Waste Strategy Officer

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Warwick District Council Waste Management Strategy, Report to Executive on 15th
October, 2001

Areas in District Affected: ALL
Executive Portfolio Area and Holder: Environment – Councillor Mrs Begg.

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