

	<b>Food Waste Recycling Initiative Project Outcomes</b>
<b>Committee</b>	Gloucestershire Joint Waste Committee
<b>Committee Date</b>	<b>23 February 2016</b>
<b>Significant Decision</b>	No
<b>Responsible Officers</b>	Steve Read, Head of Service, Gloucestershire Joint Waste Team (01823 625707; <a href="mailto:steve.read@gloucestershire.gov.uk">steve.read@gloucestershire.gov.uk</a> );
<b>Main Consultees</b>	None
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To present the results of the food waste initiative project undertaken between August and December 2015
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p><b><i>It is recommended that the Committee:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Note the improvements in food waste capture following the initiative.</li> <li>b. Supports the continued promotion and monitoring of food waste recycling and, where the opportunity or need arises, receives and considers proposals for further activities and initiatives to increase food waste recycling.</li> <li>c. Support the monitoring of all waste data in order to determine whether this project has had a knock-on effect to the levels of capture of other recyclable materials.</li> </ul>
<b>Resource Implications</b>	None

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Food waste remains one of the largest components of the household waste stream. Although convenient kerbside recycling options are available across the majority of Gloucestershire, fewer than 50% of households participate. Food produces a wide range of environmental impacts in its life-cycle throughout production and disposal, and the costs of landfilling wasted food are high, yet the benefits of maximising the resource value of food in terms of nutrient preservation and energy production are easily gained if more people used the kerbside recycling service.
- 1.2 At the Joint Waste Committee meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015 approval was given to undertake an initiative involving placing “no food waste please” stickers on residual waste bins, and relaying associated messages to residents. This was subject to the County Council obtaining and agreeing detailed costings for the project. The purpose of this exercise was to increase the amount of food waste diverted from landfill into anaerobic digestion and composting.
- 1.3 A positive business case to support this decision was evidenced by information presented by WRAP and Somerset Waste Partnership, who had previously

demonstrated that the capture of food waste could be increased by at least 20% by taking the following action;

- 1.3.1 Placing a sticker clearly stating “No Food Waste” on the lids of all householder residual waste bins.
  - 1.3.2 Providing further information to householders in order to explain the benefits of food waste recycling and to encourage participation.
- 1.4 Between August and December 2015 this general approach was mirrored in the five Gloucestershire districts where food waste is currently collected. Stroud district was the only area excluded from the project as food waste will not be separately collected there until November 2016.
  - 1.5 The project was funded by the County Council on an invest-to-save basis, as the business case demonstrated that the £100k invested in this work would provide a payback in less than a year.
  - 1.6 Assuming the level of diversion is sustained, this objective will also be comfortably achieved.

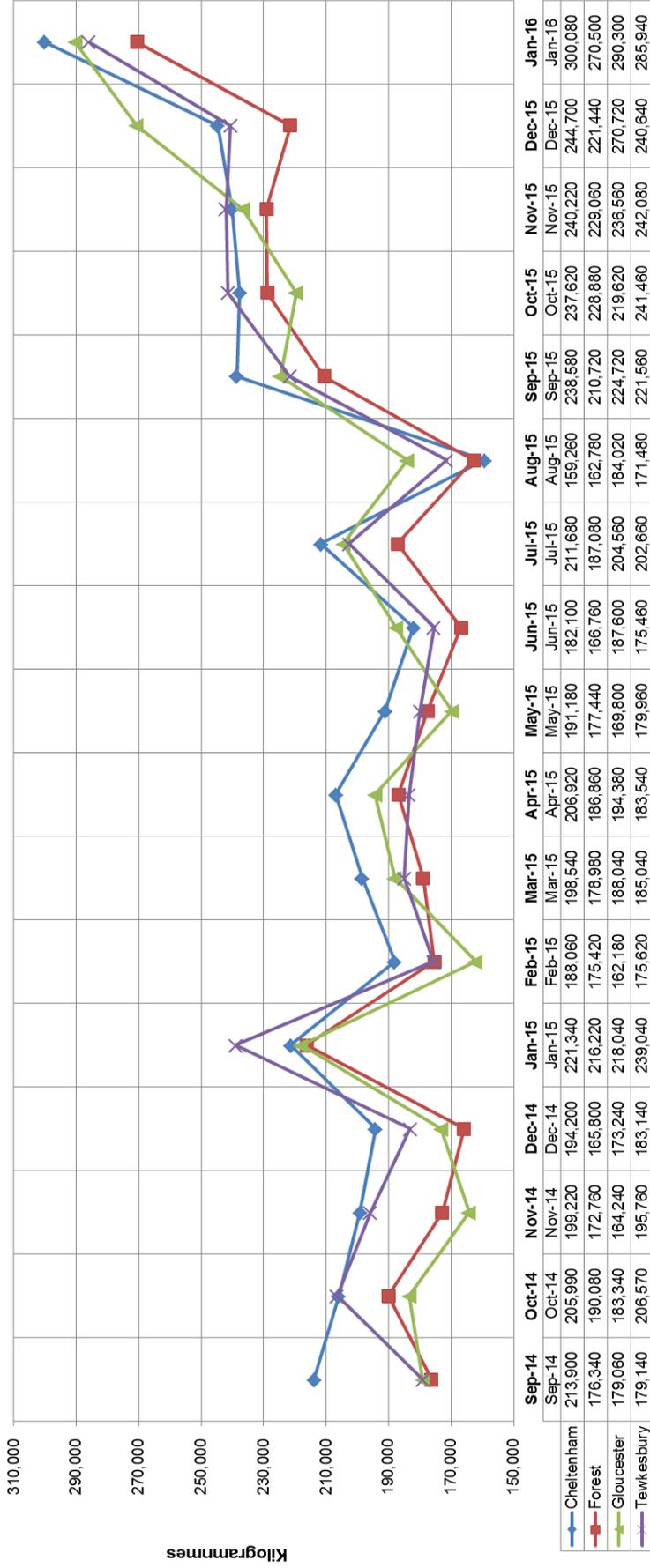
## **2. The project**

- 2.1 Project planning involved agreeing;
  - the key messages
  - the method of presenting these messages
  - the means of distributing the messages
  - the means by which householders were to be further encouraged to recycle food waste and thanked for doing so.
- 2.2 The main key message was a clear call to action, asking people to not put food waste in their landfill bins, but to use their caddies instead. Other supporting messages presented the benefits of doing this in terms of energy generation, reduced disposal costs and reduced environmental impacts.
- 2.3 The key message was presented by means of a highly visible, weatherproof permanent sticker designed to convey a clear, polite instruction. Supporting messages were provided on a card hanger which was placed on the handle of the bins. This could be removed and recycled by householders after they had read it.
- 2.4 Stickers and hangers were placed on waste containers at the kerbside whilst they were accessible on collection day. This ensured that as many householders as possible received the information. The exercise was completed by waste collection crews working with a small number of additional temporary staff. By fitting in with the standard waste collection cycle, the work was anticipated to be completed within a two week window, with some additional contingency time inbuilt in case of delays caused by bad weather or other unforeseen events.
- 2.5 Householders were further encouraged to participate in food waste recycling by being offered a new caddy free of charge if they needed it. To facilitate this, an additional 2000 sets of caddies per district were bought by the County Council for distribution by each district. In response to high demand, a further 2000 caddies were provided to Tewkesbury Borough Council, who had previously charged householders for replacement caddies.

### **3. Results and conclusions**

- 3.1 The primary measure of success with this project is the tonnage of food waste collected for recycling. Monthly tonnage data is captured for each district and a month-on-month comparison of this data can be used to demonstrate any improvement trend.
- 3.2 A secondary measure of success is provided by the number of caddies ordered by householders in the period of time immediately following the sticker placement.
- 3.3 A subsidiary measure of success was the demonstration of the business case to show that the benefit could be obtained without additional overall cost.
- 3.4 The chart on the following page shows the month by month food waste tonnage data per district;
- 3.5 This data demonstrates an increase of over 20% in food waste capture following the initiative. All districts saw a further increase in food waste recycling during January 2016 and although there may be a seasonal reason for this which may result in performance settling back down again in future months, ongoing monitoring of tonnage data will be required in order to confirm this. Note that no tonnage data is available for the Cotswolds as their food waste is commingled with garden waste and cannot be separately quantified. However, there is no reason to believe that Cotswold food waste recycling improvements are any different to each of the other districts.
- 3.6 The number of additional caddy orders exceeded the anticipated 2000 per district in all areas, although the ongoing tail off in orders during the winter makes it difficult to be exact about final numbers. This is not a significant problem, as the primary aim of the project was to capture more food waste irrespective if this was from a household which needed a new caddy or from a household which already had a caddy.
- 3.7 The project was delivered on budget at £100k and the subsequent increase in food waste recycling has ensured that it is on track to pay back in less than a year.

## Food Waste Delivered to Andigestion - Sept 2014 to Dec 2015



3.7 Despite the project succeeding in its aim to divert at least 20% more food waste from landfill, a number of issues arose during the process of stickering which resulted in the exercise having to be restarted and repeated in some areas;

- Gloucester City contractors, Amey, were unable to adequately resource the stickering crews during the planned dates in August. Only around 10% of the city was covered, and the rest of the city completed several weeks later during November.
- Ubico in the Cheltenham Borough area also initially struggled on some rounds to deliver the stickering as per specification in a neat and consistent manner. Bins were subsequently re-stickered across the town in a second phase during December.

Stickering in the Cotswold, Forest of Dean and Tewkesbury Borough areas was largely done to specification, although there were small pockets where hangers either blew off or where stickers were incorrectly attached. In all cases where this was seen during monitoring, it was fed back to the supervisors for action. Similarly, feedback was given where stickering was seen to have been done well.

3.8 Very few customer complaints were received, with the most common comment being that some people felt that they were being singled out. This was anticipated, and a briefing note circulated to all customer contact centres in advance of the stickering allowed customer service officers to reassure individuals that they were not being singled out and that the message was aimed at all households.

3.9 A 'thank you' message will be delivered to households in Cheltenham, Cotswold, Gloucester and Tewkesbury on the back page of the council tax guide that is distributed in March.

#### **4. Further Work**

4.1 JWT and partners will continue to press the importance of food waste recycling in general communications and in future initiatives where the messages are a good fit with project objectives

4.2 Members are therefore recommended to support the continued promotion and monitoring of food waste recycling and, where the opportunity or need arises, receive and consider proposals for further activities and initiatives to increase food waste recycling.