



**Low Performing Areas; Helping Residents to Recycle More**

<b>Committee</b>	Gloucestershire Joint Waste Committee
<b>Committee Date</b>	<b>13 October 2015</b>
<b>Significant Decision</b>	Yes
<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 consider a proposal to help residents in areas with excess residual waste and low recycling rates to recycle more.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p><b><i>It is recommended that the Committee:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Approve the initial work in Forest of Dean and Cotswold as outlined in section 2 below with a view to extending the programme into other areas of Gloucestershire, and</li> <li>b. Requests each partner to allocate the necessary staffing resources to assist with the delivery of the project during the face to face engagement phase, and</li> <li>c. Endorses and ensures the consistent application of side-waste, closed lid, and extra bin policies in order that the work can be undertaken effectively.</li> </ul>
<b>Resource Implications</b>	<p>The greatest resource implication is that of staffing resources. It is anticipated that staff from other teams within partner authorities (eg environmental/street wardens, housing officers, enforcement officers) will be required to support the joint waste team in the delivery of this work once the face to face engagement work starts. It is also proposed that two vacancies currently existing within the Joint Waste Team be utilised and these roles be dedicated to delivering and extending this work. It is expected that a team of between 6 – 8 people be assembled for this phase of the work. The support of the waste collection contractors is also vital to in order to ensure that work is co-ordinated closely with waste collections.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the preparation of supporting literature and the supply and distribution of additional containers can be managed within existing partnership budgets.</p>

## 1. Background

- 1.1. Diverting waste away from landfill is a very effective way to save money and improve environmental performance. Partner authorities have comprehensive recycling services and supporting policies in place in order to assist with the diversion of waste from landfill. In most cases these services provide residents with the ability, if they use the services fully, to recycle over 70% of their household waste.
- 1.2. However, the performance of these services is limited by the extent to which householders participate in them, and the county recycling rate has levelled off at just under 50%. Any significant further increase in recycling, apart from the planned service changes in Stroud, will need to be achieved by greater levels of participation by householders.
- 1.3. Councils only have the ability to encourage householders to recycle; they have no legal use of pricing mechanisms or ability to charge for residual waste, and it therefore remains at the discretion of the householder if they wish to use their recycling service. However, the introduction of fortnightly residual waste collections and the implementation of policies which restrict residual waste capacity e.g. smaller wheelie bins, 'No Side Waste' policies and 'closed lid' policies, are basic but vital measures which provide a cornerstone in driving improvements in recycling performance.
- 1.4. Despite consistency in service provision there remains significant differences in recycling performance between different neighbourhoods. Some neighbourhoods have particularly low levels of performance in terms of both dry recycling, food recycling and in the amount of residual waste that is produced. The reasons for this are complex, and may include a genuine lack of understanding, an unwillingness to participate and a lack of recycling facilities in the home. Barriers to recycling may be both attitudinal e.g. "I can't be bothered" and physical e.g. extra or replacement recycling boxes are needed.
- 1.5. At the JWC meetings in April and June, Gloucester City Council discussed their approach to tackling both attitudinal and physical barriers to recycling. This approach identified low-performing areas, and using a combination of letters to householders, face-to-face discussions, helping residents to understand and sort out their waste streams into the correct containers, and provision of replacement or additional recycling boxes and caddies has led to an increase in residual waste diversion. The approach is producing very positive results and it is recommended that the Joint Waste Team replicate it in other low-performing areas of the county. As an example the result of a recent focus in the Matson area of the city, participation in dry recycling has increased from 55% to 69%, and participation in food waste recycling has increased from 19% to 35%. Ongoing monitoring will determine if this increase is sustained.
- 1.6. It is important to work in areas that are supported by the provision of comprehensive recycling services yet which are underperforming in terms of recycling rates and in terms of the production of excess residual waste. These offer the greatest scope for improvement. It is also vital to ensure that policies which eliminate side waste and overfilled bins are in place and are robustly enforced on the ground. For this reason it is proposed that low performing areas in Forest of Dean and Cotswold be the initial focus, but that the programme is developed to have a positive impact on all areas of the county.

## 2. The proposal

- 2.1. A four phase approach is proposed;
  - a) Planning and baseline monitoring.
  - b) Writing to residents and assessing feedback.

- c) Undertaking door-knocking and helping residents to understand and use the correct bins for their different wastes.
- d) Follow-up monitoring and reporting.

2.2. This four phase approach is to be replicated in each of the focus areas.

2.3. The learning gained from undertaking this work will help to inform our approach to future performance improvement and it is hoped that this will feed into future business plans.

2.4. a) Planning and baseline monitoring.

2.4.1. It is necessary to identify specific neighbourhoods for improvement. These areas should be chosen based on a combination of information e.g the amount of residual waste and recycling being produced at a per household level and feedback from the crews. The target areas should be contained within a collection round so that any improvements arising from the activity will be measurable.

2.4.2. Baseline participation in dry recycling and food waste recycling will be measured prior to any communications being sent out. Data from other areas will also be monitored in order to provide a comparison. Monitoring will not commence until the effect of the current "No Food Waste" stickering project has settled down. This may be around mid to late October.

2.4.3. Baseline monitoring will be undertaken over a period of 6 weeks in line with WRAPs best practice guidance. This will ensure that three sets of fortnightly data will be obtained which will provide statistical accuracy.

2.4.4. The level of residual waste and recycling will also be recorded for the area again over a 6 week period.

2.4.5. During this period of monitoring, the preparation of supporting literature will be undertaken. Communications will also be developed to ensure that members and senior managers are fully informed of what we are doing and why, and front-of-house / contact centre staff will also be briefed and provided with FAQ's to assist in dealing with any calls from the public. It is hoped that all members and staff will act as ambassadors to the project and support it's delivery. Due to the local nature of the project it is not proposed to utilise the media by means of broad advertising, but it is anticipated that a general press release will be prepared between the Joint Waste Team and the relevant district council, and issued by the district council at the outset in order to explain our new approach and to reinforce specific messages regarding closed lid and side waste policies.

2.4.6. It will also be necessary to identify, bring on board and brief the staff resources in preparation for undertaking this work. Staff from the Joint Waste Team will be dedicated to planning, preparing and delivering the programme, and will initially focus their work in both the Forest of Dean and Cotswolds. It is anticipated that additional staffing support from each district area will be required in order to effectively undertake the subsequent face to face engagement with residents. The options for this will be researched but it is envisaged that support will be provided by, for example; community engagement, contractors, enforcement teams and local housing associations. Members of the committee are asked to help facilitate this within their authorities.

2.4.7. Contact centre staff will be briefed about this project in order that they are able to respond appropriately to any feedback they receive from the public.

2.5. b) Writing to residents and assessing feedback.

- 2.5.1. All residents in the low performing round will receive a letter explaining the importance of recycling and requesting them to make sure that they use both their food waste caddies and their dry recycling boxes and bags. It will also remind residents of side waste and closed lid policies and will make residents aware that these policies will be enforced. This letter will be sent upon completion of the baseline monitoring.
- 2.5.2. It is important that from this time collection crews consistently enforce these policies and feedback on households where side waste or open bins are presented.
- 2.5.3. The letter will also explain to residents that officers from the council will be able to visit them if they wish in order to assist in their efforts to recycle, and that officers will be working their area in the weeks ahead.
- 2.5.4. It is also essential that the contact centre staff record any feedback from residents so that the project team can use this information when preparing the next phase.

2.6. c) Undertaking door knocking and helping residents to sort their waste into the appropriate containers.

- 2.6.1. Approximately one month after letters have been sent out, a team of officers will visit a low performing area within the round on residual waste collection day and will work ahead of the collection crews. Based upon experience in Gloucester City, officers will work in pairs. All residual waste container lids will be lifted and an inspection of contents will show whether or not the resident is recycling correctly. A check will also be made to see if the resident is presenting a food waste caddy (or, in the case of Cotswolds, placing food waste in with garden waste). These checks will be recorded and will demonstrate whether the letter alone has had an effect upon participation levels.
- 2.6.2. Residents with additional or larger bins will be cross checked against the database to ensure that they remain entitled to this additional capacity. In cases where they no longer need the additional capacity or where it is clear that the resident is not using their recycling container then the additional or larger bin will be earmarked for removal and replacement with a standard sized bin. The householder will be made aware of this.
- 2.6.3. Any household that is using the service correctly will receive a 'thank you' card through their letterbox. All other households will be approached for a discussion about recycling and if they are happy to do so, they will be offered the opportunity to spend a few minutes with the officers looking at how they could better sort their waste. If the resident requires a new recycling box or a food waste caddy this will be provided at the time.
- 2.6.4. Care will be taken to be polite and helpful to residents during this process, and officers will be sensitive to any difficulties that residents may have, particularly the elderly. Households with 'no cold caller' signs on their front doors will not be approached but information will be provided on recycling.
- 2.6.5. Local ward members will be encouraged to support this exercise and would be welcome to participate in it on the ground.
- 2.6.6. A record will be kept of any caddies and recycling boxes issued on the day.

## 2.7. d) Follow-up monitoring and reporting.

- 2.7.1. Follow-up monitoring will consist of an analysis of tonnages relating to the various waste streams in both the focus area and the control rounds. Additional participation monitoring will also take place a fortnight after the door-knocking has taken place.
- 2.7.2. The results of the exercise will be summarised and used to determine how and whether this approach can be effectively rolled out to other areas.

## 2.8. Resources

- 2.8.1. Planning, project management and monitoring of the focus areas can be delivered by existing capacity from within the Joint Waste Team. The direct public engagement part of the project will however require the support and involvement of additional staff. The ideal number of people required to work on this project can vary depending upon the size of the area, but it is expected that between 6 – 8 staff working in pairs will be able to engage with up to 200 households a day.
- 2.8.2. It is proposed that staff be engaged in the following ways;
  - 2.8.2.1. Two vacancies within the Joint Waste Team to be filled with time limited roles dedicated to delivering this work.
  - 2.8.2.2. Staff from other teams be allocated to supporting and delivering the face to face phase of the work. This may include staff from housing, enforcement or, for example, wardens. In the case where an area is heavily reliant upon these additional staff it may be important to ensure that this commitment is identified within any individual local service plans.
- 2.8.3. Support from waste collection contractors and operatives is also very important in order to ensure that policies are consistently enforced and that collections of waste from the kerbside are co-ordinated with the engagement teams.

## 2.9. Timeline.

- 2.9.1. Planning and baseline monitoring to be undertaken in November and December.
- 2.9.2. First letters to be sent to residents in late January.
- 2.9.3. Door to door visits to commence late February. This will give time to deal with the impact of additional Christmas waste and any catch-up. This first round of engagement with householders to be undertaken with existing resources from partner authorities. The recruitment of additional staff to the two vacancies within the JWT will provide extra capacity for the longer term but are unlikely to be in post during the early stages of the work.
- 2.9.4. Further participation monitoring to take place during March and April. During this time, it may be necessary to engage with householders on an ad-hoc basis or on request.
- 2.9.5. It is hoped that a longer term programme can be rolled out thereafter. This will include areas of Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and Gloucester, and possibly Stroud after their service change in 2016.

2.10. Next steps required to progress the project;

2.10.1. A detailed project plan is to be worked up for the project, but baseline monitoring and project preparation can commence from mid-October as soon as it is clear that the effect of the “No Food Waste” stickering project has stabilised.

2.10.2. The identification of initial focus areas is to be agreed between partner authorities.

2.10.3. A solution to the staffing requirement is established with partner authorities. This may involve recruitment to vacant posts.

2.10.4. A communications plan is drawn up in association with the delivery partners.

### **3. Recommendations**

3.1. It is recommended that the Committee:

3.1.1. approves the project as outlined in section 2 and

3.1.2. approves the allocation of resources to deliver the project, and

3.1.3. endorses and ensures the consistent application of side-waste, closed lid, and extra bin policies in order that the work can be undertaken effectively.