

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1st October 2009

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), and Councillors K Banks, G Chance, R King and D Taylor

Also Present:

Councillors P Anderson, M Braley, B Clayton, W Hartnett, W King and M Collins (Vice Chair – Standards Committee).

Officers:

G Revans and S Horrobin
M Bell and A Wardell (Bromsgrove District Council)

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and H Saunders

79. INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed all Members to the meeting and explained that the evening would comprise a number of presentations from Officers regarding the recently revised Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy. He also welcomed and introduced Mike Bell, the Head of Street and Community and Anna Wardell, the Waste Policy and Promotions Manager, both from Bromsgrove District Council.

80. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Gandy, Hunt, Norton, Pearce, Smith, and Thomas.

81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or of any party whip.

82. REVISED WASTE STRATEGY

The purpose of the evening was to provide further information to Members about the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

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Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1st October 2009

Members received a presentation which outlined the key revisions to the Strategy.

The strategy was originally published in 2004 with the intention to review and make revisions to it on a regular basis. The current review had begun in 2007. Public consultation had been undertaken as part of this review in early 2009 and a final draft of the strategy had been completed in August 2009. This final draft promoted the Waste Hierarchy which advocated, in the following order of priority, reducing, re-using, recycling, recovering and disposing of waste. Officers commended Bobbi Ashby, the Council's graphic designer for her excellent work in producing the design of the strategy.

Officers explained that the strategy was a joint strategy for both Worcestershire and Herefordshire and was programmed to run for thirty years until 2034. The current revision had been agreed in January 2009 by the Member Waste Resource Management Forum. The strategy had taken into account some of the key legislative drivers that impacted upon the ways in which local authorities disposed of waste. In particular, these included the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) and National Indicators for recycling and composting. LATS was a scheme designed to reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfill. The County Council was liable to large penalties through this scheme if it was not able to reduce waste. In the previous year, 197,000 tonnes of waste had been sent to landfill in Herefordshire and Worcestershire and it was predicted that by 2034, this would have risen to 250,000 tonnes. Worcestershire County Council was currently in the process of investigating residual waste treatment options.

The strategy set out the 'core services' which would provide the opportunity for materials to be collected but through a commingled collection of recyclables. The increase of waste prevention, recycling and composting could be achieved through either restricted collection frequency and / or a restricted container size. Any service that was not covered through the core services would be charged for to recover the cost of provision. This would include any possible garden waste collection that might be introduced.

Consultation had taken place on the strategy across the two counties through the use of focus groups and questionnaires. The focus group responses revealed that many participants wanted: more information about what happened to their recycling once it had been collected; more advice about the range of services; and improved consistency in collection across Councils. Results from the questionnaire revealed that: some participants were unclear

about what they could recycle; over a third of people felt they could not compost at home as their garden was too small; and two thirds of people donated items to charity rather than throwing them away.

Members noted that they had observed onsite anaerobic digesters being used for waste management in Scandinavia. It was suggested that these could be integrated into new housing developments through the planning process. Officers explained that the use of anaerobic digesters had not been included in the strategy but it was something they could review and potentially incorporate into both the strategy and action plan for implementing the strategy.

Members noted that only one local business had been involved in the consultation process. They commented that more could be done to encourage businesses to address their recycling duties and to reduce their carbon footprint. Officers explained that the focus of the strategy was on municipal waste which consisted of household waste and that business waste was dealt with in a different way. However, it might be possible to incentivise businesses to increase their levels of recycling.

Members questioned whether it would be possible for more work to be undertaken with charities to increase the re-use of old furniture. Members suggested that furniture could be received by the waste disposal site with any re-usable items being passed on to local charities. Officers explained that Worcestershire County Council had been investigating the possibility of installing sheds on two of their sites that would enable them to accept and store furniture. Re-use of waste materials was discussed in greater detail later in the meeting.

83. ENVIROSORT - PRESENTATION

Members viewed a short video presentation which demonstrated a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in action. This revealed how commingled materials sent for recycling were sorted. The intention was to provide Members with an idea of how the new EnviroSort MRF facility, which was being built in Norton, would work once it was up and running.

Officers explained that this facility would enable a wider variety of waste materials to be recycled than was currently available. The additional types of waste which could be recycled using this facility included plastic bottles and containers, waxed cartons, and cardboard. Officers provided a pictorial overview of how the EnviroSort system would operate at Norton. It was explained that

once the materials had been sorted they were sent to various processing centres across the UK. Only paper recycling was sent outside the UK to Sweden. It was envisaged that the new EnviroSort facility would be operational by the end of 2009 with Redditch residents being able to recycle the wider range of materials from January 2010 onwards.

Members expressed concerns about the potential for residual waste contamination of recyclable materials. Officers explained that a sorting process was in place to take out any residual waste before it was sent to the EnviroSort facility. In addition, each time a load for recycling was processed, a sample percentage of the load would be tested for contamination.

Members enquired if the EnviroSort facility had been designed to enable it to expand and incorporate future advances in recycling technology. Officers confirmed that this had been considered. It was also acknowledged that a possible increase in recycling and advances in technology might mean that the facility would need to be expanded or developed in the future.

84. CHARGEABLE GARDEN WASTE COLLECTIONS - PRESENTATION

Information was presented to Members regarding proposals to introduce a chargeable garden waste collection. These proposals were scheduled to be presented for the consideration of the Executive Committee in November.

Bromsgrove District Council had recently moved from a free garden waste collection to a service that residents had to pay for. This chargeable collection system had been introduced in 2009. Residents who chose to pay for the service were charged £30.00 per year. When the chargeable collection was first introduced in Bromsgrove a large number of complaints were received from residents and there was also some negative media coverage about the issue. Consequently, Officers had found that the numbers of people using the service had decreased, the tonnage had decreased but the average yield had risen.

Support from a variety of different teams within the Council including IT, Finance, Communications, and Customer Services was important in delivering the service. It was also crucial for the lead-in time of the process to begin as early as possible to enable all teams involved to provide support at the appropriate time. It was important that both Council Officers and Members were aware of the service and were able to promote it where possible. Ensuring

that the correct information about rounds and routes was available would help to ensure that the correct information was given to the public.

Members questioned the maximum volume for a single collection. Officers confirmed that there would be a 240 litre bin available for residents who signed up for the collection. Residents would be charged a further £30.00 for the use of an extra bin.

Members discussed the potential to reintroduce the Shredder Man service. This service had been used by a number of residents in previous years. However, Officers advised that this service was expensive to provide and therefore did not necessarily represent an appropriate alternative to the chargeable garden waste collection service.

Some Members expressed the view that introducing a garden waste collection service would not be environmentally friendly because of the extra journeys this would generate, the increase in fuel, and the emissions this would create. Officers agreed with this point but noted that there was a good proportion of garden waste that currently ended up in landfill. By introducing a chargeable garden waste collection service, the costs could be covered but also the collection schedule could be kept manageable.

Members discussed the use of composting for disposing of garden waste. It was noted that not everyone had the space to be able to accommodate a compost bin. There was also a question over what to do with the end product once garden waste had been processed. It was suggested that residents participating in the chargeable garden waste collection could receive compost back in return for their garden waste. Officers explained that they had been investigating a possible disposal route for the garden waste. Some garden waste was sold from household waste sites that processed it and one potential disposal point had considered giving excess compost to local farmers.

85. PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION - PRESENTATION

The Waste Management Manager from Redditch Borough Council and the Waste Policy and Promotions Manager from Bromsgrove District Council presented Members with information about the promotion and publicity of waste services.

Officers explained that residents required information about their waste collection services. Herefordshire and Worcestershire had been awarded approximately £260,000 in Waste and Resources

Action Programme (WRAP) funding which was to be used for publicity campaigns relating to the changes to recycling over forthcoming months. WRAP encouraged all authorities in receipt of this funding to undertake publicity campaigns that were consistent across the country by using their own branding and imagery. To do this, WRAP guided local authorities on the types of publicity materials they should use.

The Council was planning, using the WRAP funding, to introduce, amongst other methods, a new recycling guide for residents, bin stickers and 'teaser' newspaper adverts. The aim of the recycling guide was to provide: residents with information about what items they could recycle; further information about what happens to recycling once it has been collected, and information about what any recycled materials were made into once they had been processed. The Council were planning to deliver this guide to every household in the Borough by hand during December.

The Council was also planning to support a number of recycling campaigns, including the national 'love food, hate waste' campaign to encourage residents not to waste food. Members commented that this was a big issue that needed to be addressed and that the supermarkets also needed to be targeted. Supermarkets could be regarded as a contributor to this problem through the use of stringent sell-by dates and the prevalence of buy one get one free offers. Members commented that in future, local authorities might have to consider how food waste could be collected and creatively recycled.

Members questioned how effective the bin stickers would be at sticking to the inside of the bins. They commented that the stickers which had been used in the past had peeled away after a short period. Officers noted that the adhesive was quite strong and that one had been tested and so far had lasted for four months without peeling off.

86. RE-USE AND THE THIRD SECTOR

Officers presented a short presentation on the subject of the role that the third sector could play in the re-use of materials.

Officers explained that in recent years the emphasis from government had been on recycling rather than on re-using materials. However, in the waste hierarchy contained within the strategy, re-use was prioritised before recycling. The current re-use activity in Redditch included: charity shops; second hand shops; car

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1st October 2009

boot sales; the website Freecycle; and the re-use centres such as Boomerang and New Start in Bromsgrove.

One of the aims contained within the strategy was to encourage local authorities to work more closely with the Third Sector to investigate opportunities for promoting the re-use of materials. Officers routinely signposted residents to the two local re-use centres when they phoned to request bulky waste collection. They suggested that to move further on this the Council could procure the services of a third sector organisation for bulky waste collections. For example, an organisation could be invited to identify items they were willing to collect for re-use. The organisation could take a fee for this service.

87. RECOMMENDATIONS (IF ANY)

Officers ended the evening by informing Members of the recommendations that they wished the Executive Committee to consider at their meeting on Wednesday 7th October 2009. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to endorse these recommendations.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the three recommendations contained within the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) for Herefordshire and Worcestershire – First Review report be endorsed by the Executive Committee; and**

RESOLVED that

- 2) the proposals for a chargeable garden waste collection be considered further by the Committee at its meeting on 4th November 2009; and**
- 3) subject to the comments above, the reports delivered during this meeting be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.30 pm