

Safer & Stronger Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel, 24th March 2011

Report back on Scrutiny Inquiry Day held 18th Feb 2011 into Commercial Waste Collections within B&NES.

1.0 Background

At its meeting on the 18th November the Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed to undertake a review of commercial waste collection services with the aim being to find out what waste collection services businesses in Bath & North East Somerset would like, what issues they face, what is on offer currently, and how to encourage more commercial businesses to recycle. The Panel agreed to undertake a Scrutiny Inquiry Day into this issue which was held on the 18th February.

Representatives were invited from a wide range of organisations representing businesses throughout the district, Councillors, and Council departments. Jane Stephenson, the CEO of Resourcefutures facilitated the day. There were 17 attendees in total with a strong bias towards city centre businesses. Presentations were given by the Council and by Resourcefutures detailing current practices and examples of commercial waste recycling services throughout the country. Workshops were then held to scope the issues that businesses face, along with recommendations for further investigation and some possible solutions to issues. Waste collection contractors were also invited to give details of their services and key issues affecting them. 4 contractors gave presentations.

2.0 Recommendations

There are several areas to be taken forward for further review and action. Initial recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel are as follows:

That the Council:

- a) continues to work with the Business Improvement District (BID) to help scope a quality recycling and disposal service for BID members to procure
- b) produces an information leaflet and web information detailing commercial waste collection and recycling services provided in the district that we know about, working with other Council departments as appropriate
- c) reviews the potential for an accreditation scheme for trade waste providers and makes future recommendations on this
- d) reviews the times that trade waste can be left on the street for collection after consultation with business and in view of impending traffic restrictions
- e) reviews its enforcement practices in relation to waste on the highway and refreshes its guidance on this
- f) reviews the potential for further storage of bulk bins to enable increased recycling capacity for businesses and makes proposals on this
- g) produces a brief for a waste analysis of commercial waste and determines costs to do this
- h) produces a costed proposal for a commercial food waste collection throughout the district and works with its domestic recycling partner, May Gurney, to scope a proposal

3.0 Findings:

The workshops generated many issues and ideas which could be grouped in to the following themes:

- Information and Quality Standards
- Receptacles, Storage & Collection Points
- Streetscene (including timings of collections, night time economy and enforcement)

Below is a brief summary of some of the discussions and possible solutions.

3.1 Information and Quality Standards:

It was clear that businesses generally lacked an understanding about what happens to their waste once it has been collected and the standards that waste collection companies must adhere to. It was felt that the Council had a more proactive role to play in helping business identify good contractors (such as via an accreditation scheme) and to raise awareness about what actually happens to the waste.

There is a lack of information about the recycling services on offer to companies. It was felt that the Council may have a role to play in helping publicise what is on offer and promoting best practice in the waste hierarchy (reduce / reuse / recycle / recover).

The number of contractors and vehicles in the city centre causing congestion and pollution when collecting was cited as a key concern. It was felt that by setting quality standards and by businesses joining together to procure waste collection services (e.g. through the Business Improvement District) then the number of vehicles and pollution potential could be reduced.

There is a clear knowledge gap in terms of what businesses are actually producing both in type and quantity of waste. In order to plan a cost effective recycling service, some analysis of the composition of trade waste and the quantities available was recommended.

3.2 Receptacles, Storage and Collection Points

Although business are keen to recycle more, the need for storage space for containers and increased segregation are concerns.

Increased segregation of waste would require more storage space for bags and bins and a lack of space is a key concern to businesses. It was noted that some businesses already dispose of their waste in other people's bins or in litter bins illegally and that this is difficult to enforce against.

Split bags and scavenging by birds and animals is of particular concern in terms of visual impact of the current waste collection services.

Food waste recycling was raised as an issue for further development in order to reduce scavenging by gulls in particular and the desirability of taking this dense material out of the residual waste stream. Although there is a clear desire to recycle food waste, there was no clear steer as to whether businesses would be willing to pay

more to benefit from this service. Realistic costings for a food waste collection service should be developed to enable informed decisions to be taken.

3.3 Streetscene Timings:

The existing restrictions set out the times during which waste can be left out on the highway for collection. These are not helpful for businesses that work late into the evening such as theatres, restaurants, pubs and clubs. The Council's enforcement rules are that waste can only be left on the street for collection between 6am -10am and 4:45pm - 10pm. Fixed Penalty Notices (fines) can be issued to businesses who leave their waste out beyond these times. Sacks left on the street have a visual impact and cause litter due to scavenging by birds and animals.

Although operators are aware of the timings for collection, if for some reason the waste does not get collected, it is the businesses themselves who are liable for payment of the Fixed Penalty Notice, although in many cases they may be unaware of any issues the contractor has had (e.g. vehicle breakdown).

The collectors have also commented that these timeslots can be tight for them to achieve their work in, particularly when they are collecting different waste streams for recycling.

The Council is currently consulting on restricting traffic within the city between the hours of 10am and 6pm. If these restrictions are implemented then collectors would not be able to begin their work until after 6pm in the evening.