

## **REFUSE COLLECTION REVIEW GROUP**

**16th July 2012**

**PRESENT** – Councillors Carson, Harman, L. Hughes, Lawton, Long (in the Chair) and E. A. Richmond.

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Cossins.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors Curry and Wallis.

**OFFICERS** – Ian Thompson, Assistant Director - Community Services, Brian Graham, Head of Environmental Services and Paul Dalton, Elections Officer (Democratic Services).

**Purpose of the Meeting** – To reflect and give consideration to the findings with regard the implementation of Wheeled Bins, following a visit to Durham County Council's South Durham Depot at Chilton on Tuesday, 10th July 2012.

### **Points Discussed and Considered -**

- Brian Graham, Head of Environmental Services, provided an overview of the visit to Durham County Council's South Durham Depot at Chilton on Tuesday, 10th July 2012. Councillors Cossins, Curry, L. Hughes and Long had attended the visit, and were escorted by Officers from Durham County Council. Members were able to witness where bins were placed, and saw the collection process in operation.
- A Member commented that a detailed analysis of each route should be conducted, taking into consideration the requirements of each individual property. It was noted that public perception was extremely important, and such an exercise would reassure members of the public that the Council was taking any concerns seriously. A role for Councillors was identified in dealing with individual residents, however it was acknowledged that Officer support would be required.
- Brian Graham advised that all Members will receive a list of properties where potential difficulties have been identified, and that Officers will also investigate any issues raised by Members. Discussion focused on the number of properties where it might be perceived that wheeled bins were not appropriate. Ian Thompson stated that the key was to keep a minimal number of properties on the 'black sack scheme' as the fleet was geared up for wheeled bins.
- Members noted that this list would only be drafted on the basis of a physical observation of the property, and that it would be important to ensure that residents were informed about the Assisted Refuse Collection Policy – the scheme whereby assistance will be provided to residents who may have difficulty in physically manoeuvring their wheeled bin due to disability or ill-health. Discussion ensued on the communication strategy around this, with Members informed that all available channels of communication would be used to promote the policy, including the 'Darlington Together' magazine, Social Media profiles, etc. Members were informed by the Portfolio Holder that a three month period of communication was planned, commencing in August 2012.

- Members entered into discussion on the level of Assisted Refuse Collection that would be required. Members were informed that Assisted Refuse Collection in Durham was approximately 5%. Brian Graham explained that the Assisted Refuse Collection List in Durham was continually added to, but not maintained so that residents who moved, died, etc., were not removed from the list, and therefore it was expected that this figure would be reduced following the forthcoming review.
- It was noted that there was an acceptance from Members that wheeled bins would be introduced from June 2013, however it was commented that in order to gain public acceptance the Council would need to ensure that those who could not use the wheeled bins received as much assistance as possible, and that the public relations exercise would have to be compelling.
- It was suggested that road-show-style events should be held in supermarkets, and similar venues, to raise public awareness of the implementation of the wheeled bins.
- Questions were asked as to whether the public relation exercise ‘lead in’ time was sufficient, however it was suggested that there was the possibility of members of the public confusing this June with next June.
- Ian Thompson provided an overview of the implementation process:
  - **August 2012:** Members will receive a list of properties where potential difficulties have been identified, and Officers will investigate any issues in relation to properties raised by Members.
  - **September 2012:** Information regarding the wheeled bin scheme will appear in the ‘Darlington Together’ magazine.
  - **Autumn 2012:** Work will be conducted in relation to the Assisted Refuse Collection List, and a FAQ will appear in the ‘Darlington Together’ magazine.
  - **April 2013:** Households leafleted, and subsequently refuse collection days change.
  - **May 2013:** Wheeled Bins delivered to residents doorsteps.
  - **17th June 2013:** Wheeled Bins Scheme goes live.
- Brian Graham stated that the leaflets delivered to every property would include a list of “Do’s and Don’t’s”, contact telephone numbers, etc.
- Members entered into discussion on the visual impact of wheeled bins on the locality, with the view expressed that the wheeled bins may ‘disfigure the landscape’. It was suggested that the removal of wheeled bins from the frontage of properties might be encouraged as part of the public relation process. Members also felt that there was an opportunity to make good connections with local communities and schools, by encouraging innovative and creative methods of decorating the wheeled bins.

- Discussion progressed to the size of the wheeled bins, with the suggestion that the 240 litre bin may be too big for many households. One Member explained that 38% of households in Pierremont were single elector households, and suggested that there may be a sizeable minority of households that would benefit from a smaller (140 litre) bin. The Chair advised that the procurement exercise for the wheeled bins was now underway, and that she understood that only 800 140 litre bins had been accounted for in the tendering process. Ian Thompson explained that the number of residents per household did not necessarily correlate to the volume of refuse produced by that household, and that the offer of smaller bins would restrict capacity and lead to an increased number of queries on the doorstep. Brian Graham explained that the majority of the 800 140 litre bins would be provided to already identified OAP accommodation.
- In terms of the size of bins, Brian Graham explained that it was important to remember that the wheeled bin remained with the property. The Portfolio Holder stated that it was important that the scheme met the needs of the vast majority of residents, rather than juggle bins around, and therefore the default bin should be as big as possible. Further concern was expressed by Members in relation to the lack of flexibility in terms of the number of smaller bins available, however it was highlighted that the decision regarding the procurement of the different sizes of wheeled bins had already been taken by Cabinet.
- A Member recalled that sheltered accommodation in Durham shared one 240 litre bin between properties.
- Concerns were raised with regard the manoeuvrability of the refuse collection vehicles in the small and tight back alleyways.
- A Member clarified what colour the wheeled bins would be ('Dark Grey'), and whether the changes with regard the collection dates were a necessary part of the implementation process. Ian Thompson confirmed that the collection process would be moving from six to eight rounds, so most collection days would change.
- The Chair enquired whether RIEP funding could be used for additional 'in-cab tech', and asked whether the specification of vehicles that would be used in Darlington would be the same as the specification of vehicles in Durham.
- Members entered into discussion on the use of collection points, and were advised that these would only be imposed in streets where there were less than ten properties. Members asked questions about the arrangements in such a scheme.
- Discussion ensued on the tonnage of refuse collected in Darlington, and whether the Council had a target for the reduction of waste. Members were advised that key targets and indicators were part of the Waste Minimisation Scheme. The Portfolio Holder explained that 'a carrot approach' had been adopted in Darlington when it came to encouraging recycling and waste reduction, rather than an aggressive approach.
- Members expressed concerns in relation to properties whereby steps formed the curtilage of the property, and it was explained that if residents were unable to

manoeuvre the wheeled bin to the curtilage of the property then they may be able to gain assistance under the 'Assisted Collection Scheme'. A Member highlighted that it would be possible for residents to place incorrect materials in a black sack prior to putting the black sack in the wheeled bin, and that this would not be identified by the refuse collectors, although it was conceded that this could happen under the current scheme. Another Member did suggest that refuse collectors in her Ward do open black bags to check that the correct type of waste had been placed inside, however pointed out that they wouldn't be able to do that with a wheeled bin.

- Further discussion took place on the numbering of wheeled bins, and Members were informed that each bin would have a specific address label.
- A Member highlighted that there are many properties whereby the only curtilage to a property is the drive, and by placing a wheeled bin at the end of a drive access and egress for residents' to their property would be obstructed. Members were informed that residents in such properties would have to get out of their vehicle and move the wheeled bin each time they wished to access and egress their property on collection days.
- Further concerns were expressed in relation to those properties where there are small courtyards at the front of the property and no rear access, in terms of the visual impact of residents storing their wheeled bins at the front of the property. The Portfolio Holder suggested that Officers needed to look at what other areas did to encourage residents to store their wheeled bins at the rear of the property.

**IT WAS AGREED** – That the following draft recommendations be submitted for consideration by the Place Scrutiny Committee:

- (a) That there should be a detailed consultation with residents by both Officers and Members, ward by ward, round by round, street by street, and resident by resident, if necessary, to ensure the best possible preparation for this implementation. Environmental and social factors dictate a flexible approach to the collection of wheeled bins.
- (b) That consultation with refuse collection workers and appropriate unions is essential given the increased complexity of the work which will result.
- (c) That close attention should be given to the need for assisted collection and close monitoring of this scheme post implementation.
- (d) That monitoring of the implications of the introduction of wheeled bins on recycling rates is essential and the possibility of resultant changes to operation of both schemes (collection of household refuse and recycled refuse) be acknowledged.
- (e) That, where rear access exists, there should be no storage of wheeled bins, or collection from, the front of any terraced properties. Where this is impossible to avoid, residents should remain on the black bag regime. The reasons for this are, the pavement is a public highway and storage in front gardens is unsightly and would reduce visual amenity for all residents.
- (f) That consideration be given to encouraging a system of consistent numbering of wheeled bins.

(g) That the possibility of engaging and involving local schools and communities in the promotion and implementation of the wheeled bin service be explored.