

REFUSE COLLECTION REVIEW GROUP

18th May, 2012

PRESENT – Councillors Carson, Cossins, Harman, L. Hughes, Lewis and Long (in the Chair).

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baldwin and Grundy.

OFFICERS – Ian Thompson, Assistant Director, Community Services, Brian Graham, Head of Environmental Services, Steve Petch, Head of Strategy and Commissioning and Claire Hutton, Democratic Officer.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors L. Haszeldine, Johnson, B. Jones, Kelley and Lee.

Purpose of the Meeting – To receive a presentation on the implementation of wheeled bins in the Borough.

Points Discussed and Considered -

- Brian Graham, Head of Environmental Services gave an overview of the current position in relation to refuse collection and highlighted that, at present, 48,500 properties in the Borough had their waste collected each week, with 753 of those being assisted collections, equating to 1.57 per cent of the service. Currently there were nine per cent of Councils in the UK who were still using black sacks although some were moving to wheeled bins.
- The Group were informed that, from 2003 to 2012, there had been a total of 70 reported injuries to operatives within this Council collecting refuse which equated to 631 days of working day's lost.
- Particular reference was made to Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 that requires this Council to put findings of their risk assessment in place and also the Health and Safety Executive Report that identified the risk factors of musculoskeletal disorder in refuse collection and recommendations for methods of reducing musculoskeletal disorder in refuse collection.
- The Group were advised that there would be a significant health and safety benefit to the Council's refuse collectors if wheeled bins were introduced, particularly in relation to manual handling and to cut/needle stick injuries. The Head of Environmental Services also highlighted that there would be a reduction in street litter through containment of refuse, it would encourage residents to participate in the recycling scheme as there would be limited capacity in a wheeled bin, it would provide a facility for residents to store refuse and would control the amount of waste put out for collection.
- A number of benefits of the wheeled bin system to householders and refuse collectors were highlighted in the presentation, which included the large storage capacity of a standard wheeled bin which could contain two and half to three times as much refuse as a traditional dustbin; stopping foraging by domestic pets and wild animals and birds; reducing the amount of refuse being scattered on collection days from split sacks, no manual lifting, one container instead of multiple sacks and the removal of the risk of cut/needle stick injuries.

- In relation to the collection policy, it was highlighted that a 240 litre wheeled bin has the capacity to hold three to four black sacks and that households of five or more residents have the option to opt for a 360 litre wheeled bin, as no additional bags could be placed at the side of the wheeled bin for collection, except during the Christmas period. No green waste could be placed in the wheeled bin.
- The Head of Environmental Services highlighted that wheeled bins must be brought to the curtilage and returned to the curtilage of the property or, in the case of farms, to the end of the farm track on the same day as collection. In relation to terraced properties with back lanes, wheeled bins would need to be placed in the back lane for collection and that for some locations, particularly back lanes with restricted access that were unsuitable for refuse collection vehicles, collection points would be identified where residents would be required to bring their wheeled bins to.
- It was accepted that a limited number of properties may need to retain black sacks collection service.
- The Group were advised that, at present, there were six and half different rounds to collect refuse which would increase to eight with the implementation of wheeled bins.
- A Member raised a concern in relation to the wheeled bins being blown over once they have been emptied and requested Officers to look into this.
- The existing Assisted Refuse Collection Policy would remain and operatives would collect and return the wheeled bin for those residents who were incapable due to ill health or disability.
- Following a question raised by a Member in relation to whether there would be an increase in residents requiring the Assisted Refuse Collection, the Head of Environmental Services responded and stated that it was envisaged that there would likely to be an increase from 1.57 per cent to two and half per cent and that this has been taken into consideration.
- At present, the operatives were developing a list of properties where there could be potential problems to collect wheeled bins from and were identifying alternative solutions. A list of properties would be circulated to all Members in due course and there would be an opportunity to feedback any other areas within their wards where they felt there could be potential problems.
- Following a question, the Group were advised that there shouldn't be any problems with the refuse vehicles accessing back lanes that they currently access once the wheeled bins have been introduced, however, if this did cause problems there were alternative solutions such as placing bins at one side of the lane.
- A question was raised in relation to residents not putting their wheeled bins back once refuse has been collected and whether this would be enforced and the Assistant Director, Community Services stated that it was down to individuals where they store their bins but that the Council could stipulate that they must not be left in lanes and that they must be put back within the curtilage of their property. Enforcement would be the last consideration

- Concerns were raised in relation to the size of the wheeled bins and the impact this could have on the quality of life for residents, as some residents only have one to two bags of refuse each week and have no space to store the bin within their yards. Suggestions were made to explore the possibility of reducing the default size of the wheeled bins and also giving residents the opportunity to state which size bin they would like, however, the Assistant Director, Community Services advised Members of the problems that this would be likely to cause.
- To enable the correct size of the bins to be purchased, a Member suggested that a pilot wheeled bin collection be undertaken to ascertain the level of refuse generated by properties. The Assistant Director - Community Services highlighted a number of technical issues in undertaking a pilot scheme and advised Members that the Council did not have the correct vehicles to undertake such a pilot and that any such vehicles would cost approximately £1,000 per week to hire. He also advised the Group that a number of other Local Authorities had implemented wheeled bins and that this Council could learn lessons from them.
- With regard to the size of the wheeled bins, questions were raised in relation to how the default size compared to other Local Authorities across the Tees Valley and whether the Procurement process of wheeled bins should be put on hold until the Place Scrutiny Committee considers and finalises the recommendations from this Group.
- The Chair recommended that the Group visit another Local Authority of similar size to Darlington that had recently implemented the wheeled bin collection.
- The Group referred to the removal and enforcement of fly tipping and were informed that there were two teams dealing with this.
- Following a question, the Group were informed that there was no desire to go to alternate weekly collections. A Member expressed a view that the Council were implementing wheeled bins with the view of privatising the refuse collection in the future.
- In relation to recycling it was highlighted that there had been an increase from twenty seven per cent to forty four per cent.
- Particular reference was made in relation to the bid that has been submitted to DEFRA for supported weekly collections to help fund the implementation of wheeled bins.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That thanks be conveyed to Ian Thompson and Brian Graham for the informative presentation.

(b) That the default size wheeled bin be 240 litres and that officers explore possible locations where it may be appropriate for 140 litre bins.

(c) That Councillor Wallis be invited to attend a meeting of this Group.

(d) That a visit to Durham County Council (former Wear Valley District Council) be arranged to examine their wheeled bin service and the problems that occurred when they implemented the service.

(d) That the next meeting of this Group be arranged in consultation with the Chair.