

INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting:

31/1/2002

Title: BEST VALUE REVIEW - WASTE MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC
CONVENIENCES - ACTION PLAN

Report of: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Report reference: EN.017/2002

Summary:

The report reviews the outcomes of the first year of the Action Plan.

Recommendations:

Members are recommended to note the report and approve the 2nd year of the Action Plan.

M. BATTERSBY

Director of Environment and Development

Contact Officer: R.W.S. Speirs

Ext: 7325

Waste Management & Public Conveniences

Best Value Review

Action Plan

1. In the Best Value Review of Waste Management and Public Conveniences an Improvement

Programme/Action Plan was included in Chapter 5. Year one of that plan related to financial year 2001/2002 and is replicated below. This Report examines progress against that Action Plan and refines the proposals for 2002/03.

Improvement Programme
Year One (2001 – 2002)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise client and contractor functions – potentially to identify savings to cover cost impact of "single status" agreement. • Retain "help desk" call centre currently being piloted. • Retain and develop the special collection appointment system currently being piloted. • Publicise both the "help desk" and special collection service details and investigate the potential for a "free phone" number. • Strengthen role of the "Quality Control" operation to cover all aspects of the Waste Management and Public Convenience services. • Extend neighbourhood recycling sites to areas under represented through increased partnership arrangements. • Complete the review of refuse collection routes and associated collection rates. • Utilising the above data develop a pilot kerbside dry recyclables collection service. • Develop partnerships and submit Landfill Tax application to secure funding for pilot kerbside collection service. • Adopt the pilot revised street cleaning frequencies to divert resources to areas in need of additional cleaning. • Prepare a People and Places initiative with the Tidy Britain Group to address commercial waste and litter problems in the Denton Holme area. • Commence investigation of opportunities to integrate litter removal and weed killing with the Grounds Maintenance contract. • Investigate the potential for partnership provision of public toilets in the City centre. • Plan and undertake the adaptation of either Upperby Park or Dalston toilets to allow access by disabled users.

- 1.
2. Client and Contractor Functions. Following the initial examination of the cost allocations and functions between client and contractor the pre-existing split has been revised. This has effectively transferred all the routine contract performance monitoring to the contractor's quality control section. The only routine function remaining with the client is the payment of accounts and the monitoring of expenditure. Weekly meetings take place between the Head of Environmental Services and the contractors Quality Control section to resolve operational problems which has greatly improved the resolution of any identified problems. The transfer of responsibilities has enabled the transfer of funding from the client to the contractor to assist in the development of the call centre and the impact of single status. This has enabled the cost increases from these areas to be met from within the existing budget.
3. Help Desk. The pilot operation of the help desk or call centre proved very effective and this has now been established on a permanent basis. Previously calls relating to the refuse and street cleaning services could be referred to either Environmental Services or Design Divisions of the Department of Environment and Development or directly to the contractor.

This frequently resulted in the duplication of effort and delays in dealing with problems. The routing of all calls through the call centre has significantly reduced such problems and the majority of enquiries for contracts are now dealt with in this manner.

4. Special Collection appointment system. When customer satisfaction surveys were undertaken, through the Citizen's Panel, a common complaint relating to the special collection service was the inability to give any firm date for the collection. Under the refuse contract the contractor was obliged to carry out special collections within 7 days of notification. This was the only information that could be given to householders requesting the service. A trial was introduced early in 2001 which allocated specific collection days to geographic areas, monitoring of the trial confirmed that it had two advantages. Firstly it enables the call centre to give a collection day on receipt of a special collection request and secondly it enables the contractor to operate a planned and therefore less reactive collection programme. This has been crucial in trying to keep pace with the increasing number of special collections being requested. A graph showing the increased demand for special collections is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
5. Publicity for call centre and special collections. Publicity has been given to both these services during the year which is in part shown by the uptake in the numbers of special collections. Advice from other authorities was to be cautious about making the call centre a freephone number. Experience has shown that such numbers then become the preferred route for all calls to the Council which would then complicate the work of the centre. The potential exists however for the future development of a call centre for all Council functions which could then offer such a free telephone service.
6. Role of the Quality Control Unit. Following its successful operation for refuse collection and street cleaning functions of the contractor the unit has been developed to encompass a full range of highway related functions. This has developed the generic roles of the officers within the unit and broadened their knowledge and experience to the benefit of the inter-related contacts.
7. Extend Neighbourhood Recycling Sites. The Governments' "Waste Strategy 2000" has placed an ambitious recycling target on the Council. Currently we recycle some 12% of household waste, this has to be increased to 23% by 2003/04 and to 33% by 2005/06. Whilst it is realised that these targets cannot be met by bring sites alone they play an important role in increasing public awareness of recycling as well as achieving an increase in the amount of material recycled. Members recognised the need for additional sites and allocated a non recurring additional budget to recycling. This has enabled the purchase and installation of an additional 20 neighbourhood sites during the year. The budget was able to cover this many sites due to the purchase of reconditioned containers previously belonging to Westminster City Council. A further provisional allocation of £20,000 has been identified for 2002/03, should Member's approve this sum it will enable further work to be undertaken to meet the Council's recycling target.
8. Review of Refuse Collection Routes. The Best Value Review identified that the exact routing used by collection crews was not fully documented and that the workloads of each collection round required further research. Consequently each collection round has been accurately mapped and tonnage figures have been compiled and monitored. The work has benefited the collection service in that some minor modifications to routes have been made resulting in a more equal spread of workload and a subsequent minor, but measurable, reduction in overtime costs. The information obtained has also been crucial in setting up the pilot kerbside recycling scheme and will enable a more accurate monitoring of the scheme's impact on collection tonnages. A sample tonnage graph from one route is included as Appendix 2 by way of an illustration. The graph clearly shows the spring/summer tonnage increase due primarily to garden waste. The opportunity to adjust working arrangements was also taken to address an increasing seasonal problem over Bank Holiday weekends. Historically Bank Holiday Monday collections have taken place on the Saturday before the Bank Holiday. Householders have however progressively failed to follow this practice despite increased media coverage. Refuse weights and crew observations confirmed that nearly 50% of households were failing to place their refuse out for collection on the Saturday. This resulted in a significant number of households having to keep their refuse for a further week before collection. This impacted significantly on the collection in the next week where the additional tonnage resulted in crews running late, the need to apply for

refuse tip extensions and an increased overtime claim. Christmas and New Year 2001 saw a move to collect from all properties one day later than normal to allow for the Bank Holiday. This had an immediate benefit in that householders putting their refuse out on the normal collection day rather than the re-arranged date, only had to wait one day for collection and not a further week. Close analysis of tonnage figures showed that there was a more even collection spread running more closely to a normal timetable and there was a small but noticeable reduction in overtime. Appendix 3 to the report shows the impact of the change.

9. Pilot Kerbside Collection. A successful partnership has been developed through Carlisle and Eden Environmental Action to attract Landfill Tax Funding for the development of the pilot scheme. The operational partnership between Carlisle and Eden Council and Cumbria Waste Management as the contractor was launched on the 22nd January with collections due to commence from 15,000 properties as from 28th January. The information obtained from the scheme will be crucial in helping both authorities decide on the most effective methods for future Waste Management in order to meet their respective recycling targets. It is hoped that the innovative partnership working will be a deciding factor in attracting additional Government funding to take the schemes further in 2002/03.
10. Street Cleaning frequencies. The original Street Cleaning Contract specified that the contractor was responsible for ensuring that the performance criteria in the Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse were met. In addition the contract also had a minimum cleaning frequency clause for the majority of highways and streets. During the Best Value Review it was apparent that several areas were being swept to meet the minimum frequency requirement even though they had not required cleaning under the performance standard of the Code of Practice. Such routes have been studied and several have now had their cleaning frequencies reduced. This additional resource has been directed towards those areas where difficulties were being experienced in meeting the Code's requirements. In summary the most significant changes are as follows. Most estate roads have moved from 4 weekly to 6 weekly cleans. This resource has been moved into Botcherby and Old Harraby which were originally served by one street orderly, this has now been extended to 3. Currock which had been shared with parts of the Denton Holme route now has its own dedicated street sweeper. All the principle routes into the City are now swept once a week instead of the original specification of once every 4 to 6 weeks. Other problem litter zones, i.e. around certain secondary schools, have been improved from a weekly to a daily clean. As these moves appear to have been successful in reducing or controlling increased litter problems work is in hand to change the basic contract clauses to incorporate the improvements. The impact has been to move the contract more from a minimum frequency basis to a more responsive service based on the specifications of the Code of Practice. The contractor/client relationship has also benefited from the increased perception of co-operation and flexibility needed to meet changing litter patterns.

One area of concern within the Street Cleaning Contract has been the continuing operation of the FIDO dog-waste collection vehicle. The Environment Agency have raised concerns regarding the disposal of the contents and the machine has become progressively less reliable. The collection of dog waste is also contrary to the Poop Scoop message, which encourages dog owners to clean up after their pets have fouled public areas. Consideration can usefully be given to the re-direction of the staff resource for FIDO into enhanced cleaning in the City Centre area where problems are being experienced in meeting the standards of the Code of Practice due to the continuing growth of litter. In recognising the extent of public concern about dog fouling Members' agreed additional non- recurring expenditure in 2001/02 which has been utilised to provide 30 additional litter bins in problem areas as well as an educational campaign to promote the "poop scoop" campaign.

11. People and Places Initiative. The Council is a People and Places Partner with the Tidy Britain Group and works closely with that organisation to address litter and environmental problems. Some years ago we jointly undertook a Tidy Business promotion in Brampton to address problems of commercial waste. This was primarily related to smaller shop premises failing to take out a commercial waste contract and merely leaving their waste on streets and back lanes in the hope that the Council would collect the waste when carrying out the household collection service. The improved awareness from the campaign did bring about

an improvement and it was considered worthwhile to try the approach in Denton Holme, which was perceived as having a similar problem. Accordingly the Tidy Britain Group was contracted to undertake a study in the area to determine the types and sources of litter. The subsequent report identified that 95% of streets surveyed were of an acceptable standard of cleanliness or better although the area would benefit from more attention. Commercial waste was not however identified as a problem as the majority of rubbish was found to relate to pedestrian litter associated with the shops, school and local workers. Funding and time permitting it is hoped to address some of these issues in 2002.

12. Integration of litter picking with the Grounds Maintenance Contract. When the Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) regime was first implemented there was a split between the Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance contracts as regards the responsibility for litter removal. This initially resulted in street orderlies removing litter from highways, streets and pavements and grounds maintenance staff litter picking from associated planted or grassed areas. Fruitful discussions have taken place with the Grounds Maintenance contract client and it is anticipated that the problem will be resolved when the respective contracts are tendered in future. Operationally the contractor, through holding both contracts, has been able to resolve most of the operational problems in this respect. This would not however have been possible if different operators had held the contracts. Whilst litter picking has been resolved, discussions have confirmed the need at this stage to operate independent weed killing teams due to the differing specialities of the contracts.
13. Public Toilets. City Centre provision is being investigated with the aim of providing improved facilities in a partnership arrangement between the City Council, Stagecoach, National Express and the owners of the Earl Street bus station. It is hoped that, subject to agreement, an improved automatic toilet can be provided at the bus station in place of the underused facility at Devonshire Walk and the current partnership arrangement which provides a toilet in the bus station office. Whilst this toilet initially proved to be worthwhile it has been subject to extensive and repeated vandalism and is also limited by office opening hours. Plans are being finalised for the provision of facilities for the disabled at Upperby Park and Dalston conveniences and it is hoped to start the works at Upperby before the end of the current financial year.
14. Useful comparators of public convenience provision between authorities has been difficult as the National Indicator purely relates to the numbers provided and the hours of opening. The Best Value Review drew comparisons with other authorities within the Historic Cities Benchmarking Group. This work concentrated on the costs of provision, cleaning and client support and showed that within a limited number of Councils Carlisle offered the best overall value. An opportunity to benchmark with other Cumbria authorities was taken in 2001 and this too confirmed that Carlisle's spend per 1000 population represented good value. Appendix 4 to this report provides some of the relevant comparison data.
15. The Public attitude study undertake into public conveniences identified that there was inadequate public information available for both residents and tourists regarding the location of city centre toilets. Discussions with the Tourism Officer and the leading department stores have resulted in the inclusion of improved information in the forthcoming Shoppers Guide. This will for the first time detail the toilets available in both Council and commercial ownership in the town centre. This will hopefully increase public awareness of facilities in the City Centre.
16. The preceding paragraphs demonstrate that many improvements to the services under review have been made in the first year and that the majority of the objectives within the first year of the Action Plan have been achieved. The action originally proposed for year 2 is attached as follows.

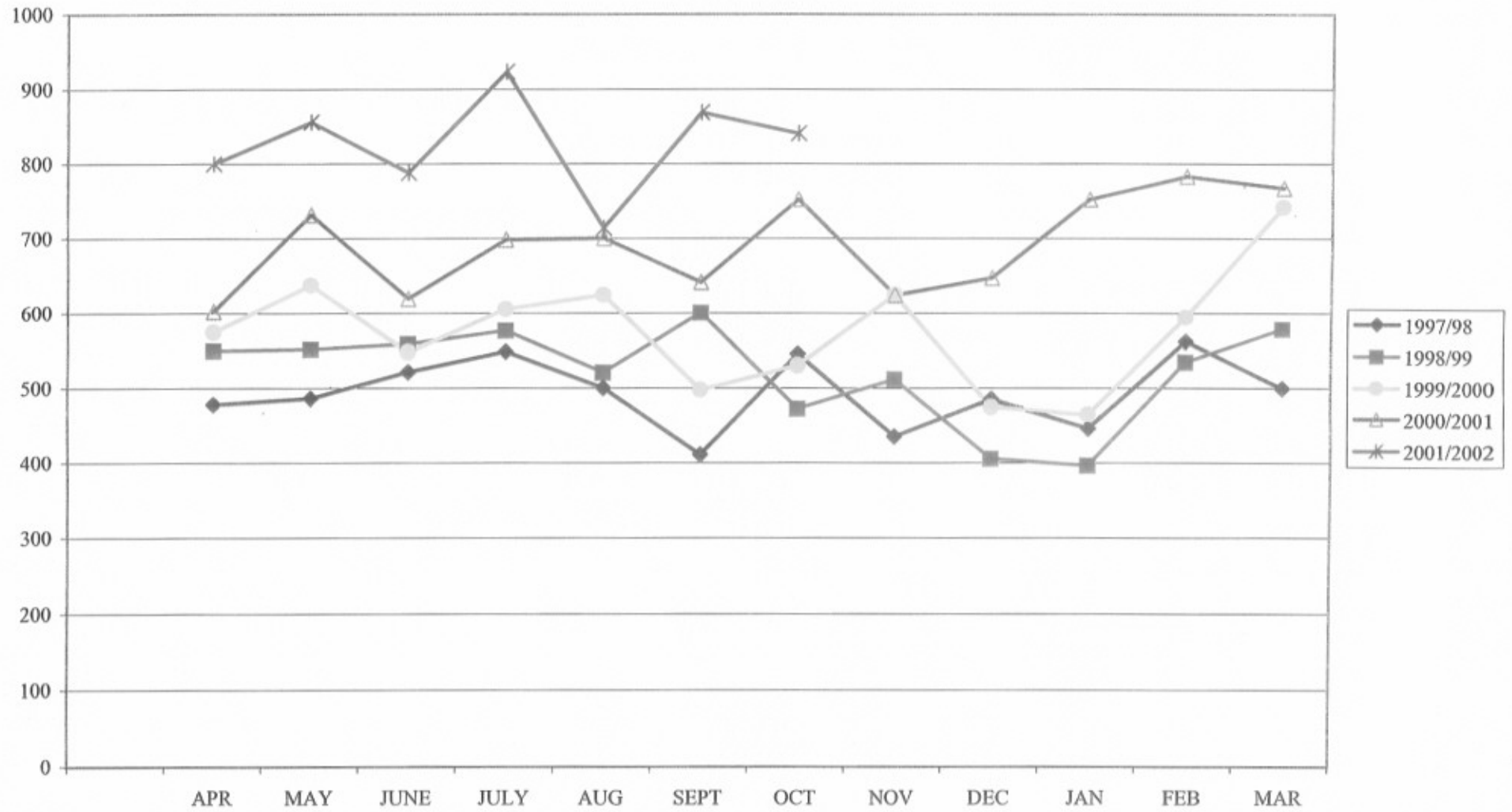
Improvement Programme

Year Two (2002 – 2003)

- Monitor effectiveness of dry recyclables collection.
- Develop composting partnership to establish a pilot kerbside garden waste collection service.
- Continue revision of street cleaning frequencies to ensure high priority given to most littered areas.
- Produce proposals for the integration of litter removal and weed spraying work into one contract area.
- Develop proposals for the replacement of Court Square conveniences preferably through partnership.
- Plan and undertake the adaptation of either Upperby Park or Dalston toilets to enable use by disabled users.

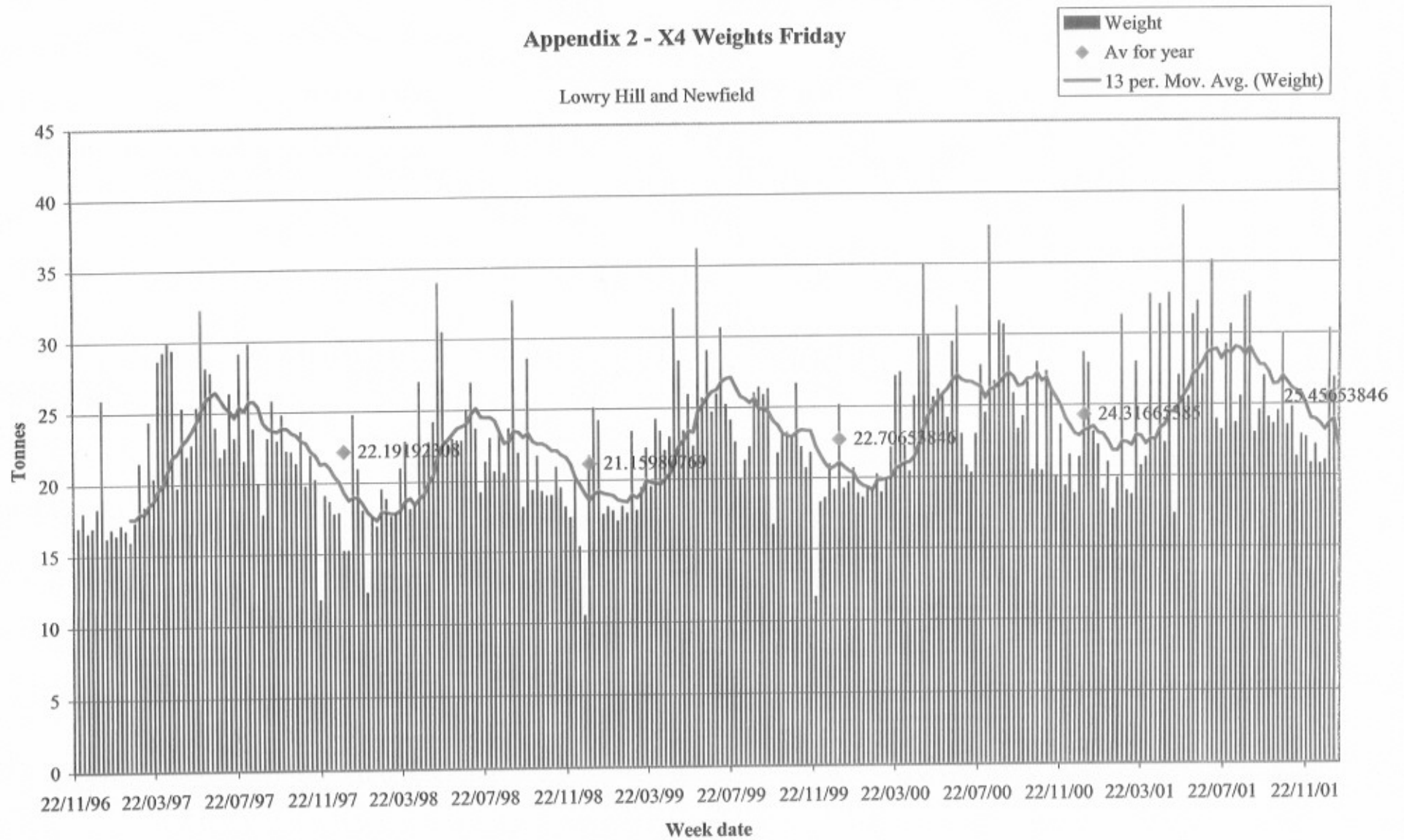
Subject to Member approval it is proposed that these elements remain as the primary focus for action in year 2. Much will depend on the outcome of the pilot kerbside recycling scheme and the result of any bid for additional funding from the recently announced £140 million Government fund for the promotion of recycling. The consultation paper relating to this additional funding was the subject of a separate report to Executive on the 28th January. Should Member's subsequently support a bid for the funding it may be necessary to substantially advance the timetable for the second phase of the pilot project i.e. to commence kerbside collection of green waste for composting through the current partnership arrangements with Carlisle Environmental Action, Eden District Council and Cumbria Waste Management.

APPENDIX 1 REFUSE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS TOTALS



Appendix 2 - X4 Weights Friday

Lowry Hill and Newfield



Appendix 3 (i)

Christmas 2002. Refuse collection overtime

Overtime for Christmas week (treating Saturday as a normal working day)
96.75 hours

Overtime for New Year week (treating Saturday as a normal working day)
61.75 hours

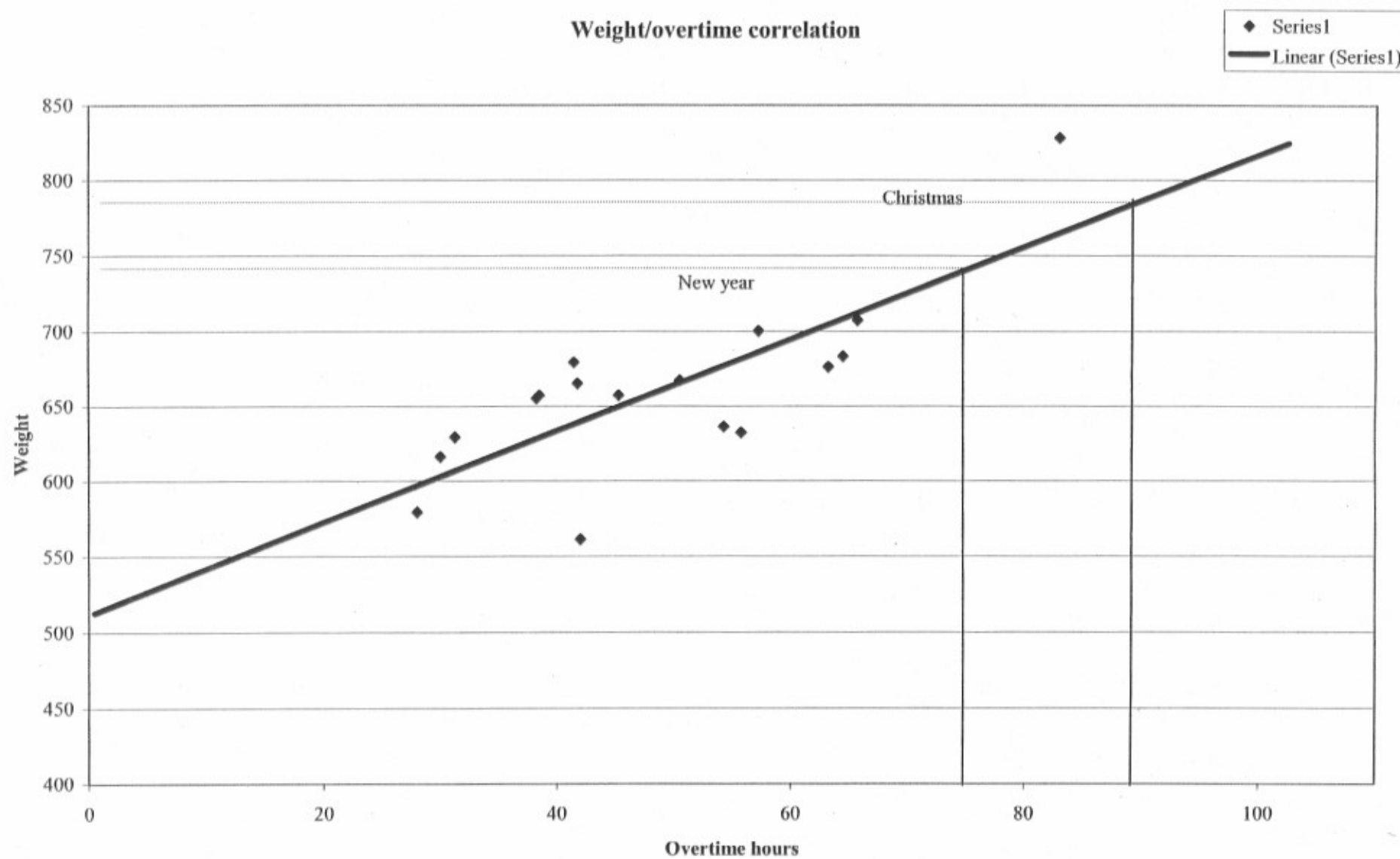
Predicted overtime using a regression analysis on previous 17 weeks.
89 hours
75 hours

Taking the refuse weights and the corresponding overtime hours it is possible to use regression analysis on the figures to give a basis for comparison with previous working weeks.

The attached graph shows the line of best fit which can be used to determine the expected overtime given the collected refuse weights.

The actual overtime is 5.5 hours less than the predicted value from the graph and given the variability of the results and the external factors(such as vehicle breakdowns) which affect overtime, the figures for the Christmas period are well within expected amounts.

Weight/overtime correlation



APPENDIX 4

Total (£) spend on Public conveniences per 1000 population in 2000 / 2001

Source: Fiddler, C (2001) South Lakeland District Council, Kendal: Benchmarking Exercise, Environment and Housing Dept.

Spend per 1000 population on PC's

Audit Commission & Idea - Library of Local Performance Indicators: Providing a quality local environment

