
**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 23 OCTOBER 2002**

IOS.97/02 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – TOTAL WASTE COLLECTED

Councillor Mrs E Mallinson, having declared a personal interest, remained in the meeting and spoke on this item.

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer submitted Report TC.206/02 outlining the Council's performance on Best Value Indicator BV.84 which is "the number of kilograms of household waste collected per head". He commented that although the Council's performance in relation to a number of other waste management indicators had been good, the total amount of waste collected last year had increased by 5%, and therefore missed the target which has been set (there had been an average national increase of around 3%). Carlisle's performance in 2000/01 had been the worst of the "family group of authorities", and in the bottom quartile of performance for all authorities.

Within Cumbria no authority was doing particularly well on this indicator and Carlisle was at around the County average. The recent Best Value Inspection of Waste Management which had been good overall, had noted that waste minimisation was an area in which the Council was not performing well, and concluded that a more strategic approach was required.

The Head of Environmental Services commented that this was a peculiar Performance Indicator in that it was very difficult for a Local Authority to control how much rubbish individual householders put out for collection. In addition, the Indicator related to all waste put out for collection, including items which were put out for recycling and which were subsequently recycled by the Council. It did not differentiate between waste which ends up in a landfill site and waste which was recycled.

He continued that comparisons with other authorities in relation to this indicator were problematic. The City Council's calculation was based on the weight of waste collected by the Council's vehicles, weight of waste deposited at County Council Civic Amenity Sites within the Carlisle area, and weight of waste collected through street sweeping operations. Other authorities, including adjoining authorities to Carlisle, did not include in their figures the weight of waste collected from Civic Amenity Sites. He advised that the Waste Management Officer at the County Council had different figures for each authority based on household collections and Civic Amenity Sites, which showed Carlisle's performance to be better in relation to other authorities in Cumbria.

Members then raised the following issues/questions which were discussed by the Committee:

- (a) What were the reasons for the continued increase in the amount of household

waste collected?

The Head of Environmental Services commented that a large part of the increase could be attributed to the Council's special collection of bulky waste items, such as 3 piece suites, fridges etc.

The Council collected these free of charge and when the original contract for collection of these items was let it was on the basis of 6,000 being collected annually, however last year there had been 10,000 collections. Part of the reason for this increase was low interest rates and the "feel good factor" resulting in people being able to replace household items and furnishings and throw out the old ones.

- (b) Had consideration been given to charging for the collection of bulky waste items?

The Head of Environmental Services commented on the experiences of other Councils such as Worcester and Copeland, who had introduced charges for special collections. The experience of Worcester had been that there had been an increase in fly tipping and an increase in the amount of waste being deposited at Civic Amenity Sites, which would still be included within the overall Performance Indicator figures for total amount of waste collected. He advised that Copeland's experience could be monitored over 12 months, to help to inform any future decision by the City Council, but that at this stage the free collections would continue within Carlisle.

- (c) What efforts were made to recycle goods which were collected as special collections of bulky goods?

The Head of Environmental Services advised that when they receive phone calls to collect goods, they try to establish if the furniture could be recycled. If so callers can be referred to Impact Housing Association's Centre 47, where there is a furniture recycling and refurbishment operation which provides training and employment opportunities for young people.

- (d) Is all the waste which householders put out for recycling included within the Performance Indicator on the number of kilograms of household waste collected per head?

The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that all waste put out by householders for collection and all waste deposited at the Civic Amenity Site was included in the number of kilograms of waste. This included glass, cans and garden waste put out as part of the Recycling Pilot Scheme, and all other materials which were deposited at recycling bins in the Civic Amenity Site. The Indicator therefore took no account of the measures being taken by the Council to recycle waste.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Council does not put any limitations on the amount of waste it collects from households. Householders in the Pilot Scheme are being given the opportunity to recycle, but these collections were still included

within the total number of kilograms of waste collected.

Members commented that the authority had a duty to collect waste and that the Council could be seen as performing well, in that it was collecting all waste put out by householders, thereby reducing the amount of fly tipping.

- (e) What measures are being taken to promote waste minimisation as part of the overall consideration of waste management by the Council?

The Head of Environmental Services advised that reports would be going to this Committee and the Executive in December on options for waste management in relation to a County Wide Waste Strategy. Consideration would be given to a number of options including improved recycling and incineration, although incineration was recognised as a very emotive issue.

With regard to the promotion of waste minimisation, it was suggested that this would be more beneficial if it was undertaken at a County wide level. However, in addition to the waste minimisation method being promoted to householders, there was a need for producers to take some responsibility. The amount of packaging which is included with goods should be reduced by producers, and in relation to white goods retailers should be encouraged to collect all goods and recycled where appropriate.

Members commented on experience of other European countries and suggested that new legislation was what was required in this area.

The Chairman advised that she had received a leaflet entitled "Make Waste Work" from Cumbria Waste and asked that a co-ordinated approach should be adopted throughout the County.

- (f) Have the Council been successful in securing any of the Government money available for recycling?

The Head of Environmental Services advised that the Council had failed in its first phase bid, but that it had submitted a second phase bid which was for the capital element of recycling i.e. the provision of green boxes and wheeled bins to every suitable property in Carlisle and Eden. This was different from the original bid in that it would include only properties which were accessible by refuse collection vehicles and had gardens. However, even if the funding for this capital element was covered there would still be a revenue implication in respect of the collection and composting of the recycled material.

- (g) What happens if the Council is not successful in securing any of the Government funding?

The Head of Environmental Services advised that if the Council is not successful in securing any Government funding for recycling, it would not be possible to extend the recycling initiative beyond the pilot project. In addition, there would still be the cost of approximately £350,000 for the next financial year to continue the

Pilot scheme.

The Portfolio Holder commented on the allocation of Government funding and stated that it would be fairer if every local received some funding. The Council would like to be able to extend the Council Pilot Recycling Initiative throughout the whole Council area, but this would be dependent on Government funding.

Members commented that they would like to see Landfill Tax monies being allocated to local authorities to assist them with their waste recycling efforts.

RESOLVED - (1) That the following recommendations be made to the Executive and to be taken on board by the Head of Environmental Services in his report on Best Value Review of Waste Management:

- (a) To ensure that this Local Authority is judged on a like-by-like basis in terms of targets on the number of kilograms of household waste collected, the Audit Commission be asked to ensure that all authorities are operating to the same statistical standards.
- (b) That the Government be lobbied for legislation to put the onus on producers of goods to be responsible for waste arising. In particular, outlets for electrical goods should be responsible for collection and disposal of white goods. Legislation should also be put in place to reduce the amount of packaging which comes with all different types of goods and which ends up as waste.
- (c) That pressure be put on the relevant body to change the Best Value Indicator on the number of kilograms of household waste collected per head as it is not a meaningful indicator and does not take into consideration the Local Authority's recycling efforts.
- (d) That Government funding be sought to help meet the Government targets for the collection and recycling of waste. If Government funding is not available, the Pilot Recycling Scheme will still have to continue at the cost to the Authority of approximately £350,000.

(2) That the Head of Environmental Services be asked to come back to the January meeting of the Committee with a Draft Action Plan to improve the Council's performance, including timescales, targets, any costs involved and proposals for funding the same. The Committee meeting in December would consider a report on Waste Management and could amend requirements for the Action Plan at that time if necessary.