

**Minutes  
Environment Scrutiny Panel**

**19 April 2006  
5.30 p.m.  
Town Hall**

**Present:** Councillors Wolstenhome (in the Chair), Carr, Graham, Kinghorn, McDonnell, Marsden, Simpson, Turnbull and Walton.

**Also in Attendance:** Councillors Colledge, Cowper, Kellett, Moderate, Stoddart, Taylor and Thomson.

Tom Puntun – Environmental Services Manager, City of Durham

**Apologies**

There were apologies for absence from Councillor Pitts.

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 March 2006**

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record.

**Draft Report on Fly-tipping**

The Panel agreed the Draft Report subject to the following amendments:-

- Rather than referring to the system employed by the Neighbourhood Wardens as a “six zone system” that it be referred to as the “*Neighbourhood Service Delivery System*”.
- Within Section 4. Outcomes, that the word Certificate be replaced with the phrase “*Waste Carriers’ Licence*”.
- That the following paragraph be added to the end of Section 4. Outcomes:

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 is a piece of legislation which covers a multitude of areas which the Environment Services Department deal with. There are many opportunities to use new or extended powers set out within this Act to help tackle the issue of fly-tipping. However, it must be ascertained which approach is most suitable for the City of Durham in each case.

- As an addition to recommendation 1:
  - (c) That Local Members are informed as regards any enforcement that is envisaged, that which is being considered and that which is to be implemented.

- An addition to recommendation 2(b):
  - (b) ...from individual households *especially as regards the removal of waste via skip hire companies.*
- That an additional recommendation be added:
  3. That the City of Durham's Environmental Services Department research how best to use the powers set out within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

### **Further discussions Recycling and Litter-Picking – Environmental Services Manager**

- **Bulky Items**

Bulky items refers to items such as fridges, cookers and furniture. Whilst fridges must be disposed of correctly to ensure no chemicals are released during disposal, furniture currently goes to landfill.

It is within the Environmental Services Business Plan to review the situation as regards bulky items in the next 12 months. At present in excess of 15,000 bulky items are collected per annum, with over 3,000 white goods per annum on top of this figure.

As the number of items has increase significantly, it may be necessary to consider charging for the removal of bulky items similar to other neighbouring Authorities. This would have an associated administration cost and this would need to be balanced against any level of fee set if charging was introduced.

- **Existing Vehicles**

As furniture is currently sent to landfill the only suitable vehicle is a conventional refuse collection vehicle. If furniture could be reused it may be that furniture reuse companies could be contacted to see whether they wished to collect the furniture (subject to the quality, condition and if the items meet with current fire regulations). As there is considerable costs associated with the transporting the furniture on behalf of furniture reuse companies, it is not possible to do so in-house. If the furniture was not suitable for reuse then refuse vehicles could be sent to take the furniture to landfill.

Obviously, for the City of Durham to provide an additional vehicle for the purpose of collecting the reusable furniture there would be an associated cost of the purchase of the vehicle and the associated running costs. These costs could not be recouped by the resale of the collected goods (at this time) and therefore the existing procedure should be adhered to. Also as the refuse vehicles are used for household wheelie bin collections only 4 days out of 5, the use of the vehicles on the "spare" day is cost effective as the staff and vehicle are already in place, with only the cost of fuel being required.

Liverpool City Council run a successful furniture/white goods recycling and reuse system in conjunction with partner companies such as “Bulky Bob’s”. Apprentices are utilised, and therefore not only do many items become refurbished (and are sold at a sufficient price to recoup the costs involved, though not a profit), but also a number of educational targets are met. The Environmental Services Manager is scheduled to attend Liverpool to look into the possibility of implementing similar schemes within the City of Durham area, albeit on a smaller scale.

- **County Durham Furniture Forum**

This Forum was in place until 2 years ago when it ceased operating. Durham County Council suggested to the District Councils to revive the forum and this was agreed. The County proposed to be the facilitators for the first few meetings until the Forum was fully operational. This Forum will hopefully provide solutions to help divert furniture from the waste stream for reuse and recycling.

- **Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005**

The Act has a range of new powers, though it is a review of previous Acts rather than the entirely new piece of legislation which was hoped by most Local Authorities. It would be necessary to conduct research into the Act to see how these new powers relate to previous legislation and current City of Durham procedures to ascertain how (where appropriate) to implement them for the City of Durham.

DEFRA have advised that it would be preferable for a period of notification (for the public) explaining any new powers taken on by Local Authorities, prior to any widespread implementation of enforcement. Obviously, it would be best to identify what the problem areas are within the City of Durham and then see where the new Act can be utilised to best serve the Council’s objectives.

This includes:

- Wheelie Bins being left in the street after waste collection, or indeed not being presented in the first place.
- Shopping trolleys removed from supermarkets and dumped.
- Fly-tipping
- Recycling
- Litter Picking

The new Act has provision for the issuing of Street Litter Control Notices (or Traders Notices for Companies) and also increases the power to act when waste bins have not been presented for collection or are left on the street. Usually though it would be for Neighbourhood Wardens to ask residents to comply, possibly with a follow up from Environmental Health Officers if required.

Also within the Act, there is provision for Local Authorities to increase the level of fixed penalties. This may allow for not only a greater deterrent, but also to generate funds to be used to help tackle associated environmental issues. One example is that of shopping trolleys that are recovered from being dumped. Those in good working order are currently returned to supermarkets, with wrecked trolleys being sent for disposal. It maybe possible now to recharge the supermarkets for this, or to force supermarkets into introducing a system of control to prevent trolleys leaving their sites in the first instance.

As relating to fly-tipping the new Act permits Local Authorities to, in some cases, go onto land not owned by the City of Durham ownership to tackle incidents of fly-tipping. There is a Memorandum of Understanding between Local Authorities and the Environment Agency as regards fly-tipping which in effect divides the responsibility for fly-tipping between the two organisations. Local Authorities deal with small cases with the Environment Agency deal with the larger cases. For these larger cases, it can prove to be a drawn out process, as the process of evidence collection tends to be more laborious and must be sufficiently robust to ensure conviction for these serious offences.

- **Durham County Council Waste Strategy**

The County Council has currently presented no further information on this matter to the City of Durham.

- **Promotion of Recycling Schemes**

The City of Durham “Kerb-It” scheme is in it’s 7<sup>th</sup> season with the City of Durham running the pilot scheme initially, prior to uptake by other Authorities. Many joint public relations exercises have been instigated by Durham County Council and the City of Durham, including some funded by DEFRA. Most of these have had a modicum of success, but they have rarely increased the uptake of recycling by members of the public.

Prize Draws, such as those being currently operated by Easington District Council, have not proven to be effective when tried in the City of Durham area. Promotions via radio, posters and advertisements on buses have all proven to have little effect on the tonnage of recycled waste.

The only avenue proven to have a cost effective and appreciative effect was to have a sticker that is placed onto wheelie bins giving the days and times of the regular and holiday collections for household waste. It also included information regarding the “Kerb-It” boxes and scheme. Within 3 weeks of these stickers being placed, there were 3,000 requests for “Kerb-It” boxes. There was tonnage increase of 17%, with the overall recycling rate increasing from 17% to 20%. The cost for these stickers was £3,000 which represents extremely good value for money. It is thought that an annual sticker campaign would be an excellent method of proven promotion for the “Kerb-It” scheme.

Members of the public can request addition “Kerb-It” boxes, though not large boxes as this poses a Health & Safety risk to the Waste Management Operatives. For those people who cannot move their recycling box for collection, there is a similar scheme to the assisted waste service.

In the future, as waste collection strategies evolve, it may be that separate bins for waste and recycling are required and that future techniques for separating waste may negate the current system.

- **Green Waste Bins**

Whilst the green waste bins for garden rubbish have been a success, rolling them out to more households in the District may be premature and prove to be non-cost effective if Durham County Council push ahead with Aerobic or Anaerobic Digestion of household waste, as this would allow for all waste to be placed into one bin for collection by one vehicle.

- **Litter Picking**

Voluntary Litter Picking has increased steadily in the last 2 years, though the City of Durham does not formally promote the activity. This may be remedied by reference in Durham City News to the work done by these voluntary organisations. The City of Durham facilitates by providing bags, sticks, gloves etc. and occasional a member of Staff to assist. Also the City of Durham collects the bagged rubbish from prearranged pickup points.

One of the major benefits of this type of litter picking is that it can concentrate on areas outside of the City of Durham's ownership, within wooded areas, undergrowth etc. Some examples of these activities are the Friends of Witton Dene (Councillor Simpson et al) and schemes at Sherburn where Councillor Colledge has been helping out with voluntary litter picking in the area.

The litter-picking must remain voluntary and ad-hoc as there are various Health & Safety, Insurance and Union issues which preclude a formalised arrangement.

- **Takeaway Food Premises and Litter**

New powers within the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 may allow for further conditions to be place on Takeaway owners to provide bins and to keep the areas along shop frontages clean, though this does not stop the problem of wind-blown litter. It is possible to negotiate with owners and companies regarding litter and indeed some of the large firms have litter pickers themselves.

Ultimately, education of the public as regarding littering is a more likely to lead to a reduction in the littering with prevention being better than cure.

**Actions for the next meeting:-**

- Further discussions with the Environmental Services Manager regarding the topics.
- Information from relevant Officers regarding the impact of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 on enforcement and operational procedures currently in place at the City of Durham.
- Consideration of the draft report on the topic of Recycling.

The Meeting terminated at 6.40 p.m.