

**WASTE AND RECYCLING – DCLG WEEKLY COLLECTION SUPPORT SCHEME AND HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE AUDIT OF WASTE AND RECYLING SERVICES**

Cabinet – 10 May 2012

Report of the: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Community and Planning Services.

Status: For Decision.

Key Decision: Yes.

Also to be considered by Services Select Committee – 19<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

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**Executive Summary:** This report outlines the DCLG Weekly Collection Support Scheme bidding process and reports on the results of the recent HSE audit of Waste and Recycling Services.

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**This report supports the Key Aim of:** A clean and healthy environment and effective management of Council resources.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Mrs Hunter.

Head of Service Head of Environmental and Operational Services – Richard Wilson.

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**Recommendation to Cabinet:** It be RESOLVED that:

- (a) Cabinet determine if the Council should submit a detailed final bid to the DCLG Weekly Collection Support Scheme fund, for the introduction of a separate weekly collection of food waste for compositing, and
- (b) Cabinet give consideration to the recommendations from the HSE referring to the Waste Collection methods currently employed and determine any future action required at this time.

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**A. DCLG Weekly Collection Support Scheme**

**Introduction**

- 1 The Department of Communities and Local Government, (DCLG), have announced a £250 million ‘Weekly Collection Support Scheme’ fund available for Local Authorities to ‘increase the frequency and quality of waste collections and make it easier to recycle’.

2 The Weekly Collection Support Scheme is a challenge fund that will support Authorities in providing a weekly collection service.

3 Below are relevant extracts for the DCLG bidding document:-

#### Objectives

4 “The Weekly Collection Support Scheme is a challenge fund designed to support Local Authorities to introduce, retain or reinstate a weekly collection of residual waste and/or recycling (for example food (or organic) waste).

5 The fund is designed to achieve the three outcomes of maintaining or improving frequency of collection, improved environmental benefit and value for money.

6 Examples of the type of projects the Scheme might support include; recycling schemes that divert more waste from landfill; reward schemes for householders that recycle more; equipment to increase collection capacity; investment in technologies like Mechanical Biological Treatment facilities, Materials Recovery Facilities, Composting or Anaerobic Digestion; and awareness raising campaigns.

#### Criteria

7 Through this challenge fund approach, innovative bids will be invited from Local Authorities that:

- Guarantee to introduce, retain or reinstate weekly collections of residual waste for five years; and,
- Provide environmental benefits or improvements on current environmental performance; and,
- Demonstrate value for money.

8 In addition, and in recognition that some Councils are locked into long term contractual arrangements tying them to fortnightly collections, the Scheme will also accept bids from Councils with a fortnightly refuse collection that do not currently offer a weekly food (or organic) waste collection. The addition of a weekly food (or organic) waste collection for five years in this circumstance is considered to be a significant increase in the service offered to householders.

#### Eligibility

9 Projects that meet the objectives and criteria of the Weekly Collection Support Scheme are eligible for funding. As a challenge fund, bids will be assessed as to how well they score against the criteria and how they compare relative to other bids.

## Timescale

10 The Weekly Collection Support Scheme is a three year fund from 2012/13 to 2014/15. The spend profile is up to £250m over three years: £50m in year one, and £100m in each of years two and three. Outline and final bids should clearly profile requested funding, which could be either in a single year sum or spread over the one, two and/or three years of the Scheme. Local Authorities should provide a profile of expenditure as part of their bid. Where possible the Department will try to accommodate the funding profile requested by successful bidders, but the budget is limited to a fixed amount in each year so until all bids have been assessed no guarantees can be made that a specific profile can definitely be met.

## 11 Timetable

- Expressions of interest should be submitted by 16<sup>th</sup> March 2012.
- Outline bids should be submitted by 11<sup>th</sup> May 2012.
- Final bids should be submitted by 17<sup>th</sup> August 2012.
- The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will announce successful bids in October 2012.

## Five Year Commitment

12 This scheme is designed to invest in better weekly collections. Making a five year commitment to weekly waste collections, demonstrates that Local Authorities are committed to putting customer service and residents' needs first when configuring local waste services. Helpfully, it also enables Councils to profile over the medium term the positive impact this funding can have in terms of delivering better cost-effectiveness and environmental outcomes.

13 A weekly collection should comprise of:-

- a) A residual waste collection once a week and,
- b) Additional recycling of food/organic waste or dry recycling at least once a fortnight.

14 Authorities that have worked hard to preserve weekly residual collections can also bid into the Scheme if they want to add a new recycling component such as weekly food (or organic) waste.

15 If a Local Authority is already operating a fortnightly collection of residual waste, then we are encouraging them to reinstate weekly collections or to at least add an extra collection of food (or organic) waste once a week.

## **Bidding**

- 16 Any Local Authority in England can lead a bid – whether they are a collection or disposal authority. We also encourage joint bids from groups of Local Authorities or consortiums (that include businesses/third parties). For grant allocation purposes, however, the lead bidder in all instances must be an English Local Authority.

## **Additionality**

- 17 Where an Authority would no longer be able to offer its residents a weekly residual collection without the support of this Scheme, continuing to offer this service would be classed as “additional”. Alternatively, for Authorities that would still be able to offer a residual collection without the support of the Scheme, additionality could be demonstrated by improving the service level in some other way, for example, by improving recycling, or improving the affordability or sustainability of the weekly service for Local Council tax payers.
- 18 All bids need to provide reasonable evidence that funding will support additional activity, rather than activity that would progress anyway.
- 19 Where bids seek to retain a pattern of service provision already in place, they should provide evidence that their bid will fund service improvements, for example by increasing affordability and sustainability of the chosen service configuration, rather than solely subsidising an inefficient service.

## **Bid Amounts**

- 20 There is no minimum or maximum amount for which a Local Authority can bid for through the Weekly Collection Support Scheme fund. It is possible to bid for up to 100% of the costs of a project. Given the high levels of interest in the fund, bidders need to present realistic and competitive bids. If we feel that the requested funding is higher than the current market value, but the aims of the bid otherwise meet the fund’s criteria, we may offer to fund a smaller amount than requested. In such instances, it would then be up to the Council if they wanted to continue with the bid on those terms.

## **Feasibility**

- 21 The Technical Advisory Group will review each bid in terms of the evidence and information presented against the criteria. As part of that, they will review the bids to ensure that they can be delivered, are achievable and realistic and that sufficient governance and/or infrastructure is in place (or being prepared) to support the proposed project.
- 22 All Local Authorities should ensure that any submitted bids follow the standard processes and procedures for spending public money.
- 23 Where the Technical Advisory Group consider that a bid does not sufficiently demonstrate the feasibility of the bid, then they may ask for more information.

## Consultation

- 24 The application form will require Local Authorities to confirm that residents' needs have been considered in the configuration of waste services being funded by this Scheme.
- 25 Where an Authority intends to consult or canvass opinion to shape the delivery of a bid, this should be detailed in the application, especially if some/all of the funding being bid for will support the activity being consulted on."

## Expression of Interest

- 26 An expression of interest, (EOI), has been submitted to the DCLG by the deadline of 16<sup>th</sup> March 2012. This is provided as Appendix 'A' to this report.
- 27 The EOI is based on providing a separate weekly collection of household food waste, for diversion to in-vessel composting as an improvement to the Council's existing weekly residual and dry recycling collection service. It is proposed to provide this service to 21,000 households, increasing the Council's overall recycling/composting rate by up to 4.25%.
- 28 Final costed bids need to be submitted by 17<sup>th</sup> August 2012.
- 29 Preliminary costings, based on providing a separate weekly collection of food waste to 21,000 households in the residential population centres of Sevenoaks, Swanley, Edenbridge and Westerham, utilising free issue of containers, caddies and liners, are in the region of £180,000 per annum plus the one-off capital costs of containers and caddies (£120,000). The annual revenue costs would be reduced if the three collection vehicles required are purchased from the fund and not included in depreciation charges in the annual revenue costs. (Estimated purchase cost of 3 vehicles is £225,000). A bid representing 100% of the estimated scheme costs would be approx £345,000 one off capital costs and £180,000 per annum running costs. These estimates would be confirmed if a final detailed bid was to be submitted by the August deadline.

## B. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Audit of Waste and

### Recycling Collection Operations

- 30 The HSE undertook an audit of Waste and Recycling collection operations on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> February this year. Their findings are detailed in the letter reproduced as Appendix 'B'. The Council's response is reproduced as Appendix 'C'.
- 31 This was a National Initiative by the HSE and Sevenoaks District Council was the last collection Authority to be audited in Kent.
- 32 As can be seen from the Appendices 'B' and 'C', there are a number of actions the Council is required to take.

- 33 With regard to Sack Collection from resident owned wheeled bins, the Council will write to all residents who use wheeled bins informing them that on HSE instruction, the collectors will be instructed not to lift refuse sacks from the bottom of wheeled bins, due to the manual handling risk.
- 34 Residents will be required to either:-
- (a) Present their waste for collection in sacks outside of their wheeled bin,
  - (b) Convert to a more traditional type of dustbin that does not present these manual handling difficulties, or,
  - (c) Place an upturned box, or similar, in the bottom of the wheeled bin, so the bottom sack is not so low down for lifting out.
- 35 Customer Services will inform residents who may complain if the bottom sack is not collected from their bin of this situation and, therefore, their refuse will not be collected, unless it is presented for collection in compliance with the above.
- 36 The actions to be taken with regard to the sack collection from 1,100 litre drop fronted bins; route risk assessment; driving vehicle equipment checks and other issues are detailed in the Council's response in Appendix 'C'.
- 37 With regard to the comments and recommended actions relating to the Sack Collection method generally, it is clear from a Health and Safety for operatives, risk assessment perspective, that the HSE prefer a wheeled bin and bin lift collection method to the use of refuse sacks.
- 38 As can be seen in the Council's response, the HSE have been informed that this collection method provides an effective service that is strongly embedded and highly valued by residents, having very high customer satisfaction rates.
- 39 The action identified indicates that the HSE's concerns and recommendations would be brought to the Council's Cabinet Members for consideration as to future collection methods, and recommends the Council survey residents on the use of wheeled bins for waste collection.

## **Key Implications**

### Financial Implications

- 40 The financial commitment required to fund additional waste collection and recycling services in years four onwards if a bid to the DCLG Weekly Collection Support Scheme was successful, is outlined in the report. [Preliminary estimate £180,000 per annum] The bidding criteria requires any detailed bids to be signed off by the Section 151 Officer.

- 41 Funding is available from the Weekly Collection Support Scheme for three years, but bidding Council's must commit to delivering the service for five years. Even if 100% of the capital and revenue costs were met by the fund for years one to three, the Council would still have to commit to delivery and finding funding for the Scheme for years four to five, and thereafter. Unless, these funds could be secured from other external sources, (Kent County Council/Kent Waste Partnership), this would result in a growth item from 2015/16 onwards as there is currently no provision for this in the approved budget plan.
- 42 The financial implications of moving to a wheeled bin collection method would have significant capital cost implications with regard to the provision of wheeled bins for residents and adapting vehicles for bin lift operation. Depending on the collection method adopted, if wheeled bins were introduced, savings may be realised on annual collection costs.

#### Resource Implications

- 43 To submit an outline bid by 11<sup>th</sup> May 2012 and a final bid by 17<sup>th</sup> August 2012 will involve a significant amount of Officer time.

#### Community Impact and Outcomes

- 44 It is considered a separate weekly collection of food waste for composting would be well received and used by residents, and this could be tested by an on-line survey using the Council's web-site, if felt appropriate.
- 45 Any decision regarding changes to collection methods utilising wheeled bins, as recommended by the HSE, would require extensive consultation with residents.

#### Legal, Human Rights etc.

- 46 The recommendations made by the HSE are in regard to the Council's responsibilities for it's employees under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

#### Equality Impact Assessment

- 47 If a separate food waste collection service was introduced an equalities impact assessment would have to be undertaken, but it is considered there would not be any equalities impact that could not be easily overcome.
- 48 Similarly, if a revised collection method of household waste was proposed to be introduced an equalities impact assessment would have to be undertaken.

#### Risk Assessment Statement

- 49 There is a risk that not submitting a bid to the DCLG Weekly Collection Support Scheme fund would deny potential financial funding being made available to improve existing waste collection and recycling services. However, this needs to be balanced against the financial commitment required for the Scheme for years four and future years.

50 By not fully addressing the concerns raised by the HSE and providing a full reasoned response, puts the Council at risk from enforcement action, under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act, 1974, by the HSE.

**Background Papers:**

- DCLG Weekly Collection Support Scheme Bid Funding Criteria.
- Letter from HSE dated 24.2.12.
- Response to HSE dated 15.3.12.

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