

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C/139/2005-06.

Date of meeting: 10 April 2006.



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Environmental Protection.

Subject: Petition - Alternate Weekly Refuse Collections.

Officer contact for further information: John Gilbert (01992 – 56 4062).

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 – 56 4470).

Recommendations:

- (1) That the receipt of a petition from approximately 175 residents in Buckhurst Hill regarding alternate weekly collections of household waste be noted; and**
- (2) That no action be taken other than to respond to the first named petitioner setting out the reasons for the Council's decision.**

Report:

1. A petition of approximately 175 signatures has been received from residents of Buckhurst Hill (Lower Queens Road, Tudor Place, The Windsors, Mountbatten Court, Cascade Road, Cascade Close, Albert Terrace and Alfred Road) which:

“deplores the reduction of general household rubbish collection from weekly to fortnightly. This has been done without any consultation with residents and will create a serious health hazard”.
2. The concerns raised by the petitioners include those with which Cabinet will be very familiar:
 - a lack of consultation;
 - recycling is an excuse to reduce residual collections;
 - health hazards and fly tipping; and
 - no reduction in costs due to the reduced collection frequency.
3. All of the above issues were debated at great length by members through Scrutiny and at two cabinet meetings before Cabinet agreed that the alternate weekly wheeled bin collection system should be introduced. It should be noted that this system of collection is in widespread use, the reason being that it remains the only system which has been able to attain the levels of recycling required to meet statutory targets and to avoid the consequences of landfill penalties.
4. The system does work. Despite the inevitable difficulties in the first roll out areas of Chigwell and Lambourne, recycling levels have increased from around 25% to over 40%. There is no reason to believe that this cannot be repeated throughout the district and that it cannot be improved upon once residents become familiar with the new arrangements and recycle as much as possible.
5. In terms of a response to the head petitioner, it is suggested that they be informed as follows:
 - (a) it is accepted that there was not a formal consultation exercise. However, the

Forester had covered the issues ahead of the decision, and in any event, in this instance, the Cabinet had to base its decision on the targets that had been set and the evidence from other authorities who were achieving high levels of recycling. Cabinet were satisfied that there was no viable alternative;

(b) alternate weekly collections are not financially driven. Whilst costs is of necessity a consideration the fundamental reason for alternate weekly collections is that it requires residents to recycle as much as they can. If they do so, there is enough capacity in the wheeled bin to hold residual waste;

(c) there is no demonstrable health hazard associated with alternate weekly collections. It has been clearly demonstrated elsewhere, that with the adoption of common sense housekeeping methods, such as the wrapping of food waste etc, no difficulties should arise. Any smells, which might arise in the warmer months, can be satisfactorily dealt with through the use of disinfectant powders and the like.

There is as yet no evidence to suggest that fly tipping has increase due to the new system. All incidences of the fly tipping of domestic waste will be investigated and subject to suitable evidence being obtained, legal action will be taken.

(d) A stated in (b) above, this is not a financially driven exercise. The costs of the new arrangements are greater than the former system, due in the main to the capital costs associated with the wheeled bins and lifting equipment. The costs of refuse and recycling collection for 2005/06 is £0.80p per household per week and the budgeted cost for 2006/07 is just over £1 per household per week. Less than half of this is met directly through the Council Tax, the remainder being met through government grant (via direct taxation)

Statement in support of recommended action:

6. The concerns being raised are commonplace in all areas where an alternate weekly system has been introduced. Over time these concerns dispel as residents become familiar with and properly use the recycling elements of the service. The concerns are fully understood, but if the Council is to achieve its statutory target, and the local target it has set itself of 40% recycling by the end of 2006/07, it has to stand firm and see the implementation programme through.

Options for action:

7. The Council's constitution requires that petitions be responded to. There is therefore no alternative in that regard. At this stage in the implementation programme there are no alternatives to the suggested response to the Head petitioner.

Consultation undertaken:

8. No external consultation undertaken.

Resource implications:

Budget provision: Nil.

Personnel: Nil.

Land: Nil.

Community Plan/BVPP reference: N/A.

Relevant statutory powers: Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Background papers: Previous Cabinet and Scrutiny reports.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: None.

Key Decision reference (if required): Will advise when key decisions have ref nos.