Scrutiny Committee

Members of the Scrutiny Committee:

Mrs M Dewsbury (Chairman)
Mr T Lewis (Vice Chairman)
Mrs V Bell
Mr J Herbert
Mr A Pond
Mrs S Thomson
Mr N Ward
Mr G Watt
Mr K Weeks
Mrs J Wilby
Mr M Windridge

Group Meetings

Conservatives:
Blomefield Room 9.00 am

Liberal Democrats:
Kett Room 9.00 am

If any member of the public wishes to speak on a non-confidential item, they may do so at the discretion of the Chairman

Agenda

Date
Wednesday 11 July 2012

Time
10.30 am
(Scrutiny Training for members will take place at 9.30 am)

Place
Colman & Cavell Rooms

South Norfolk House
Long Stratton
Norwich
Norfolk
NR15 2XE

Contact
Caroline Heasley tel (01508) 533685
South Norfolk District Council
Swan Lane
Long Stratton Norwich
NR15 2XE

Email: democracy@s-norfolk.gov.uk

If you have any special requirements in order to attend this meeting, please let us know in advance

Large print version can be made available

04/07/2012
AGENDA

At the discretion of the Chairman, a short break will be taken after the meeting has been running for approximately two hours.

1. To report apologies for absence and to identify substitute members;

2. Any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972. Urgent business may only be taken if, "by reason of special circumstances" (which will be recorded in the minutes), the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered as a matter of urgency;

3. To Receive Declarations of Interest from Members;
   (Please see guidance form and flow chart attached – page 4)

4. To confirm the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15 May 2012;
   (attached – page 6)

5. Review of proposed efficiencies and reduced costs of the waste collection and recycling service
   (report attached – page 11)

6. Scrutiny Work Programme and Cabinet Core Agenda
   (attached – page 21)
Working Style of the Scrutiny Committee

Independence
Members of the Scrutiny Committee and Overview Sub-Committees will not be subject to whipping arrangements by party groups.

Member leadership
Members of the Committees will take the lead in selecting topics for and in questioning witnesses. The Committees will expect members of Cabinet, rather than officers, to take the main responsibility for answering the Committee's questions about topics, which relate mainly to the Council's activities.

A constructive atmosphere
Meetings of the Committees will be constructive, and not judgmental, accepting that effective overview and scrutiny is best achieved through challenging and constructive enquiry. People giving evidence at the Committees should not feel under attack.

Respect and trust
Meetings will be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and trust.

Openness and transparency
The Committees' business will be open and transparent, except where there are sound reasons for protecting confidentiality. In particular, the minutes of the Committee’s meetings will explain the discussion and debate, so that it could be understood by those who were not present.

Consensus
Members of the Committees will work together and, while recognising political allegiances, will attempt to achieve consensus and agreed recommendations.

Impartial and independent officer advice
Officers who advise and support the Committees will give impartial and independent advice, recognising the importance of the Scrutiny Committee and the Overview Sub-Committees in the Council’s arrangements for governance, as set out in the Constitution.

Regular review
There will be regular reviews of how the overview and scrutiny process is working, and a willingness to change if it is not working well.

Programming and planning
The Scrutiny Committee will have a programme of work, in conjunction with the Overview Sub-Committees. The Committee will agree the topics to be included in the work programme, the extent of the investigation to be undertaken in relation to resources, and the witnesses to be invited to give evidence.

Managing time
The Committees will attempt to conclude the business of each meeting in reasonable time. The order of business will be arranged as far as possible to minimise the demands on the time of witnesses.
Review of proposed efficiencies and reduced costs of the waste collection and recycling service

Director of Development and Environment

Summary – the report provides an update regarding the performance of the waste collection and recycling service, the progress made in reducing costs and delivering efficiencies and the work currently progressing. A £400k reduction in the waste budget management budget in 2012/13 has been achieved along with a number of other service improvements which are ongoing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cabinet member(s):</th>
<th>Ward(s) affected:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keith Kiddie</td>
<td>All</td>
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Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail: Bob Wade 01508 533787 bwade@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Overview

1.1 For Members to receive an update regarding progress towards the recycling targets and to make recommendations as appropriate regarding adjustments.

1.2 For Members to consider a review of the steps taken to improve efficiency and reduce the annual cost of the waste collection and recycling service.

1.3 For Members to evaluate the savings made in terms of both finances and efficiencies.

2. Scope of Overview

2.1 This report provides information on the overall performance the recycling and waste collection service of the Council. It also describes the work that has been undertaken on the operational efficiency, cost reduction and income generation measures that were reported to Cabinet in June 2011 and which were intended to achieve a substantial reduction in the annual cost of the Council's waste collection and recycling services.
2.2. Comment is also provided on proposed future work intended to optimise the service.

3. General Recycling Service Performance Information

3.1 The Council’s recycling and composting rate has increased from 11% of all household waste collected in 2000/01 to 39.3% in 2010/11 with a target of 40% set for 2011/12. This target has now been exceeded with over 42% of waste arisings recycled or composted (final year end figures have not been audited). This has been achieved by a combination of measures which have resulted in (comparing 2010/11 with 2011/12):

- the overall quantity of material recycled and composting has increased over the past year to 17,260 tonnes (2011/12) largely due to the increasing demand for our green garden waste composting scheme and also the recycling of street sweepings
- Over 2,800 tonnes of material – glass, paper, textiles were collected at the mini recycling centres. The two new sites were recently introduced in Brooke and Diss bringing the total number of sites in the district to 121; an increase of 4 sites in the current financial year.
- a 100% increase in the quantity of street sweepings being recycled compared to the previous year with nearly 1000 tonnes processed
- recycling and composting has increased by nearly 20 kg per household
- landfill waste collected per household has reduced by 7.4 kg
- the quantity of textiles collected has decreased by c 20 tonnes this year, but the price per tonne has increased significantly
- Garden waste collected and composted increasing by over 1000 tonnes – an increase of over 20%

Improving the quality of recyclable materials collected for sorting at the materials recycling facility (MRF) continues to be a priority. South Norfolk had the lowest level of rejected material in Norfolk at audit earlier this year (5.9 %). This resulted from plant efficiency improvements. The lower reject level means increased recycling/income and lower costs to dispose of the rejected material.

3.2 It should be recognised that over the past 4 years there has been a decrease in the tonnages of recyclable material collected at the kerbside. A number of factors are probably contributing to this reduction – these include the state of the economy, changes in consumer behaviour (falls in newspaper reading and
and packaging reductions (particularly so-called ‘lightweighting’). The good news is that increased income is being achieved from the sale of materials and the volumes of landfill waste collected are also down more than kerbside recycling.

3.3 In terms of the recycling of street sweepings, this may be reduced this year (2012/13) because of Environment Agency stipulations on the arrangements for recycling. We are working closely with the site and other agencies and are reasonably confident that the site we use will be able to meet EA and Norfolk County Council requirements. At present the tonnages cannot be counted towards our totals for recycling.

3.4 Other initiatives that have been very well received include our WEEE (waste electrical and electronic equipment) events. With 3 events held last year around 500 items were tested and re-used, 5 tonnes was recycled combined with charitable donations to the Chairman’s charity. Such events enable local communities to dispose of items which would most likely have found their way to landfill. These events have received recognition from the Neighbourhood Boards in the ‘Your Neighbourhood, Your choice’ scheme with requests made to fund further events from a Board budget.

3.5 The Council is currently involved in a collaborative procurement exercise with all the other local authorities in Norfolk to secure an effective outlet for the various recyclables they collect from March 2014 when the current contract at the Costessey materials recycling facility (MRF) comes to an end. Securing overall best value will be a key component of this exercise which will also be used to test the market’s appetite for taking additional materials which are not currently collected because no reliable end outlet could previously be found for them.

3.6 The Council is involved in further collaboration with Norfolk County Council, Broadland District Council and Norwich City Council and submitted a non-binding expression of interest for funding from DCLG towards the cost of a pilot food waste collection scheme in the district. The collaborating authorities have now submitted an outline bid. This potential service development will be reported to Cabinet on the 16 July.

3.7 The above initiatives each provide opportunities to increase the recycling rate for the South Norfolk area, however, the on-going economic climate with decreasing waste levels and possibility of drought that was just starting to be considered last winter the Councils recycling rate for 2012/13 was set at a cautious 42%. The ‘drought’ has turned out to be the wettest on record but other issues remain very uncertain and with on-going recession and no certainty about the availability of external support funding for food waste collection it is considered too early to advise Members as to what a future recycling target might reasonably be.

4. Review of efficiency improvements and cost reductions

4.1 On the 6 June 2011 Cabinet approved a report outlining a number of proposed operational efficiencies, cost reduction and income generation measures which
were intended to achieve a substantial reduction in the annual cost of the Council’s waste collection and recycling services.

4.2 The report listed the following actions which it was felt could be delivered:

- Reviewing how specific functions are undertaken - LEAN
- Reviewing the performance, routing and loading of General Waste/Recyclables and Garden Waste Collection vehicles
- Tendering the garden waste treatment service
- Reviewing the income received for the various materials collected for recycling
- Reviewing the refuse vehicle replacement timetable
- Reviewing and promoting chargeable services
- Reviewing overheads

4.3 It was anticipated that in the long term savings of c £800,000 could potentially be achieved if all the actions aimed at driving the service to be more businesslike, efficient and customer aware are ultimately fully successful. In the medium term the potential for savings of £600,000 were identified, which have been included in the Medium Term Budget Plan.

4.4 **Reviewing how specific functions are undertaken** – this has taken a number of forms with the primary energy being devoted to a LEAN review of the green garden waste collection service. This service was considered as one where there were significant opportunities for efficiency improvements and income generation. Early on in the review it became clear that the three main data sets for the service had not been reconciled for a considerable time. This was addressed and the databases cleaned to remove double entries and redundant records.

4.5 The marketing and the profile of the service has also been enhanced which has resulted in subscriber numbers increasing from 13,000 in June 2011 to over 14,700 now. Subscribers are currently being added at the rate of over 70 per week – generating additional income and reducing unit costs. The review of functions will continue with the support of the Performance Review team; as will the embedding of a culture of continuous improvement.

4.6 At the start of the review only 167 of c 13,000 customers were on Direct Debit. As a result of increased communication and promotional pricing this figure has risen to over 55% of our current subscribers and is expected to rise further this growing season. ‘Self service’ on-line customer ordering has been introduced and further improvements are anticipated associated with the Council’s IT upgrade.

4.7 It is difficult to be absolutely precise about the savings generated by this review, but on the basis that processing a Direct Debit renewal costs about £5 less per transaction than processing a cheque, the direct debit initiative is estimated to have saved significant staff time resulting in non cashable savings. The additional customers have resulted in increased income of approximately
£60,000. Work has also been undertaken on improving communication between the House and the depot.

5. **Reviewing the performance, routing and loading of collection vehicles** –
   There are significant costs associated with the operation of the refuse collection fleet. Optimisation of rounds to maximise productivity is a key aim. This involves balancing and maximising the number of properties that can be serviced each day in relation to the loading and tipping requirements of the vehicles. This balancing is challenged by seasonal variations in waste arisings and the variable loadings of vehicles between refuse and recycling week to week. An early overview of the service and logistics was undertaken which included collating and plotting the daily tipping weights for all the vehicles. As a result it was found possible to reduce the number of refuse/recycling and garden waste vehicles by one vehicle in each of the two services. Additionally, due to the lower tonnage collected during the winter months by the garden waste collection service, it has been possible to reduce the crews during the winter months from a driver and two loaders on each vehicle to a driver and one loader. This arrangement will continue until the weight and set out figures confirm that the gardening season is in full swing, when three summer agency loaders will be engaged to help with the additional work.

5.1 An early attempt was made to reduce the slimmed down garden waste fleet from three vehicles to two over the winter months. The weight data suggests this should have been possible but in practice the crews found this very difficult resulting in unreasonably long days to complete the rounds. Following further consideration it is felt that with greater route modelling this trial may have worked much better so this matter will be looked at again next winter.

5.2 Clearly as the population of the district generally increases and the demand for specific services such as garden waste collection grows then from time to time additional vehicle capacity will be required. This can be met either by purchasing additional vehicles or by replacing smaller vehicles with ones with a larger carrying capacity (although this is not possible in all cases, for example where access is restricted). Before any additional or indeed replacement vehicles are requested further effort is being devoted to optimising all the collection rounds, balancing the weight and volume of materials to be collected (taking into account seasonal variations), with distance of travel and any area constraints such as narrow lanes. The aim is to have the right type of vehicle in any particular location and to allocate the optimum number of properties to it to ensure that the lorry goes to tip as full as possible, but not overloaded. To assist with this process an in-cab interactive fleet management system produced by a local company, Proteo, was purchased with grant assistance from Improvement East of £25,000 in the autumn of 2011. This system has been introduced and is largely operative with the garden waste collection service. It is also being taken forward with the refuse and recycling service, but is not yet fully functional for a number of reasons including on-going routing changes. The other sought benefits of this system including real time GPS tracking of vehicles, driver behaviour and fuel management and the provision of in-cab information is also being worked on; as is the possibility not yet realised of using a ‘tablet’ type unit which can relay property/customer requirements, health and safety ‘hotspots’ and other local information.
6. **Tendering the garden waste disposal service** - the tendering of this service has been undertaken and was reported to Cabinet on the 26 March. The savings achieved are in the region of £6,000 per year on current volumes although there will be further opportunities for improving this situation in due course. In addition as a consequence of the increasing customer take up of this service additional revenue is being generated (see 4.5 above) from subscriptions and the payment of recycling credits from Norfolk County Council (NCC). This additional income helps to offset the cost of recycling and waste collection generally.

7. **Reviewing the income received for the various materials collected for recycling** – there are a number of arrangements in place which generate as much income as possible from the sale of recyclable materials collected from our householders and from the payment of recycling credits by Norfolk County Council for avoiding landfill.

7.1 The largest single source of income arises from the materials recycling facility at Costessey which continues to provide additional value. Income share this financial year is £507k which helps offset the costs of the service. The income in 2010/11 was £319,485. The additional income has been achieved by working closely with the operator and joint investment in mid 2011 to improve materials capture efficiencies and reduce the volume of waste outputs which require onward disposal. This combined with the commitment of the South Norfolk waste management team and residents to reduce non target items in the recycling bin has resulted in the Council having the lowest proportion of rejected waste material in the County and the lowest since the plant commenced operations nearly 10 years ago.

7.2 As regards other materials handled, there has been an increase in textile values which has been tracked and secured resulting in an increase in income of £6k per year. There is ongoing work to test the market to obtain best value from the materials we collect and although general economic conditions are less than buoyant the current trend is for material values to increase as the cost of raw materials continues to rise and waste is increasingly recognised as a resource.

7.3 There is another potential income generating project in hand namely the intention to revitalise the commercial waste service. Clearly much work will need to be done, not least in relation to affordability before Members’ approval is sought for any commitment. Part of this work will be the need to optimise and plan vehicle logistics, staffing and the associated costs and fit this in with the vehicle replacement programme.

8. **Reviewing the refuse vehicle replacement timetable** – there has been a careful examination of the need for and timing of vehicle replacements and the retention of so-called ‘spare’ vehicles. Across the waste industry operators are making increased use of fleet management information and are more closely tracking individual vehicle lifetime costs the results of which are then used to inform vehicle replacement programmes by optimising the point at which vehicles are disposed of. The Council is adopting similar practices and the Operations fleet replacement programme is currently being rescheduled on the basis that vehicles will be retained for nine years instead of seven where it makes economic sense to do so.
8.1 Consideration is also being given to potentially timing the next round of vehicle replacements to take advantage of any external funding that may be secured through the Council’s collaborative bid for funding towards the cost of collecting food waste. For example, it may be expedient to use a new two ‘pod’ vehicle to collect food waste and recyclables one week and food waste and residual waste the next rather than use two separate vehicles. Additional recycling materials collected will also require careful consideration given the potential impact on vehicle loadings.

8.2 The vehicle review also included the ‘spare’ vehicles that are needed to cover for breakdowns and programmed statutory vehicle checks. At one stage the Council had a stock of six older vehicles used as ‘spares’. Although fully depreciated these vehicles still needed to be maintained fully licensed and road worthy requiring time and cost and taking up valuable depot space. The easy availability of spare vehicles also resulted in the practice of hiring in agency crews at short notice to crew spare vehicles to respond to relatively minor issues rather than plan out the problems from the outset. Three vehicles judged to be surplus to requirements have now been disposed of at auction to realise residual value and reduce standing costs.

9. **Reviewing and promoting chargeable services** – the biggest impact that has been achieved in this area is through the enthusiasm that residents have for the garden waste collection service which has had over 1,700 additional subscribers in a year. Considerable effort has gone into making this an easy to use service reasonably priced service that is valued by customers. The result of this work is a service with increased customers, modest price rises (now the second lowest cost service in Norfolk) and a return that reduces the over cost of recycling and waste collection.

9.1 The opportunity to provide a profitable value for money trade waste collection service is also being considered as mentioned above at 7.3. The move will need to be planned and costed with care to ensure that any expansion in this area provides benefit for local businesses, for example more reasonably priced rural waste collection and does not undermine the current cost effectiveness of the rest of the service.

10. **Reviewing overheads** – There are a number of costs that are inherent to all services – these include salaries, pensions, sickness, central overheads and buildings. Given the largely fixed nature of such costs it is challenging to gain short-term savings. In terms of staffing costs there has been a focus on reducing the cost of so-called agency workers. Such workers are largely employed due to sickness absence and for holiday cover. At the same time there is an ongoing emphasis on utilising the opportunities offered by on-line customer services, ensuring we ‘get it right first time’ and continuous improvement. There has also been a renewed emphasis on reducing the cost of fuel and other vehicle parts supplies to generate further savings in an inflationary environment. Currently we are £8,000 under spent the projected budget spend of fuel for this financial year, even with an increase in purchase costs. Continuing efforts are being made to reduce the costs of maintenance by bearing down on supplier’s costs and smarter working.
11. Comparative Performance Information

11.1 The most appropriate approach to review the direction of travel of the service is in relation to the Audit Commission’s so-called ‘nearest neighbour’ peer group of local authorities. Base cost and benchmarking data has been obtained from national sources for 15 authorities in this group for 2010/11 – the most recent dataset. Given the direction of travel in 2011/12 and assuming other authorities do not make significant improvements to their performance then the following can be highlighted:

- In 2010/11 the collection cost per chargeable dwelling was £38.36 in South Norfolk. This compares to an English district average across 201 authorities of £47.96 and a peer group average of £44.87. In the same year this Council was ranked 5th out of 16 in the peer group for collection cost. Given income and savings this year it is most likely that this ranking will improve given the outturn of £27.84 per chargeable dwelling. This is a significant achievement.

- In 2010/11 the Council was ranked 12th out of 16 for overall recycling performance with 39.58% (based on the Audit Commission ‘nearest neighbour’ model). This year with provisional outturn of over 41% it should improve its comparative position. It should be recognised that the underlying ‘dry recycling’ rate tends to be very similar for authorities operating alternate weekly systems (e.g. Breckland and Broadland - ‘nearest neighbours’). Elsewhere additional performance is most often achieved by green and food waste tonnages often at the expense of cost per household. In terms of the overall tonnage of waste collected per household this Council was ranked 4th in 2010/11 – a very respectable position – a possible indication of our resident’s commitment to sustainable living.

12. Proposed future work

12.1 The report to Cabinet in June 2011 explained that the usual approach to repositioning a waste service would be to carry out a base review including obtaining a detailed waste compositional analysis and then prepare an integrated waste strategy. The point was also made that in the unprecedented economic climate that perhaps addressing service cost was the priority.

12.2 The cost issue has been tackled head on and while there are still efficiency gains to be realised the service is now in much better financial shape than it was in mid 2011.

In addition to working on costs, officers have also been doing a lot of work assembling and analysing core base date such as rounds lists, lorry tipping frequencies and weights, round details and crew productivity. As a result and going forward the intention is to:

- Identify and report upon the key strategic issues facing the service,
- undertake further reviews of processes to cut out waste and decrease costs still further.

- Identify and obtain approval for future vehicle purchase and replacement needs, including that linked to the food waste collection service should the Council’s funding bid be successful and Cabinet approval attained.

- maximise income from the sale of collected recyclables, including increasing take up of the garden waste service, revitalising the trade waste collection service on a sound competitive basis and materials. It is also proposed to introduce an efficient food waste service, subject to the DCLG bid outcome and Cabinet approval.

13. Relevant Corporate Priorities

13.1 Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in. The service supports sustainable living by reducing waste to landfill and promotes the better use of resources.

13.2 Promoting a thriving local economy. The service contributes to the local economy by goods and services supplied to the Council.

13.3 Supporting communities to realise their potential. Local communities are involved in initiatives and events which encourage more sustainable living.

13.4 Driving services through being businesslike, efficient and customer aware. The changes highlighted in this report are playing a significant role in supporting these priorities across the district.

14. Implications and Risks

14.1 Financial: If the savings identified for this service cannot be realised they would have to be found from elsewhere to ensure delivery of the Medium Term Plan.

14.2 Legal: In reviewing and revising the service care has been taken to ensure that legislative requirements are met.

14.3 Equalities: there are no implications or risks arising from the review.

14.4 Risks - there are currently national policy issues relating to the interpretation and transposition of EU waste law which could impact on waste collection authorities. The likelihood of impact is not currently known.

15. Conclusion

15.1 The Council’s refuse and recycling collection service is continuing to improve and through a combination of the measures and actions outlined above and overall recycling performance continues to rise. There is an aspiration to increase recycling further and the MRF contract and both the food waste and trade waste initiatives provide future but as yet unquantifiable opportunities.
15.2 Reducing process waste and seeking value for money at every opportunity has enabled a £400,000 reduction in the waste management budget for 2012/13. Further efficiency improvement work is in hand in areas such as procurement of goods and services, service enhancement and income generation in the areas outlined in above. The intention is to deliver further customer service improvements and significant additional cost reduction in 2012/13 and 2013/14.

16. **Action Required**

16.1 Members are asked to endorse this report and the issues and actions arising from it, in particular,

- the key strategic issues facing the service
- the ongoing review of processes to cut out waste and decrease costs further
- the aims to maximise income from the sale of collected recyclables, including increasing take up of the garden waste service, revitalising the trade waste collection service on a sound competitive basis. It is also proposed to introduce an efficient food waste service, subject to the Cabinet approval and the DCLG bid outcome
- the need to identify and obtain approval for future vehicle purchase and replacement, including that linked to any food waste collection service should Cabinet approval be given and the Council’s funding bid be successful
1043 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny Committee held on 15 May 2012 were agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1044 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared an ‘other interest’ as they had a (brown bin) contract with South Norfolk Council for the collection and recycling of garden waste:

V Bell
S Thomson
G Watt
K Weeks

1045 REVIEW OF PROPOSED EFFICIENCIES AND REDUCED COSTS OF THE WASTE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING SERVICE

Cllr K Kiddie introduced the report advising members that significant progress had been made in efficiency improvements and identifying savings in the area of waste collection and recycling and that plans were in place to continue this progress as the service moves forward. He stated that overall the amount and quality of recycled waste had increased, while complaints about waste collection generally had decreased.
Cllr Kiddie thanked Cllr T Lewis for scrutinising the report in advance of the meeting and providing questions, confirming that this had given the officers the opportunity to produce figures and information for members to supplement the report which was circulated at the meeting.

The Director of Development and Environment advised members that there had been a change in culture throughout the teams dealing with waste collection, with a determination by all staff to ‘chase every pound’. As a result of this new way of thinking, not only had efficiencies been identified, but also new ideas for capturing more recycling, to maximise income. One example of this was the recycling of street sweepings. These would previously have been put into landfill, which would have been a cost to the Council. Now, the sweepings were being recycled, producing some revenue. The Environment Manager advised members that the reason street sweepings could not currently be counted towards this year’s recycling figures was that new guidance had been issued by the Environment Agency in May as to how such waste should be recycled, and the Council was awaiting formal confirmation that it’s street sweeping waste had been dealt with in accordance with these new guidelines before it could officially be counted in with the other recycling figures for this year.

Members briefly discussed the recent improvement in efficiency of the plant used in the recycling process and were informed that as well as improvements to plant, the quality of the recycling collected was very good and meant that South Norfolk had very low level of rejected material. Householders in South Norfolk were referred to as ‘good recyclers’.

The Committee discussed the mini recycling centres, and the Director of Development and Environment drew members’ attention to two benefits of these centres. The first was the meeting of public expectation, and the fact that if such a service was made easy for the public to use, they would use it. The second benefit was that additional materials could be collected here that were not collected by the green bin collection, such as glass, clothing and books. Members were informed that the charities collecting items for recycling advised the Council of the tonnages collected and these figures were added to the Council’s total recycling figures.

Cllr A Pond felt that businesses should be encouraged to recycle more, and it should be made easier for them to do so. He added that the issue of waste could be a valuable area for job creation in the District.

In response to Cllr Week’s comment that South Norfolk had only 121 mini recycling centres compared to neighbouring authorities that had more than this, the Director of Development and Environment advised members that these centres were usually developed in response to public demand, and that there was definitely scope for more growth in the District.

Cllr M Windridge questioned whether householders in the District were given enough information about what can/cannot be put into the green bins. The Environment Manager confirmed that new hangers were being produced to be left on the bin of each household in the District giving a guide as to what should be disposed of in the green bins. The South Norfolk Link magazine also provided information about waste disposal and increased awareness about recycling.

Whilst discussing the figures for the amount of garden waste recycled, the Director of Development and Environment confirmed that weather conditions were a factor due to the increased weight of grass cuttings etc in wetter weather. With regard to the garden waste
collection service the number of customers compared with vehicle capacity was discussed and members were advised of the methods employed to manage the increase in numbers. Members were advised of the additional flexibility available because the Council retained an in-house work force. The Committee was informed that the yearly cost of a brown bin was £39 for those residents who paid by direct debit.

Members were advised that the current contract with the Costessey Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) comes to an end in March 2014 and the Council was currently involved in a collaborative procurement exercise with the other local authorities in Norfolk. During the procurement exercise additional materials, not currently collected (such as glass and rigid plastics), would be considered.

The Committee also heard from the Director of Development and Environment that the Council was currently involved in an outline bid to pilot a food waste collection scheme. There was some discussion as to the merits of such a scheme. Members were advised that there were no figures available yet.

Members discussed the issue of trade waste, and the Director of Development and Environment advised members that this issue would be looked at once the outcome of the food waste bid was known. In response to members’ questions the Environment Manager confirmed that there was no formal benchmarking for commercial waste and that the market in this respect was very fluid.

In summarising the report the Director of Development and Environment advised members that the review of the waste management service was started approximately 18 months ago when South Norfolk Council’s costs were significantly higher than some other comparable authorities. The Council’s officers had ‘risen to the challenge’ looking at initial savings that could be made such as the consolidation of rounds and staff redeployment as well as many other efficiencies. A significant number of changes had been made with approximately £400,000 in savings achieved so far and many further savings expected in the future.

Cllr M Gray thanked officers for their hard work in maximising performance. He asked where the Council was rated on performance amongst all other district authorities. The Environment Manager confirmed that he would provide this information to members, whilst reminding members it was important to note that with such tables you would not always be comparing like with like.

The Chairman congratulated officers on their hard work and achievement so far regarding waste management. It was

**RESOLVED** To endorse the report and the issues and actions arising from it, in particular,

- the key strategic issues facing the service
- the ongoing review of processes to cut out waste and decrease costs further
- the aims to maximise income from the sale of collected recyclables, including increasing take up of the garden waste service, revitalising the trade waste collection service on a sound competitive basis.
• the introduction of an efficient food waste service, subject to the Cabinet approval and the DCLG bid outcome.

• the need to identify and obtain approval for future vehicle purchase and replacement, including that linked to any food waste collection service should Cabinet approval be given and the Council’s funding bid be successful

1046SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND THE CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the work programme.

It was agreed that a paper would be presented at the next meeting regarding the way in which the Committee would look at Directorate Plans in the future.

(The meeting concluded at 12.27 pm)

Chairman