

# **REPORT OF THE SPECIAL ADVISORY PANEL ON ALTERNATE BIN COLLECTION (ABC)**

## **1. Introduction**

The Special Advisory Panel on Alternate Bin Collection was set up to address the concerns of local residents at the request of Councillor George Beckett, the Leader of Winchester City Council.

The cross-party panel comprised the following members:

Cllr Richard Worrall (Chairman) (Winchester City Council)  
Cllr John Beveridge (Winchester City Council)  
Cllr Kate Chapman (Winchester City Council)  
Dr Iain Blair (Health Protection Agency)  
Dr Ian Williams (Southampton University)  
Dr Tom Cherrett (Southampton University)

## **2. The Special Advisory Panel Process**

Four public meetings were held during June:

### **Meeting 1 - 4 June 2007**

To brief the Panel on the development of ABC in Winchester and District  
To agree the Panel's objectives  
To identify potential issues and concerns  
To agree the approach and identify witnesses who could contribute to the debate

### **Meeting 2 - 11 June 2007**

To take evidence from the following witnesses:

Robert Heathcock, Head of Environment, Winchester City Council  
Dave Walker Nix, Winchester Friends of the Earth  
Cllrs Judy Onslow and Dorothy Denston, East Hampshire District Council  
Andrew Trayer, Southampton City Council  
Martin Taylor, Winchester City Council Recycling Adviser  
Barrie Sheard, Chairman of the National Pest Technicians Association

### **Meeting 3 - 18 June 2007**

To take evidence from the local residents and councillors.

A total of 10 verbal representations from local residents, City Councillors and a Parish Council were made (including one at the earlier meeting on 11 June).  
Some 50 written representations were also received from local residents, giving both positive and negative views of ABC.

### **Meeting 4 - 25 June 2007**

To take evidence from three additional witnesses:

Tony Smith, SERCo  
Cllr James Wagner, former Portfolio Holder  
Cllr Frank Pearson, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Safety

To discuss and agree the Panel's conclusions and recommendations.

### **3. The Special Advisory Panel's Objectives**

- To determine how well the ABC Phase 1 roll out has achieved the objectives that the City Council set for it, within the context of Government requirements.
- In undertaking this work to consider whether it is dealing with concerns expressed by the public and others and that health issues, in particular, are being addressed.
- To consider if there is anything we can learn from other authorities that have implemented similar systems and research that has taken place since we started this project.
- To make recommendations from our experiences to date and evidence presented by others which could improve our service.

### **4. Evidence from Local Residents and Other Witnesses**

A full record of evidence received by the Panel is contained in the background papers circulated to the Panel and the minutes of their meetings, which can be obtained from the Head of Performance & Scrutiny (contact Niki Brown on (01962) 848165).

### **5. The Panel's Conclusions**

#### **Reasons for undertaking ABC**

The Panel concluded that the primary objective for moving to an ABC scheme had been to make a step change in recycling rates, in response to European, national and local requirements to reduce waste and increase recycling.

Neither cost savings nor service reduction had been aims of the scheme.

#### **Results achieved**

The results achieved in the pilot and phase 1 areas had resulted in a step change in combined recycling and composting rates, from 17.5% to nearly 38%. Similar improvements are envisaged from the Phase 2 roll out starting on July 16<sup>th</sup>.

ABC has encouraged many residents to adopt a more thorough approach to the segregation of recyclable items and this, coupled with the introduction of a new garden waste collection service, has given rise to this step change in performance.

Satisfaction with the waste collection service had been sustained during early stages of the process although some residents have experienced problems which have been drawn to the attention of the Panel.

Advice from the Council's recycling advisers has helped residents to overcome teething problems associated with ABC. Other councils with more experience of operating ABC schemes presented evidence that such schemes run extremely well after a settling in period with high levels of customer satisfaction.

### **Health Issues**

No evidence presented to the Panel showed that the ABC scheme caused any significant detrimental impact on health.

Dr Blair provided a detailed analysis of the information presented regarding health impacts. He concluded that “the evidence suggests that no adverse health effects are associated with alternate bin collection schemes. This is consistent with the findings that waste management generally has a low or non-existent effect on health”.

The Panel recognised that wheeled bins provide protection against many sources of concern by containing the waste and preventing flies, rodents and larger mammals from gaining access to it.

### **Rodents**

The Panel was satisfied that the introduction of the ABC scheme would not lead to increased problems with rats.

The Panel recognised that side waste stored in plastic bags could attract rodents.

### **Inconvenience**

It was recognised that there is a risk of smells, maggots and flies, particularly in hot weather, particularly if waste is not wrapped and bin lids are not closed properly.

The Panel recognised that some properties were not suited to a fortnightly collection while recognising the need for a consistent approach and message to be given.

The introduction of the green garden waste collection service has been welcomed but it is recognised that the sacks can blow away once they have been emptied.

### **Capacity Issues**

The Panel noted that the policy of offering additional capacity to households of six or more was being kept under review.

### **Lessons learnt from others**

That use of feedback cards, drawing residents' attention to the way they are managing their waste, can be very cost effective;

The valuable role that home composting can play – Dr Williams drew attention to the ‘master composters’ scheme which can train local champions able to provide practical advice.

## **6. Recommendations**

That the Leader be informed that the ABC scheme as being rolled out throughout the District is achieving its objectives and that most residents have adapted to it well, with no evidence of health risks.

That the roll out of ABC phase 2 should continue on schedule.

That the current policy of allowing weekly collections to continue in exceptional circumstances be supported where the Council's professional officers deem that fortnightly collections are inappropriate. Such exceptional circumstances may include blocks of flats, residents sharing communal bins and dwellings with difficult front to rear access.

That all residents who have raised concerns with the Panel be contacted to discuss their concerns and reassess their individual circumstances.

To continue to encourage local residents to wrap putrescible waste and ensure that bin lids are kept closed in order to minimise the risk of smells, maggots, flies and rodent infestation. Side waste should be kept to an absolute minimum, preferably eliminated.

To retain the services of the Council's recycling advisers for a further period after the roll out of ABC phase 2 in order to continue the recycling education programme.

To offer to collect bins from within the curtilage of a property if notified that the householder was away on holiday, subject to this being a cost-effective proposal. Consideration should be given to offering this service for a trial period in order to gauge the level of take-up and the potential longer term cost implications.

That consideration is given to setting up a scheme for collection of glass for recycling from commercial premises in Winchester city centre.

That planning guidance is introduced to ensure that adequate space is allowed for bin storage as part of all new developments and extensions.

That a creative communications strategy be developed to encourage behavioural change, following the Phase 2 roll out, including the possible development of a strong network of community champions and use of feedback cards. This could include a competition to find a solution to the problem of green waste bags blowing away once they have been emptied and a sticker to remind residents of the importance of wrapping waste and closing bin lids

To investigate the use of anaerobic digesters as one method of dealing with domestic food waste.

To consider promoting the role that home composting can play, for example via the 'master composters' scheme.

The use of feedback cards, drawing residents' attention to the way they are managing their waste, should be considered.

That a small local annual user survey be introduced to provide regular feedback and help prevent minor concerns becoming major issues.

That a watching brief be kept on potential problems if there is very hot weather following the phase 2 roll out.

Cllr Richard Worrall

Cllr John Beveridge

Cllr Kate Chapman

Dr Iain Blair

Dr Ian Williams

Dr Tom Cherrett

9 July 2007