

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY 1 JUNE 2010

PROGRESS ON CHANGES TO DOMESTIC WASTE & RECYCLING COLLECTIONS - EFFICIENCY GAINS

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks to inform Members of the progress in implementing changes to the waste collection service, following a review into potential efficiency gains reported to this committee on 19 January 2010, to Executive on 29 January 2010 and approved by Council on 23 February 2010.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 During 2009/10 a Members Working Group supported by officers, examined the potential of making efficiency gains in the domestic waste collection service. Initially three key changes were identified:
- moving approximately 14,000 households from a weekly to an alternate weekly collection in line with the majority of households in Exeter;
 - moving from a 5-day week to a 4-day week; and
 - moving back alley collections to front gate collections.
- 2.2 Following an extensive public consultation process during which the proposal of moving back alley collections was strongly opposed, Members decided that the changes should be confined to extending alternate weekly collections and moving to a 4-day week.
- 2.3 Although initial indications from staff were that the 4-day week was favoured, it was reported to this committee and Council that this was subject to future negotiation with the trades union and staff, as it would fundamentally affect their terms and conditions of employment. It is also important to secure the co-operation of staff in order to achieve the successful implementation of the proposals. At this Committee, Executive and Council, Members agreed that the proposal should proceed with the support of staff.

3. OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS

- 3.1 It became apparent during meetings with staff and Unison that there was some opposition to the proposed 4-day week for a variety of reasons. These reasons included concern about commitments that would be affected by the longer working day, loss of overtime payments due to the reduction in bank holiday 'catch-ups', and concern about the increase in the size of the proposed rounds. Staff wished to view the proposed round structure before forming a view; it was agreed with Unison to hold an indicative ballot of all refuse crews after providing them with the relevant information.

- 3.2 The indicative ballot was held during the week commencing 26 April 2010. A large majority rejected the proposal of a 4-day week. The results were 43 rejecting the proposal, 6 in favour and 7 abstentions. Due to this result, managers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, decided not to pursue the 4-day option further at this stage. Subsequently however we have received an indication that staff wish to review their terms and conditions, therefore there is an opportunity to take a fresh look at the 4-day option alongside any other changes. The latest position will be reported verbally at committee.
- 3.3 Retaining the 5-day working week would mean that the estimated £18,000 per annum saving in reduced overtime payments would not be achieved and perhaps more importantly, neither would the significant reduction in collection disruption caused by bank holiday Mondays be removed. It would also mean that the 4-day week rounds model is redundant, and a new 5-day rounds model has to be formulated.
- 3.4 To some extent the current disruption caused by bank holiday 'catch-ups' can be lessened by carefully formulating a new 5-day rounds model, although there will still be a need to pay overtime for Saturday catch-up collections. The need to re-formulate the rounds over 5 days will place a significant time pressure on the implementation plan, however, the implementation date for the new rounds schedule of 20 September 2010 is still considered achievable providing that there are no unforeseen impediments such as the absence of a key officer.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 If staff cannot agree to work a 4 day week, direct budget savings of approximately £18,000 derived from saving on overtime payments for bank holiday Monday catch-up collections will no longer be attained in future years; however, the substantial savings and increased recycling rates to be obtained from extending the alternate weekly collection of residual waste will still be achieved.

5. RECOMMENDED

- (1) That Scrutiny Committee – Community note this report.

HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

S:PA/LP/Committee/610SCC1
18.5.10

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) Background papers used in compiling this report:

EFFICIENCY GAINS TO DOMESTIC REFUSE & RECYCLING COLLECTIONS – Report to Scrutiny Committee – Community 19 January, Executive 23 January