

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR 'SIMPLY WEEKLY RECYCLING'

Report of the: Transport & Waste Services Manager
Contact: Jon Sharpe
Urgent Decision?(yes/no) No
If yes, reason urgent decision required: N/A
Annexes/Appendices (attached): Annexe1: Overview of communications programme
Other available papers (not attached): None stated

REPORT SUMMARY

The Council will introduce new refuse and recycling arrangements, to be called 'Simply Weekly Recycling' in the spring of 2017. A comprehensive programme of activities to communicate this change will take place between now and then.

RECOMMENDATION (S)

The Committee is invited to note the overall programme of communications summarised herein.

Notes

1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.1 Recycling supports the Council's key priorities of Sustainability and Managing Resources.
- 1.2 Refuse and recycling is a flagship service that the Council provides to every household.

2 Background

- 2.1 'Simply Weekly Recycling' will be launched in the spring 2017.
- 2.2 This new service will focus on recycling and will be easier for residents to use. All collections will be made weekly (except for garden waste, which will remain a fortnightly, subscription-based service):



- 2.3 A key feature of the new scheme will be the switch-over of green and black wheelie bins. The larger, green bin will become the recycling bin and the smaller, black bin will become the refuse bin. This will be communicated as 'The Big Switch'.
- 2.4 It is vital that these new arrangements are communicated to residents, both in advance and at the time of the changes:
- 2.4.1 We must clearly explain to residents how the new arrangements will work, and what to put in each bin. Failure to do so would risk significant dissatisfaction and additional collection costs.
- 2.4.2 We must reach as many people as possible, both those who recycle now and those who do not, and communicate the benefits of recycling more using 'Simply Weekly Recycling'. Good communication of service changes always results in improved recycling rates, which are crucial to the future financial sustainability of refuse and recycling collections.
- 2.5 It is important that we communicate why refuse and recycling collections are changing, as well as how. Success will result directly from residents clearly understanding and wanting the great blend of convenience and benefits offered by 'Simply Weekly Recycling', as well as simply knowing how collections will work.
- 2.6 Alongside the recycling message, we must be clear about the need to collect as little refuse as possible. In 2015/16 Surrey County Council paid nearly £1.7 million to dispose of Epsom & Ewell's domestic refuse. Significantly, almost a quarter of this was waste was fully recyclable under our existing collection arrangements. Therefore, we must ensure that residents understand the high, and growing, cost of simply throwing recyclable waste into their refuse bins.

- 2.7 It is to be noted that the Surrey Waste Partnership is currently discussing how funding for recycling collections might change:
- 2.7.1 At present, Surrey County Council pays districts and boroughs an amount per tonne of recycling collected, called Recycling Credits. For Epsom & Ewell, that totalled some £570,000 in 2015/16.
- 2.7.2 However, Surrey County Council's Cabinet is to receive a report recommending that Recycling Credits should be replaced with a system which also charges districts and boroughs for a proportion of refuse disposal costs. Should such a system be agreed within the Surrey Waste Partnership, it could significantly increase borough and district costs if recycling is not maximised and refuse minimised.
- 2.8 Officers will continue to contribute to these discussions within the Surrey Waste Partnership, and will update Members accordingly should the current funding situation change.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The Committee is invited to note the communications programme summarised in Annexe 1. At the core of the programme is a series of roadshows, to directly engage with residents, explain the changes, answer questions and explore beliefs. We have good experience of this: before launching our current services in 2008/9 we spoke directly to around 3,000 residents at 23 roadshows, as well as presenting at many school assemblies and other talks. They were very popular and superbly effective.

4 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 4.1 As previously advised to the Committee, officers have provisionally set aside £60,000 for the delivery of the communications programme and launch of 'Simply Weekly Recycling'.
- 4.2 Without such funding, the programme would not be deliverable, putting the launch and subsequent success of 'Simply Weekly Recycling' at risk with potentially serious consequences for both the Council and residents.
- 4.3 Should further funding be deemed necessary e.g. if roadshows or launch are affected by bad weather and need to be rescheduled, officers will discuss with the Director of Finance accordingly.
- 4.4 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** An additional £30,000 growth is in the budget for the communications of the Simply Weekly Recycling for 2016/17. Due to the financial deficit an initial review of funding the extra £30,000 (to bring the total communication budget to £60,000) from within existing budgets will be undertaken. If this is unsuccessful then the in year 2016/17 position will be clearer at quarter 1 monitoring which may identify possible organisation wide underspends that could cover the communication costs.

5 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 5.1 The Environmental Protection Act 1990 allows the Council to direct residents as to how and when to present their waste. The Act requires that residents must be formally advised of any changes, such as the introduction of 'Simply Weekly Recycling'. Therefore, an appropriate notice will be incorporated within the launch information given to residents from spring 2017.
- 5.2 With reference to the potential changes highlighted in section 2.7, Surrey County Council has a legal duty to pay recycling credits unless an alternative arrangement is agreed.
- 5.3 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** It is important that the changes to waste and recycling collection arrangements are made and notified in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation.

6 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 6.1 Recycling supports the Council's Sustainability Policy. The proposed new service structure is forecast to lift the Council's recycling rate from its current level of 46% to 53%.

7 Partnerships

- 7.1 The Council works closely with the Surrey Waste Partnership to consider best practice in areas such as policy, communications and operations. In particular, literature generated for this programme will follow guidance developed by the Partnership.
- 7.2 As highlighted in section 2.7, the Surrey Waste Partnership is currently considering how funding for recycling collections may be modified. Surrey County Council supports an arrangement whereby boroughs and districts may also be charged for a proportion of refuse disposal costs. Officers will continue to contribute to these discussions and report to Members accordingly.
- 7.3 The procurement of a replacement transport fleet contract, including the vehicles that will deliver the new service, is taking place via the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) framework. The procurement is progressing well and on time.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 Failure to complete a comprehensive and considered communications programme, both before and at launch, would risk failure to achieve the required performance and cost-effectiveness of the service, as well as risking significant resident dissatisfaction.

- 8.2 To avoid this, officers have developed the comprehensive communications programme outlined in Annexe 1. It includes messages well ahead of, during and after launch. It focuses on a high level of direct engagement with residents and draws on experiences both within the long-established Epsom & Ewell officer team and across the Surrey Waste Partnership.
- 8.3 As in section 2.7, above, there is a risk that the Surrey Waste Partnership may agree revised funding arrangements for recycling collections, which may transfer some refuse disposal costs to districts and boroughs. Officers will contribute to these discussions and report to Members accordingly.

9 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 A comprehensive communications plan will underpin the launch of 'Simply Weekly Recycling'. This is designed to ensure that residents clearly understand the great benefits of 'Simply Weekly Recycling' as well as how it works. This includes 'The Big Switch' of green and black wheelie bins.
- 9.2 As well as recycling more, it is crucial for residents that we collect as little refuse as possible. This is supported by the proposals within this report.
- 9.3 Officers will contribute to Surrey Waste Partnership discussions on potential changes to the funding of recycling collections, and will report to Members accordingly.

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL