**GENERAL PUBLIC SERVICES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**9 MARCH 2017**

**PART I - DELEGATED**

**7. PROVISION OF BAGS FOR FOOD WASTE**

(DCES)

1. **Summary**

1.1 To review the provision of corn starch caddy liners for food waste and promote the use of plastic bags.

2. **Details**

2.1 Before October 2014 food waste was collected in the brown bin, along with garden waste. At this time the waste was processed at the in-vessel composting facility run by West London Composting.

2.2 Corn starch bags, displaying the ‘seedling’ logo, meaning they are certified to a standard whereby they would break down during the composting process, were accepted in the brown bin. Outlets across the district were sought and TRDC purchased bags to sell to these outlets who, in turn, could sell the bags to residents. This was deemed the best way at the time to ensure residents were using the correct bags as there was concern regarding contamination. Minute EX09/11 refers.

2.3 Each roll (52 bags) of corn starch liners costs TRDC approximately £1.10 to purchase from the manufacturer.  The outlets purchase these from TRDC for £1.60 per roll, generating an income to the Council of 50 pence per roll, and sell these to residents for £2.50.  The outlets are allowed to keep the difference, thus making 90 pence profit per roll.  Any rolls sold to residents via Three Rivers House generate an income of £1.40 per roll. Current outlets are listed in Appendix A. Upon request Enforcement Officers deliver boxes of bags to the outlets and Support Officers raise an invoice.

2.4 In October 2014, TRDC started collecting separate food waste as part of the weekly recycling service. The food is bulked and sent separately to an anaerobic digestion plant managed by Agrivert in Chertsey. However, more recently, the Authority’s food waste have been directed to the Coursers Farm AD facility, in London Colney. Anaerobic digestion treatment differs from in-vessel composting in that all packaging has to be removed at the start of the process to achieve the PAS110 standard. Plastic is lighter than corn starch, and produces a ‘cleaner’ plastic waste stream reducing the volume of residues which have to be disposed of.  Corn starch becomes ‘gloopy’ as food waste is stored in it, and organic matter tends to stick to it, thus increasing the amount of organic matter within the plastic waste stream. There is also the potential for the corn starch bags to stretch round the pre-treatment equipment, resulting in additional downtime and maintenance needs.

2.5 In January 2016 TRDC started advising residents that food could be placed in plastic bags (as well as continuing to state that corn starch was acceptable). Correspondence was sent to all outlets (Appendix B) so they were aware of this and an article, approved by Agrivert, was placed in Three Rivers Times (Appendix C) and issued as a press release. A reminder about how food waste can be wrapped was included in the 2016/17 collection calendar information leaflet, issued in November 2016.

2.6 In 2016/17 to date (up to the end of January 2017) 7,800 rolls have been sold, with an expenditure of £8,580. Income to date is £14,000. Officers have made 85 journeys of approximately an hour each time to sort, load and deliver these, costing £1,785 (officer time and vehicle use), as well as the time taken to raise invoices.

2.7 In 2015/16 a total of 3,122 tonnes of food waste was collected, with 1,538 tonnes being collected in the first half of the year (April-September). In 2016/17 during the first half of the year, 1,634 tonnes of food have been collected.

2.8 All refuse bins were stickered in February 2016 to remind residents that food, recycling and garden waste should not be placed in that bin (Appendix D). Officers will continue to promote this.

2.9 A quote for plastic bags gives a price of 36 pence per roll (52 bags).

2.10 WasteAware, the public face of the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, continues to promote awareness of food waste with the topic being a key focus of the 2016/17 work plan with officers keen to continue these messages into 2017/18. The subject of food waste is unlikely to fall off the agenda as it is one of the main material groups left in the residual bin that needs to be ideally reduced in the first place or diverted to composting or ideally anaerobic digestion. More and more Councils are considering separate food waste, alongside charging for garden waste, so TRDC will benefit from increased promotions on this subject.

3. **Options/Reasons for Recommendation**

3.1 One option is to continue to sell corn starch bags. This option would however mean residents are spending more than perhaps they need to, as plastic bags are cheaper. These bags are also not preferred by the AD plant. By continuing to sell these it may be harder to explain to residents that plastic is preferred, that residents are spending more than they need to and sends out mixed messages. The sale of these bags does however generate a small income to the Council.

3.2 The second option is to consider is to cease to purchase/supply corn starch liners to the outlets and instead direct residents to source their own bags (corn starch or plastic). Residents still wishing to use corn starch would be advised to purchase those readily available commercially. (Although Agrivert prefer plastic they understand that residents are used to corn starch and may still wish to use this type and wouldn’t expect us to place a total ban on their use). Plastic bags can be purchased more cheaply than corn starch and residents would be welcome to use carrier bags they have from their shopping (although due to the 5p bag charge there will no doubt be fewer bags in circulation than previously), or fruit, cereal or bread bags they may already have. Use of bags residents already have would be strongly publicised as this would remove the need for residents to purchase anything. This option will negate the need for officers to order and monitor stock levels, invoice the outlets and deliver the bags to outlets. Stock of corn starch bags is relatively low, therefore if the decision is taken to cease sales no future orders will be placed and outlets will be advised stock will be used up on a first come first served basis.

3.3 A third option is to consider supplying plastic bags to the outlets across the district. Each roll would work out 74 pence cheaper than corn starch for TRDC to initially purchase. If this option is chosen these bags could be sold to outlets for £1 per roll, with a view to outlets selling these to residents for £1.50 per roll. This option would require Enforcement Officers to deliver the bags and for the Support team to raise an invoice as they do now. It should be noted that supermarkets sell plastic bags very cheaply, for example 120 bags per roll for £1.18.

3.4 A fourth option would be to give residents plastic bags free of charge, although officers feel there would be little appetite for this. Costs would be at least £13,500 per annum to provide the bags, plus other costs such as delivery and officer time to manage the logistics.

4. **Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council’s agreed policy and budgets.

5. **Financial Implications**

5.1 Sales are expected to drop and it is anticipated the recommendations will be revenue neutral from 2017/18. Any changes in incidence will be reported in the future through budget monitoring.

5.2 Members’ attention is also drawn to the Alternative Financial Model (AFM) payment mechanism which HCC pays to the districts for reducing residual waste. If a barrier to placing food waste in the correct container is removed, and with increased promotions regarding food waste disposal, the food tonnage in the residual bin should decrease and TRDC will benefit from increased payment via the AFM.

6. **Equal Opportunities Implications**

6.1 **Relevance Test**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact? | No |
| Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required? | N/A |

7. **Staffing Implications / Community Safety / Legal / Public Health / Community Safety / Health and Safety**

7.1 None specific

8. **Environmental Implications**

8.1 By our encouraging residents to use plastic bags, the capture of food waste should increase. Plastic bags are cheaper and more readily accessible for residents which should remove one of the barriers preventing placing food waste out for collection.

9. **Customer Services Centre Implications**

9.1 Minor scripting changes will be required, which can be met within existing resources.

10. **Communications and** **Website Implications**

10.1 The current outlets need to be written to regarding the changes. They would be provided with relevant information to display for residents. The website will need to be updated as well as other promotional work including articles in Three Rivers Times, e-newsletters, social media posts and notices on Council notice boards. The explanation to residents will be that the process the food now goes through is totally different from the previous process and that there is no longer a need to purchase corn starch when plastic is cheaper. A further push can be given to residents about not placing food waste in their refuse bins. All promotions can be met within existing resources.

11. **Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications**

11.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at http://www.threerivers.gov.uk. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council’s duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

11.2 The following table gives the risks if the recommendation(s) are agreed, together with a scored assessment of their impact and likelihood:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Description of Risk | | Impact | Likelihood |
| 1 | Customers complain about the change | III | E |
| 2 | Negative press coverage | III | E |
| 3 | Food waste tonnages decrease | IV | F |
| 4 | Food waste tonnages increase and vehicle cannot cope | IV | F |

11.3 The above risks are plotted on the matrix below depending on the scored assessments of impact and likelihood, detailed definitions of which are included in the risk management strategy. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood are plotted in the shaded area of the matrix. The remaining risks require a treatment plan.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Likelihood** | A |  |  |  |  |  | Impact | Likelihood |
| B |  |  |  |  |  | V = Catastrophic | A = >98% |
| C |  |  |  |  |  | IV = Critical | B = 75% - 97% |
| D |  |  |  |  |  | III = Significant | C = 50% - 74% |
| E |  |  | 1,2 |  |  | II = Marginal | D = 25% - 49% |
| F |  |  |  | 3,4 |  | I = Negligible | E = 3% - 24% |
|  | I | II | III | IV | V |  | F = <2% |
| **Impact** | | | | | |  |  |

11.4 In the officers’ opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of treatment plans are reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

12. **Recommendation**

12.1 That Corn starch liners are no longer sold to outlets / residents and instead residents are directed to purchase or use their own bags (as per the second option, para 3.2);

12.2 That all outlets are written to advise of this and supplied with information to display for residents emphasising that plastic bags are preferred and to highlight the use of bags residents may already have.

12.3 That any fluctuation in income is dealt with via budget monitoring.

Report prepared by: Jennie Probert, Environmental Projects Officer

Data checked by: Malcolm Clarke, Services Manager

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Poor |  |
| 2 | Sufficient | **✓** |
| 3 | High |  |

**Appendices**

Appendix A – Current outlets

Appendix B - Correspondence sent to the outlets in January 2016

Appendix C - Article from Summer 2016 Three Rivers Times

Appendix D – Refuse bin sticker

**Appendix A – Current outlets**

* Three Rivers House, Northway, Rickmansworth, WD3 1RL
* Ark Limited/Melbourne Builders, 151a Uxbridge Road, Mill End, Rickmansworth, WD3 7DW
* Ark Building Supplies/Melbourne Builders, 80-82 Church Lane, Rickmansworth, WD3 8HE
* Abbots Langley Parish Council, Langley Road, Abbots Langley, WD5 0EJ
* Budgens, 59 High Street, Abbots Langley, WD5 0AE
* Abbots Home & Garden, 7 Langley Parade, Abbots Langley, WD5 0AB
* Chorleywood Parish Council, South Lodge, Chorleywood House, Rickmansworth Road, Chorleywood, WD3 5SL
* J & J May, Lower Road, Chorleywood, 8 Main Parade, Chorleywood, WD3 5RB
* Croxley Green Parish Council, Community Way, Croxley Green, Herts WD3 3SU
* Costcutter, 12 Scots Hill, Croxley Green, WD3 3AD
* Croxley Hardware, 43 Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green, WD3 3LS
* Sarratt Village shop, The Green, Sarratt, WD3 9XB
* Carpenders Park Post Office, 6 The Parade, Delta Gain, Carpenders Park, WD19 5BL
* Moor Park Post Office, 8 Main Parade, Moor Park, HA6 2HJ
* Watford Rural Parish Council, Oxhey Drive, South Oxhey, WD19 7SB

**Appendix B – Correspondence sent to the outlets in January 2016**

*Please be aware that we have agreement to start promoting that food waste can be wrapped in plastic bags in the food pods.  Including plastic does not affect the food recycling process and we hope that it will encourage more people to place out more food for recycling rather than placing it in refuse bins.  Residents will be able to place their food waste into plastic bags such as carrier bags, sandwich bags or bags that bread, fruit/vegetables come in for example (we will not accept black bags).  We are going to start promoting this over the coming weeks.  
  
We will still collect food waste in corn starch liners in the pods and many residents may still prefer to use these, however when our current stock runs out we may not be purchasing any more in to supply you.  We do however have quite a large stock at the moment so it might be sometime until we make this decision and we will update you in due course.  
  
I am sorry if you are disappointed with this however we really need to remove food waste from the general refuse and this is one of the best ways to increase take up of this scheme.*

*Yours faithfully*

*Jennie Probert*

**Appendix C – Article from Summer 2016 Three Rivers Times**

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**Appendix D – refuse bin sticker**

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