

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 7<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2001**

#### **1999/2000 AUDIT – BENCHMARKING REFUSE COLLECTION**

##### **Report by Director of Community Services**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the Council's performance as part of a Scotland-wide exercise and to invite the Council to confirm and approve a number of measures to be incorporated in an action plan to deal with matters highlighted by Audit Scotland.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In April 2000 Audit Scotland published "A Review of Councils' Refuse Collection Services" based on a study carried out by the Accounts Commission. This was intended to assist Councils to achieve best value in their refuse collection services.
- 2.2 All Councils have been provided with operational and financial benchmarking information and are expected to use this to challenge current levels of performance and take action to achieve standards of the best.
- 2.3 While the Council compared well throughout Scotland in most areas of performance, comment was made on the high percentage of pull-outs and the levels of sickness and absenteeism.
- 2.4 The foregoing and other matters were the subject of a letter to the Director of Community Services in which Audit Scotland set out a number of points and requested that the Council consider measures for dealing with these.
- 2.5 The detailed concerns are set out in Annex A to this report.

### **3. DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 The exercise presents an opportunity for the Council to review its current Policy on refuse collection and where appropriate make amendments.
- 3.2 During the last four years the Council's Policy has been subject of scrutiny by the Local Government Ombudsman and on each occasion, the Council's actions have been completely vindicated.

### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Annex contains some options which if implemented would assist in keeping some areas of expenditure within continued proper financial control whilst also offering a degree of flexibility in others.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Section 45 (1) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires the Council to provide a free service for the collection of household waste in its area. Section 46 however allows the Council to determine how the service will be delivered.

East Ayrshire Council has in the main adopted the wheeled bin system of refuse storage and collection where householders are invited place wheeled bins at designated collection point on specified days. Authority to designate collection points and specified days of collection remains with the Council.

## **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council's commitment to pursuing Best Value can be supported by a review of the refuse collection service at the present time.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 Following publication of "A Review of Council's Refuse Collection Services" by Audit Scotland in April 2000, the Council is invited to approve an Action Plan which will address a number of issues highlighted in the review.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 With regard to the options set out in Annex A, the Committee is invited to:-
- (i) confirm that the current collection Policy for domestic waste will be one wheeled bin plus up to six bags/bundles/items of household waste left at a collection point to be designated by the Council on a day to be specified by the Council;
  - (ii) note that the Director of Community Services in so far as practicable will establish and maintain a separate trading account for the commercial refuse collection service to ensure that the appropriate costs are recovered;
  - (iii) note that as part of the Council's corporate commitment to introduce activity based costing, the cost of providing individual refuse collection services will be assessed in so far as practicable;
  - (iv) to confirm meantime that special uplifts will continue to be provided for the collection of household waste free of charge;
  - (v) to confirm that assisted pull-outs will be given to any households where there is no able-bodied adult is residence and (where appropriate) medical certification will be provided by the householders;
  - (vi) note that in future all sickness/absenteeism reports to Community Services Committee will highlight separately the performances of loaders and drivers;

- (vii) note that the bonus scheme will be reviewed as part of the Council's implementation of Single Status and Job Evaluation;
- (viii) note that the introduction of kerb-side household waste recycling schemes in Fenwick and Mauchline suggest that waste recycling performances of around 10% are achievable;
- (ix) that the Committee recommend to Council the above recommendation if so approved; and
- (x) otherwise note the contents of the report.

William Stafford  
**Director of Community Services**

10<sup>th</sup> November 2000

WS/JFC/RRS

#### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Letter from Audit Scotland to Director of Community Services dated 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2000.
2. Letter from Head of Protective Services to Audit Scotland dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 2000.
3. Letter from Audit Scotland to Director of Community Services dated 26<sup>th</sup> October 2000.

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## ANNEX A

### EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

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Actions highlighted and options available for discussion (page/para numbers relate to the report published by Audit Scotland on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2000)

#### **6/2.4 – A local review is to be carried out to highlight and explain the reasons for the apparent higher cost of collection.**

Comment: A review has now been carried out which suggests that the Council's collection costs are somewhat higher than the average for Scotland, as a result of Council Policy to collect up to six bags/bundles/items of household waste left beside the wheeled bin on the specified day of collection. It has to be recognised that the Council is effectively collecting waste which in other authorities might well be brought to Civic Amenity Sites by householders themselves. In the latter case these costs would be identified separately. If the Council were to vary the current collection Policy (e.g. uplift only one wheeled bin on the specified day of collection) then the cost of collection would reduce, but other costs would undoubtedly increase (including the cost of dealing with fly-tipping).

It has to be recognised that the current Policy is well-received by the community and is a major contributory factor for refuse collection enjoying a good response when subject to the most recent resident survey (2000).

Options: The Committee could review the present Waste Collection Policy and either (1) confirm no change meantime or (2) vary the amount of waste (if any) to be collected beside wheeled bins on the specified day of collection.

Recommendation – no change in Policy.

#### **6/2.4 and 7/3.4 – a separate trading account is to be established for commercial refuse collection service to ensure that the appropriate costs are recovered.**

A separate trading account will be established from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001. It has been explained to Audit Scotland staff that while Community Services Department can identify the trading costs associated with the commercial waste collection service, the calculation will include a number of values which require to be estimated and subsequent analysis must take into account the potential for variation when the final figure is computed.

#### **6/2.5 – the Department is to contribute to the ongoing corporate initiative of introducing an activity based costing system to allow the cost of providing individual refuse collection services to be assessed.**

This work is ongoing at the present time and will be dealt with as the Council's Corporate Initiative progresses.

**8/4.4 – the Council is to review it's Policies on the types of refuse to be collected and review it's charging Policies for particular types of special uplift.**

At the present time the Council does not make charges for "special uplifts" of household waste which cannot be accommodated on the routine domestic refuse collection service (i.e up to six bags/bundles/items of household waste together with the wheeled bin). While some Councils in Scotland have introduced charges for this service (or limited the number of requests per annum) it has been observed that the number of requests reduces significantly but there has been some correlation with a perceived increase in fly tipping.

The Committee is invited to review it's Policy on the arrangements for special uplifts with a view to either (1) confirming the present arrangements or (2) considering the introduction of charges for special uplifts of household waste or limiting the number of requests for special uplifts of household waste per annum.

Recommendation – No change in Policy.

**9/5.3 – the Policy on and cost of the assisted pull-out scheme is to be reviewed, including the criteria to be used to determine entitlement to receive the service.**

The initial study found that East Ayrshire's pull-out rate (10%) is double the level expected in Scotland. A complete review, using existing criteria has been undertaken and the number of pull-outs has reduced to 9%.

At the present time the Council Policy is that assisted pull-outs will be given to any household where there is no able-bodied adult in residence and where there is dubiety on the fitness of any household, it is customary to seek medical certification.

Recommendation – No Change in Policy.

**11/7.2 – Future absence management reports to Committees are to provide summary details on how the position locally compares with the Commission suggested sickness absence targets of 5% for loaders and 4% for drivers.**

This proposal has already been addressed and will be implemented on all future quarterly reports to Community Services Committee. The current position for the last quarter is 3.98% for loaders and 9.17% for drivers. The higher than normal rate for drivers is due to medically certificated long term absence.

**12/7.5 – the Council is to monitor its Bonus Scheme in order to demonstrate that it provides improved value to the Council.**

Basic monitoring of the Bonus Scheme already exists. However this issue will be dealt in detail as part of the Council's implementation of Single Status and Job Evaluation.

**14/8.7 – all appropriate steps are to be considered to achieve the Government's targets for the recycling of waste.**

The Council has already demonstrated considerable progress in the introduction of kerbside household waste recycling schemes in Fenwick and Mauchline which suggest performances of around 10% being achievable. The Council must invest resources to ensure that targets can be met.

## **AGENDA**