

**STOCKPORT COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO EXECUTIVE MEETING – SUMMARY SHEET**

**Subject:** Waste Strategy – Improving Performance

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**Report to Executive Meeting**

**Date:** 12 November 2012

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**Report of:** (a) Executive Councillor (Public Realm)

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**Key Decision:** (b) ***NO / YES*** (Please circle)

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Forward Plan  General Exception  Special Urgency  (Tick box)

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**Summary:**

The report provides the Executive with an understanding of what further improvements the Council can make to its waste strategy to ensure that we maintain and improve our performance and financial advantage.

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**Comments/Views of the Executive Councillor:** (c)

I endorse the proposals set out in the report.

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**Recommendation(s) of Executive Councillor:** (d)

The Executive is asked to:

- Approve strengthening and reinforcing the ‘Right Thing, Right Bin’ communication programme that supports the promotion of changing resident’s recycling behaviour.
- Approve replacing the white sack with a weighted sack for the storage / collection of pulpables.
- Determine the methodology for recovering unauthorised black bins.
- Approve the methodology for reducing excess waste at properties that are not suitable for wheeled containers.
- Approve the introduction of dry recycling services to rural properties.
- Approve the amendment to section 16 of the Recycling & Refuse Collections policy as set out at paragraph 5.5.
- Determine the new level of fines for Section 46, as set out at paragraph 6.5.

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**Relevant Scrutiny Committee** (if decision called in): (e)

Environment & Economy

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**Background Papers** (if report for publication): (f)

There are none

Contact person for accessing  
background papers and discussing the report

**Officer:** Megan Black  
**Tel:** 0161 218 1410

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**'Urgent Business': (g)**                      ***YES / NO (please circle)***

**Certification** (if applicable)

This report should be considered as 'urgent business' and the decision exempted from 'call-in' for the following reason(s):

The written consent of Councillor \_\_\_\_\_ and the Chief Executive/Monitoring Officer/Corporate Director for Corporate and Support Services for the decision to be treated as 'urgent business' was obtained on \_\_\_\_\_ /will be obtained before the decision is implemented.

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## **WASTE STRATEGY – IMPROVING PERFORMANCE**

### **Report of the Service Director of Place Management**

#### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide the Executive with an understanding of what further improvements the Council can make to its waste strategy to ensure that we maintain and improve our performance and financial advantage.

#### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In October 2007 the Executive agreed a new waste collection strategy to address financial, legal, customer and environmental drivers for change. The strategy was based on a four bin system with a weekly collection of food waste.

- 2.2 At this time the Executive considered the local, national and European pressures to improve the waste collection service including:

- a national waste strategy target for recycling of 40% by 2010
- a major increase in the cost of waste disposal
- a new disposal levy that calculates the Council's cost on a 'pay as you throw' basis
- an escalator landfill tax and the threat of landfill penalties
- a need to move from manual to mechanical handling
- diminishing availability of landfill
- the need to tackle climate change
- residents desire for kerbside recycling of plastics and cardboard
- residents desire for wheeled bins
- the need to change the collection service to make best use of the new disposal arrangements

- 2.3 New services were phased in from May 2008 with the rollout of wheeled bins for pulpables and co-mingled materials to all suitable households. By November 2010 the waste collection strategy had been fully implemented with the rollout of 140 litre wheelie bins for residual waste and the weekly collection of food waste with garden waste. Stockport is now in the top five performing Councils in the country delivering outstanding levels of performance. Headline indicators include:

- Residual waste reduced by 40% over 2 years
- Recycling out turned at 63% for 2012/13
- Cumulative cost avoidance of £12.7 million since 2007
- Achieved a 5 year return on £6m of capital investment
- Top 5 performing recycling authority in the country
- Significant competitive financial advantage over other GM Authorities
- Efficiencies from the collection service of almost £2m released over the last three years

## Analysis of current performance

- 2.4 Recent results (March 2012) from a Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority (GMWDA) waste compositional analysis of the kerbside residual and recycling waste streams shows there is still room for improvement. Their analysis has provided us with a statistical snapshot of performance from 110 representative properties within Stockport.
- 2.5 The analysis showed that:
- Stockport has the lowest residual waste arisings at 4.06 kg/household/week (kg/hh/wk), significantly lower than the GM sample average of 7.80kg/hh/wk. Factors influencing residual waste arisings include education, bin size and frequency as the three authorities using 240ltr bins for a weekly residual collection had arisings more than double Stockport's (9.44kg/hh/wk to 10.74kg/hh/wk).
  - Stockport's recycling services were successful in capturing 86% of pulpables (blue bin), 89% of comingled (brown bin) and 85% of food and garden (green bin) waste. These capture rates exceed all other GM authorities participating in the survey.
  - In the black bin there was a noticeable amount of material present that was potentially recyclable. The most prominent being pulpable waste, where it was noted that over 65% of the paper and card material present in the black bin could have been recycled.
- 2.6 GMWDA have stated that it is their opinion that Stockport could have a recycling rate in excess of 70% if it can capture all of the recyclates that have been found in the black bin.
- 2.7 There is therefore a need to understand what further improvements the Council can make to its waste policies to ensure that maximum advantage is taken of the significant investment made in the service ensuring we can improve performance and maintain financial advantage over our GM neighbours. This is particularly important as other GM authorities change their policy to improve performance.
- 2.8 This report re-examines the drivers for change from 2007 and identifies the opportunities for further improvement and the policy changes to deliver them.

## **3.0 DRIVERS FOR CHANGE**

### **Financial driver for improvement**

- 3.1 In 2007 the financial arguments for improvement were powerful. They remain as valid now as they were then. Stockport Council is a waste collection authority. Our waste is delivered to a point specified by Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority (GMWDA), who then arrange for its disposal.
- 3.2 Stockport Council as a member of the GMWDA pays a waste disposal levy which is administered by the GMWDA. It is a complicated calculation based on a total contract charge which includes the unitary charge of the waste disposal contract and landfill payments which have to be made for the disposal of residual waste. The total charge is allocated out across the 9 authorities who are part of the GMWDA disposal contract on the basis of the tonnages across different categories of waste. Credits are received in the contract for pulpables (blue bins) and co-mingled (brown

bins) tonnages. This is to provide an incentive for authorities to increase their recycling rates. As well as benefiting from increased credits, more importantly, authorities receive a reduced share of the substantial residual waste charges.

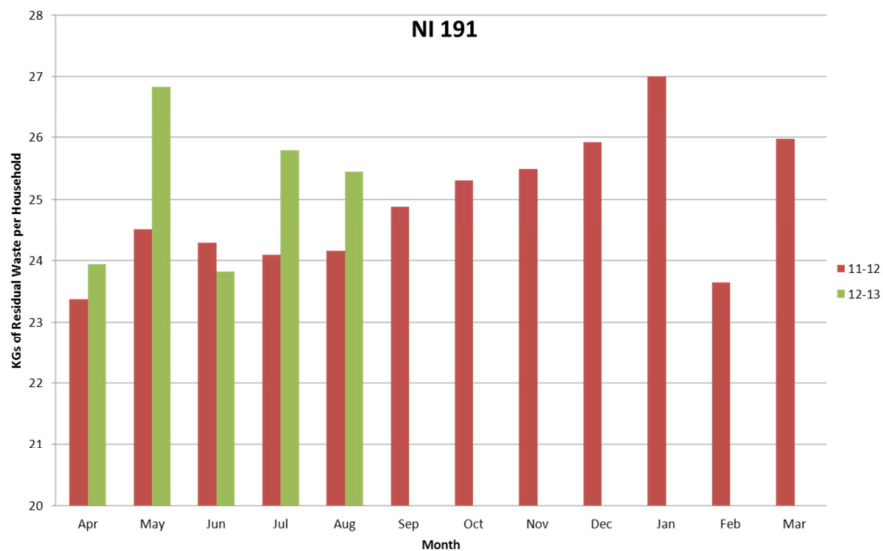
- 3.3 Our performance in diverting waste from the residual stream to recycling and composting is rewarded with significant financial benefits. Due to the overall projected growth in waste disposal costs, this will be a reduction in extra expenditure.
- 3.4 Stockport's share of the waste disposal bill in 2005/6 was 11%. Due to our excellent recycling performance over the last five years, our share of the bill has reduced to 9.86%. This year, Stockport was the only GM Authority to receive a reduction in its waste levy. See Table One. As other waste collection authorities in Greater Manchester start to improve their performance on recycling, (which they are now doing), then our share of the disposal costs will increase unless we can continue to improve.

Table One – Analysis of Levy by District 2011/12 & 2012/13 – January 2012

	11/12 Levy £000	12/13 Levy £000	% Share of 2012/13 Levy	% difference in year on year increase
Bolton	15,827	19,306	13.27%	21.98%
Bury	10,999	11,218	7.71%	2.00%
Manchester	23,810	27,733	19.06%	16.48%
Oldham	12,131	14,430	9.92%	18.95%
Rochdale	9,967	12,342	8.48%	23.83%
Salford	13,863	17,456	12.00%	25.92%
Stockport	14,651	14,347	9.86%	-2.07%
Tameside	11,628	14,460	9.94%	24.36%
Trafford	11,911	14,197	9.76%	19.19%
Total	124,786	145,490		

- 3.5 The Public Realm Service undertakes regular monitoring of the tonnages that are collected in the borough. In 12/13 this has shown a trend that is of concern – an increase in the residual waste collected through our kerbside services. See Figure One. For the reasons above it is important that this trend is arrested and action is taken to address it. The recommendations in the report particularly tackling excess waste and unauthorised black bins will significantly help tackle it.

Figure One – NI 191 The number of kilograms of residual household waste collected per household.



3.6 Maximising the amount of waste that can be diverted from the residual waste stream must remain an imperative.

### Customer driver for improvement

3.7 Back in 2007 there had been a longstanding desire from Stockport residents for a kerbside collection of additional recyclates such as plastics and cardboard. The rollout of new services allowed the Council to fulfil this desire. Wheelie bins have been delivered to suitable properties throughout the borough. The roll out of these improved services introduced card and plastic bottles recycling as well as extra storage capacity to residents in suitable properties.

3.8 It was always recognised that due to the mixed nature of Stockport’s housing, there would not be a single solution for the whole of the Borough. There are approximately 10,500 properties unsuitable for wheelie bins due to insufficient storage space e.g. flats above shops, no front storage space etc. These properties retained the recycling box for glass, cans, plastic bottles and foil and the white sack for paper, card and cartons.

3.9 The recycling box and reusable sack offer significantly less capacity for recyclable materials than wheelie bins. They are also less customer friendly to use. To support active participation by all householders, we must look at new solutions for these properties to increase recycling storage capacity and ease of use.

### Environmental drivers for Improvement

3.10 Now as in 2007, the major environmental challenge is climate change. This has not diminished over the last five years. Biodegradable waste in landfill rots and generates methane; a greenhouse gas 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Since 09/10 to 11/12 the Council’s waste strategy is estimated to have delivered a reduction of 38,282 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e.

## Legislative drivers for Improvement

- 3.11 Back in 2007, the legislative driver for change came as a result of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) encouraging Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs) to move from manual to mechanical handling in their waste collection operations. They were determined to improve national performance on a range of injuries associated with the waste industry from lifting and the use of sacks which can give rise to injuries from protruding sharp objects. The rollout of new services allowed the Council to meet this challenge. Our services, managed by SSK, have an excellent Health and Safety record.

## 4.0 OPPORTUNITIES

Taking into consideration the above drivers for change, particularly the need to maintain competitive advantage, the following improvements have been considered.

### Improved recycling facilities for properties not suitable for wheelie bins.

- 4.4 Having reviewed the options we have established that there are two options: larger ridged containers or weighted sacks.
- 4.5 Larger ridged containers – As many of the properties unsuitable for wheeled containers are smaller it was felt that a collapsible container would be more easily accommodated by householders. Furthermore, feedback from operations about larger ridged container was not encouraging as their size and weight would make them cumbersome for the crews.
- 4.6 Weighted sacks - Successfully used in Oldham, a weight is incorporated into the base of the sacks to prevent them being blown away after collection. They are made of a flexible plastic material and are similar in design to bags provided to some high rise flats in Stockport. They are a similar capacity to the current white sack but increasing their size is not an option as this would make them too heavy for residents when filled. When required, multiple sacks will be offered.
- 4.7 Trials have been undertaken with 16 properties on Rushton Gardens, Bramhall. At conclusion of the trial, 7 households completed questionnaires. All responses were positive; respondents commented that they were better than the white sack for pulpables. Interestingly 3 of the respondents said they did not recycle before being provided with these sacks. There were no operational issues during the trial.
- 4.8 A larger trial for 52 properties on Shaw Road South was also undertaken. 31 properties participated in the trial. 14 surveys were returned. Reflecting the smaller trial, respondents preferred them to the white sack for pulpables. 5 of the respondents did not recycle before being provided with these sacks. There were no operational issues during the trial.
- 4.9 For pulpable waste, reusable sacks will improve storage and reduce the likelihood of the sacks blowing away. Capacity will be similar, however, like the blue bins; a resident will be able to request additional sacks. If agreed the Public Realm Service will use an underspend from 11/12 to pay for the weighted bags.

- 4.10 For comingled waste, the current black box is proving a suitable container and continues to be widely used by many residents. Capacity is currently sufficient for most households however this may be restrictive to some larger families. The option of a second free box is available.

#### Recovery of Unauthorised Black Bins

- 4.11 Waste put in the black bin is not recycled and is landfilled which is much more expensive than recycling, currently each tonne of waste that is not recycled that could go in either the blue or brown bin costs the Council £186 a tonne (12/13 costs), lost income (£25) and cost to send to landfill (£161).
- 4.12 Black wheelie bins for non-recyclable waste were rolled out to all suitable properties in November 2010. Where a household claims that they have insufficient capacity to store their waste the Council has a process to determine if maximum recycling is taking place. If the household are recycling and meet certain criteria, the Council will provide an additional container free of charge.
- 4.13 Since they were rolled out, we have received around 1000 requests (less than 1%) for replacement black bins. Many of these are because residents have had their black bin stolen. It is believed that a number of properties have acquired an additional (unauthorised) container. Unauthorised black bins impact on the Council's waste disposal costs as residents recycle less and dispose more.
- 4.14 Where abuse of the current policy occurs, the Council needs to challenge it. A method to retrieve these unauthorised containers is required. Two potential options are outlined below:
- 4.15 **Option A – Remove unauthorised containers**  
Remove unauthorised containers on collection day and post a letter explaining why the container has been removed, advising them how to apply for an additional container.

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Quick and efficient.	Potential conflict for staff removing containers.
Reduces Council waste disposal costs.	May need to redeliver containers if eligibility criteria for an additional container are met.
	Not possible at general collection points.

- 4.16 **Option B – Give option to authorise containers**  
Post a letter and an application form for additional capacity asking the resident to apply for a container and complete a waste diary within 21 days or the container would be removed.

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Less confrontational for staff.	Fewer containers will be removed.
No redelivery of authorised containers required.	Lesser impact on waste disposal costs.
	Not all containers may be presented.
	Not possible at general collection points.



- 4.17 There are 110,000 properties with black wheelie bins. Every property would be programmed for a visit (this will take a number of months to complete). Officers will then recover unauthorised containers as per the option chosen.

#### Tackling excess waste at properties that are not suitable for wheeled containers

- 4.18 Since the 1st November 2010 when the new waste collection arrangements came into effect there have been a small number of residents putting excess waste out for collection. Excess waste from properties suitable for wheelie bins has been successfully tackled by education, supported by the 'Right thing, Right bin' borough wide campaign.
- 4.19 We are however finding properties that are not suitable for wheeled containers that are presenting excess waste. Current policy permits them to present two refuse sacks per scheduled collection; this is in addition to their recycling waste containers (black box, white paper sack, external food waste caddy). Despite some improvement there remain a small number of areas across the borough where excess bags continue to be presented. A methodology for tackling these areas is proposed below.
- 4.20 The Council collects this excess waste in order to keep the streets clean. However, this sends out the wrong message to residents reinforcing their behaviour and is likely to be the most influencing factor in the problem remaining.
- 4.21 A method to support more recycling and reduce residual waste from properties that are not suitable for wheeled containers is required.

Proposed methodology. A small area of properties in need of support would be selected. Every household will be provided with enough stickers for a 12 week period. Residents would be asked to present sacks for collection with this sticker.

- 4.22 Stage 1 – Data collection – prior to trial starting.  
Participation rates will be measured for all services.
- 4.23 Stage 2 – Education and monitoring – one week prior to the project starting, every house in the targeted area will be visited (Evening and daytime door knocking).
- Key messages:
    - Has the household got the correct and necessary waste receptacles?
    - Do they understand and use the calendar?
    - Inform the householder of all the services on offer and explain how the services work and reiterate the messages in the borough wide campaign.
    - Deliver stickers and inform the household that any bags presented without stickers will not be removed between collections, that the area will be monitored and enforcement action taken.
    - Ask the householder if they understand what they need to do to separate and present their waste for collection.
- 4.24 Stage 3 – Collections within the 12 week period.  
Any sack presented without stickers will be left by the crews and investigated as described below. Additional stickers would be given to residents who meet the Council's policy for additional capacity. Officers will monitor area before and after

collection crews arrive at site and investigate excess bags and note levels of put out for recycling.

- 4.25 Once the educational support set out in stage 2 above was completed, if excess waste is found we will serve appropriate enforcement notices with a cover letter to every property in the target area. The letter will say - we have cleared the waste today - do not repeat this offence and when we will be in the area to discuss the issues, provide advice and answer questions.

#### Introduce Recycling to Rural Properties

- 4.26 The Council's current policy states that 'In rural areas where the Council cannot maintain economic and efficient collections to specific properties, recycling services will not be offered to those affected householders. Whilst we would encourage the householder to recycle using the bring sites infrastructure, until such time that we can provide a recycling collection service the householder would be able to place such items in with the refuse.'
- 4.27 There are approximately 270 rural properties in the Borough that are not currently served by a kerbside collection of recycling. In 11/12 these rural properties produced 187 tonnes of refuse.
- 4.28 The introduction of a Pulpables (Blue) and Multi Material (Brown) collection to these properties whilst maintaining a weekly collection of refuse would cost approximately £9k per annum.
- 4.29 If the rural properties matched the 'dry' recycling rate produced by the rest of the borough 27% then disposal costs would reduce by just over £9k.
- 4.30 The separate collection of garden & food waste has been considered. However, there are 'unreasonably high' costs associated with collecting it separately from rural properties due to the specification of vehicle required to meet animal by-product regulations. The cost could not be offset against any disposal savings. Therefore it is recommended that the weekly collection of refuse would be maintained.

#### Conclusion

- 4.31 A re-examination of the environmental, legal, customer and financial drivers on waste disposal / collection has identified opportunities to maintain and improve performance and competitive advantage. The most cost effective way for the Council to deliver these opportunities is by:
- Promotion of all recyclates. In particular, paper and card should be undertaken regularly on a borough wide basis to further improve capture rates.
  - Replacing the white sack with a weighted sack for the storage / collection of pulpables.
  - The recovery of unauthorised black bins.
  - Reducing excess waste.
  - Introducing dry recycling services to rural properties.

## 5.0 COLLECTION POLICY

- 5.1 The Recycling & Refuse Collections policy was reviewed and updated for new services and approved by the Executive in November 2010. Given that the four bins system has been operational for eighteen months a review of the policy has now been undertaken. The following changes are recommended to improve performance and deliver a cost effective service.

### Missed Collections

- 5.2 Currently Council policy states that 'where a container has been presented correctly and has not been collected then if the Council is notified of the mistake before 13.00 hours on the collection day then the refuse and or recycling container will be emptied that day. For notifications received after 13.00 hours on collection day will be dealt with the next week when the collection crews are back in the area. In these circumstances residents will be asked to return the refuse and or recycling containers to their property until the collection. The Head of Service has discretion in considering extenuating circumstances.'
- 5.3 Since November 2010 waste collections have been undertaken in 'zones'. This means the contractor collects in larger areas of activity in one area of the borough each day. Working in this way has released significant financial and operational efficiencies. The existing requirements to rectify 'missed collections' reported before 13.00 the same working day has in practice created some uncertainty and offers limited value to residents. We are also finding that residents are not reporting missed collections in a timely manner following the scheduled collection, on rare occasions waiting up to two weeks to make their claim.
- In May 2012, 85% of reports of missed collections were logged within 3 working days (516 out of 606 reports).
  - In June 2012, 84% of reports of missed collections were logged within 3 working days (504 out of 600 reports).
- 5.4 In practice Stockport Direct cannot log missed collections on the day of collection (as many households do not have a collection before 13.00) unless there is confirmation that the vehicle has already been in the area and therefore the collection is missed, this is because the crews may still be collecting in the area and may not have actually collected from the property. As there can be up to 27 vehicles in the same collection zone on the same day each week, householders can see a vehicle drive past their property and (as the vehicles look similar) feel that they have been missed, when the vehicle is actually collecting a different waste type.
- 5.5 The Executive will be asked to amend the missed collection policy to: 'Where a container has been presented correctly and has not been collected by 18.00 hours on the scheduled collection day then if the Council is notified of the mistake within three working days of the scheduled collection it will be dealt with the next week when the collection crews are back in the area. The Head of Service has discretion in considering extenuating circumstances.'

## **6.0 POWERS REGARDING PRESENTATION OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE FOR COLLECTION**

- 6.1 Local Authorities can take enforcement action against householders who fail to comply with the requirements laid down in a section 46 Notice issued by a Local Authority, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA).
- 6.2 Our policy is to educate before we consider enforcement. Since April 2007 we have served approximately 30 fixed penalties and prosecuted 5. All 5 prosecutions resulted in a guilty plea or were found guilty in their absence. These have been extreme cases. In almost all cases the issue relates to bags of waste left out for days or in the wrong place where they will not be collected from. It is only in the most extreme cases where education and information has failed that a fixed penalty is considered and even then the householder is invited in for an interview to explain their non-compliance with the section 46 Notice before a decision is made to serve fixed penalty or not.
- 6.3 The Government have reviewed the penalties under section 46. Our fines for section 46 notices are set at £100 or £75 for early payment. The changes to the level of fine would not significantly impact on Stockport Council as we use a robust education and information process serving few fixed penalties and if we need to issue a fine we apply the Code for Crown Prosecutors before considering a fixed penalty.
- 6.4 Legislation has brought the following changes into effect:
- The range for fixed penalties applying in relation to section 46 EPA will be reduced from £75 - £110 to £60 - £80.
  - Early payment discounts were possible, but the amount paid could not be less than £60. This amount has been amended to £40.
  - If the local authority does not specify the amount of the penalty the default amount has reduced from £100 to £60.
- 6.5 The Executive will be asked to determine the new level of fines for Section 46 offences at £80, with an early payment discount of £40.

## **7.0 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

- 7.1 The Public Realm Service has considered the impacts of the proposed changes on its existing EIA for waste collections. No revisions to the existing assessment have been determined as a result of the changes proposed.

## **8.0 ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SCRUTINY**

- 8.1 The Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee considered the report at their meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012 and their comments were:
- It was requested that the recovery of unauthorised black bins be undertaken with a 'light touch'.

- Support was given for Option B with regard to the recovery of unauthorised black bins.
- Reductions in landfill arising from the mechanical biological treatment plant at the Bredbury Household Waste Recycling Centre. Members praised the visit to the facilities which had been undertaken in August this year.
- The continuing need to educate and raise residents' awareness of the importance of recycling was raised, as well as what items could be recycled.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATION - EXECUTIVE**

9.1 The Executive is asked to:

- Approve strengthening and reinforcing the 'Right Thing, Right Bin' communication programme that supports the promotion of changing resident's recycling behaviour.
- Approve replacing the white sack with a weighted sack for the storage / collection of pulpables.
- Determine the methodology for recovering unauthorised black bins.
- Approve the methodology for reducing excess waste at properties that are not suitable for wheeled containers.
- Approve the introduction of dry recycling services to rural properties.
- Approve the amendment to section 16 of the Recycling & Refuse Collections policy as set out at paragraph 5.5.
- Determine the new level of fines for Section 46, as set out at paragraph 6.5.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are none.

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Megan Black on telephone number 0161 218 1410 or alternatively email [megan.black@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:megan.black@stockport.gov.uk)