

**Committee:** Scrutiny 2  
**Date:** 1 October 2003  
**Agenda Item No:** 4  
**Title:** Members Home Computing  
**Author:** John Mercer (01799) 510421

### **Summary**

- 1 This report provides an update on the implementation of new IT facilities for members and suggests ways that the project could be taken forward.

### **Background**

- 2 IT facilities were first provided to Members in September 2000. The majority of Members of the last Council regularly used the system. Uttlesford was one of the first district councils to provide such facilities.
- 3 The original system relied upon connections, via standard BT lines and a Cable & Wireless managed service, to the Council's internal network. In order that the speed of connection was satisfactory, Citrix 'thin-client' technology was utilised.
- 4 At the meeting of Scrutiny 2 on 2 April 2003 a number of Members raised concerns about the operation of the IT system. These complaints were not new, and most often centred on the unreliability of the system. Although not all Members were effected by poor system performance, those living in rural areas seemed particularly badly served. This was probably because the local telephone exchange didn't cope well with the Council's Citrix technology. However, because of the number of suppliers involved (BT, Cable & Wireless, Citrix etc) it was almost impossible to pinpoint the root-cause of problems.
- 5 Agreement was reached as part of the 2002/03 budget setting process to install a replacement system. The installation was to form part of a larger project to upgrade website facilities to meet the demands of e-government. A working solution was drawn up by the E-Government Task Group and was the subject of several committee reports. The new system is similar to that used by many private sector organisations for remote workers. Its key features are:
  - i) Members access an Intranet (a secure website) via a secure link from the Internet. Access is available from any PC, anywhere in the world.
  - ii) Members can access email either from the Internet using a cut-down version of Outlook (known as 'webmail') or via a secure

connection (known as a VPN). The VPN connection provides access to full Outlook facilities and also enables members to work on email 'off-line' if so required. This was a facility that a number of Members had previously requested.

- iii) The system is browser-based, which should be familiar to anyone with computer experience.
- iv) By using the BT Anytime service, call charges are fixed. Previously, large telephone charges were being incurred. It is calculated that charges will be reduced by around £15,000 per annum. This has enabled other parts of the project to be funded.

### **Implementation of the new system**

6 A considerable amount of work has had to be carried out by staff to get the new system operational. Prior to the May elections the following work was necessary:

- i) A second Microsoft Exchange server was installed, primarily for this project. As part of this installation Microsoft Outlook and Webmail were also installed.
- ii) Specialist security software was installed. This software allows authorised users to access Council services, whilst denying access to unauthorised individuals.
- iii) Dual web servers have been installed to improve reliability and system performance.
- iv) A new Members' Intranet was designed and built.

7 Since the May elections the following actions have taken place:

- i) The system was provided in test to two Members, feedback was provided and changes made where appropriate.
- ii) Eighteen laptops and printers were reclaimed from former members. A number of items needed repairing. Laptops were also returned by the twenty four re-elected members and any files stored on them copied to CD or floppy disc. The laptops could not be re-issued until sufficient machines had been returned. This process delayed the project for a number of weeks. Once machines were ready to be re-issued, arrangements were made with all members to pick up new machines and receive basic training on the new system.
- iii) The training needs of new members were identified, quotations were obtained from training providers, dates arranged and the training delivered.

- iv) Permission was sought from new members for BT lines to be installed and arrangements made for the installations to take place. BT Openworld accounts were also set up for most members – these accounts provide virtually unlimited Internet access for a fixed monthly charge.

- 8 By early July all Members were contactable via their Uttlesford email address and shortly afterwards all members had access to the new services.

### **Post Implementation Experiences**

- 9 Initial feedback has been obtained from Members, both informal and via telephone and email follow up. It was found that Members are generally happy with the system, although some teething problems have been experienced. These have largely been resolved. However, some members have complained that the system is slow, at least in comparison to the Citrix system or their own Internet connection. Particular criticism has been levelled at opening and downloading large email attachments. Some users are also not happy with features of Webmail, particularly where its functionality falls below that of the full version of Outlook.

### **Further proposed actions**

- 10 Officers are proposing the following actions to take the project forward:

#### ***To improve performance issues:***

- i) Install broadband, where available. This will speed up system performance, for example, when opening large email attachments. Initial research has identified that about twenty five Members will be able to receive broadband by the end of this year.
- ii) Remind staff to limit the size of email attachments wherever possible.
- iii) Encourage greater use of the Intranet for posting information, as an alternative to emailing larger documents to several Members.
- iv) Upgrade or replace laptops and printers. As there is no budget presently available, this item would need to be included in the draft 2004/05 IT Programme.

#### ***To overcome objections to webmail functionality***

- v) Encourage more use of the VPN connection to access the full version of Outlook. The connection is already set up on the laptops. This will also enable Members to work on their email off-line.

#### ***Other proposed enhancements***

- vi) Upgrade CMIS, the committee management system, once the supplier is happy that the new release is working correctly (this release has

been put back several times). Training will then be provided to Members.

- vii) Offer further general training. Officers will arrange a number of informal 'drop-in' sessions before committee meetings where members can discuss issues and queries with IT staff. Formal training courses will also be arranged where requested.

- 11 Comments from this Committee are invited on the programme of further proposed actions.

Background Papers: None

**Committee:**                    **Scrutiny 2**

**Date:**                            **1 October 2003**

**Agenda Item No:**        **5**

**Title:**                            **Member involvement in the Planning Process**

**Author:**                        **John Mitchell (01799) 510450**

### **Summary**

- 1 This report sets out how Members are involved in the planning process. Members are extensively involved in the formulation of policy through the Local Plan process, which it is then the duty of the Development Control Committee to implement, either through the determination of planning and other applications or through the enforcement of breaches of planning control. The report commences with the national picture then works its way down to the local level.

### **Background**

- 2 National planning policy is formulated by central government, although there is no National Plan as such. Government policy is set out in various Planning Policy Guidance Notes, White Papers, Ministerial statements and Regional Planning Statements. The Council is formally consulted on some of these and responds through the Environment and Transport Committee. The most recent example is the Planning Green Paper, a consultation on proposed changes to planning legislation, which was reported to the Development Control and Licensing Committee and the E&T Committee before the views of both Committees was forwarded to the ODPM.
- 3 Regional Planning Policy is formulated by the various Government Offices for the Regions – in our case the Government Office for the East of England (GoEast) which is based in Cambridge. Regional Planning Policy (the

Regional Spatial Strategy) is currently being reviewed and the Council will be consulted later on in the year. It is not involved in the formulation of policy but will be asked to comment on the proposals. There is Member representation on the regional Planning Body.

- 4 The Structure Plan is prepared by the County Council and has to conform to the Regional Strategy. It sets the broad framework for development in the County and sets targets for each District covering such topics as housing numbers, employment land etc, as well as setting general policies for control of development. The District Council is consulted at an early stage and at formal stages throughout its progress to adoption, and may make representations at the Examination in Public. Responses are made by the E&T Committee. (The Planning Bill currently progressing through Parliament proposes the abolition of Structure Plans and their absorption into a new system of Regional Spatial Strategies prepared by the Regional Planning Bodies and Local development Frameworks prepared by the District Councils. All work on the proposed review of the Essex Structure Plan has now stopped. The current Structure Plan was adopted in 2002 and runs until 2011.)
- 5 The Local Plan, prepared by the District Council, translates the broad strategies of the Structure Plan into proposals on the ground. It has to comply with the Structure Plan. It is one of the most important policy documents produced by the Council. There is extensive involvement by Members in the formulation of the local plan policies and at the various statutory stages of public participation as the plan progresses through the legislative procedure. Each stage requires Member approval, initially by full Council and thence via the E&T Committee. This is shown on the attached flow chart. The scope for members to influence the Plan is considerable but certain aspects are fixed. For example, Members can direct the distribution of housing but not the overall number that have to be enabled in the plan period.
- 6 The Plan cannot be adopted as formal policy without a public inquiry, held by an Inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate. Members with individual concerns can make their views known at this stage.
- 7 Following the Inquiry the Inspector will report back to the Council and make recommendations. These are reported back to Members and there may be a further round of public consultation on the modifications that are proposed before the plan can be formally adopted, although the Council is not obliged to accept any of them.
- 8 The Local Plan and the Structure Plan together form the Development Plan. Implementation of the policies of the Development Plan is via the determination of planning applications and through the enforcement of planning control. This is carried out by the Development Control Committee. Planning legislation requires all applications to be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The DC Committee has a quasi-judicial role and is thus not involved in the approval or adoption of planning policies. Development Control is probably the area of planning which most people will

come into contact with, and is an activity which creates considerable public involvement, with comments on every planning application being actively sought and reported. There is often scope for a proposed development to be amended considerably in the light of local comments, but often the principle of development has already been determined through the development plan process. It may be argued that the opportunity for effective and creative participation comes at the earlier stages of the planning process and occurs once every 5 - 10 years.

- 9 In addressing individual planning applications Members should have regard to the Code of Good Practice. Because Development Control is a quasi-judicial process Members have to be seen to be impartial and not to express an opinion until they have heard all sides of the debate at the Committee meeting. A comparison may be drawn with a Judge who states publicly that a Defendant is guilty prior to the trial. Probity however is a matter for the whole Council and should not form part of a Best Value Review.
- 10 The final stage at which members may become involved is in planning appeals. These are made to the planning inspectorate and are determined by a Planning Inspector. They can be held by written representation, informal hearing or public inquiry, and are usually held over refusals of planning permission. There is also a right of appeal against conditions or if a decision has not been made within 8 weeks. Members may make their views known at appeals.
- 11 The attached chart sets out the various stages where Members can be involved in the planning process. It is not a definitive representation of the process.

### **Master Plans**

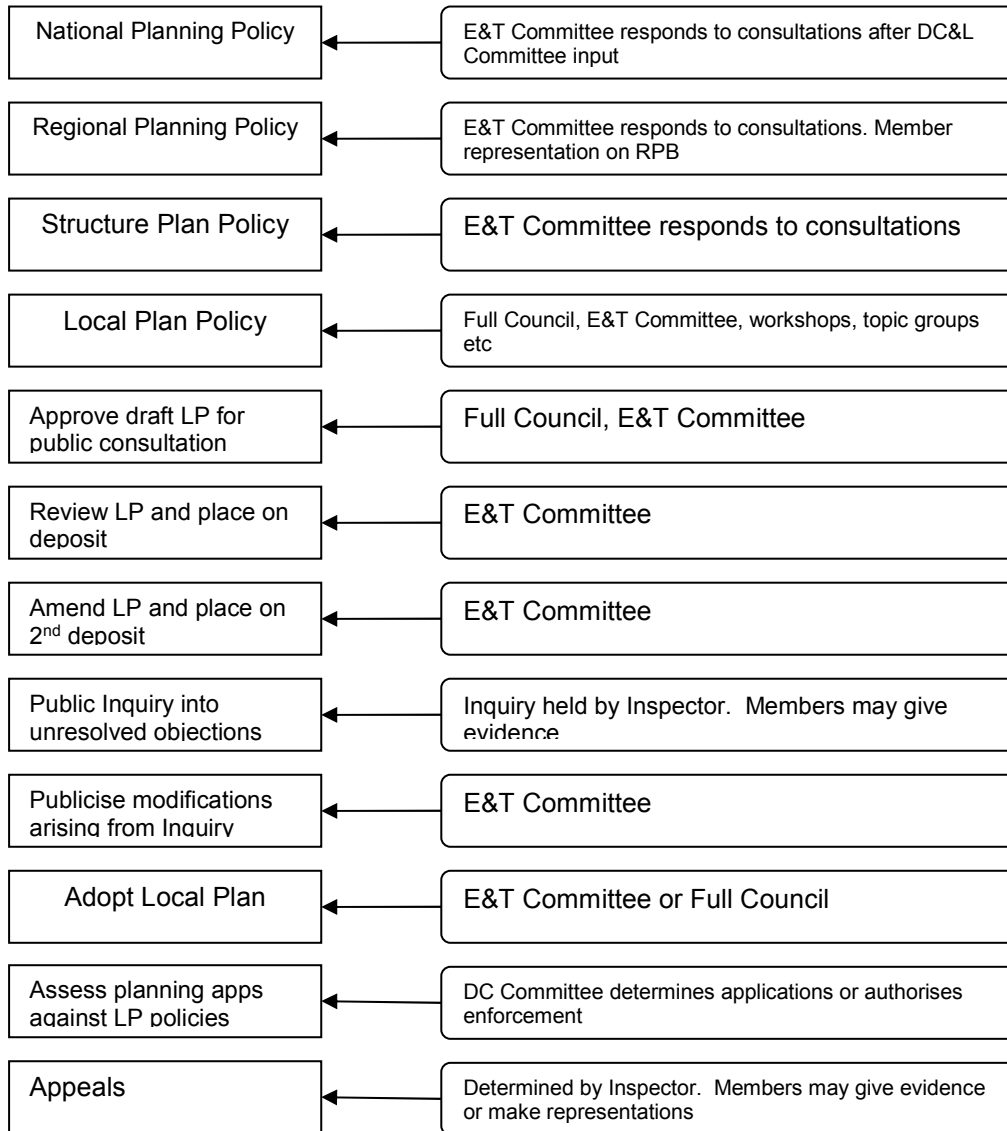
- 12 Master Plans are prepared for larger developments of housing and employment uses. They set out the overall vision for the development and how it will be achieved. They are prepared by the Developer and are then assessed by Officers in the light of the local plan policies prior to being reported to the E&T Committee for approval. They should not be confused with *Development Briefs* which are prepared by the Council for individual sites where a comprehensive approach is necessary. A brief is currently under preliminary preparation for the Council-owned site at Great Dunmow. A Development Brief was also prepared for the regeneration of the Eastern Sector in Great Dunmow.

### **Recommendation**

That the report be noted and used as a basis to inform discussion as the best value review progresses

Background Papers: none

## Chart Summarising Member Involvement in the Planning Process



**Committee:** SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

**Date:** 1 October 2003

**Agenda Item No:** 6

**Title:** Work Programme for Scrutiny 2 Committee 2003/04

**Author:** Ian Orton (01799) 510402

### Summary

- 1 This report contains details of the Work Programme for Scrutiny 1 Committee during 2003/2004. The Work Programme was suggested at the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2003 meeting of Scrutiny 2 Committee and has been split into sections to be considered during the three meetings of Scrutiny 2 Committee during 2003/20
  
- 2 **Background**  
  
 During the 9 July 2003 meeting of Scrutiny Committee 2 Committee Members were asked to develop a Work Programme of issues that Scrutiny 2 Committee should consider during the municipal year.
  
- 3 The following areas were requested to be included during the Work Programme Three meetings of Scrutiny Committee 2 remain during 2003/2004 and details of which meeting will consider which items from the Work Programme is included below.

Work Programme 2003/04	Date of Committee 1	Comments
Best Value Process	3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2003	
Service & Financial Planning		
Comprehensive Performance Assessment Process		
Licensing		
Sponsorship	4 <sup>TH</sup> February 2004	
Budget Monitoring Process		
IT Services		
Community Support Officers		
Decriminalisation of Parking Control	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2004	
Best Value Process		



- 4 This is a balanced Work Programme and will give Scrutiny 2 Committee the opportunity to scrutinise both policy and service delivery within the authority.

RECOMMENDED that the Work Programme set out in paragraph 3 of the report is agreed.

**Committee:** All Committees of the Council  
**Date:** September to October 2003  
**Agenda Item:** 7  
**Title:** Performance Management System:  
**Author:** Ian Orton (01799) 510 402

### Summary

- 1 The authority introduced a limited form of Performance Management two years ago based on the quarterly reporting of sixteen Best Value Performance Indicators to Corporate Management Team. This approach made a lot of sense at the time because it used data that the authority was already collecting.
- 2 However as part of the audit of the Best Value Performance Plan for 2001/02 the District Auditor requested the council to:  
*Consider whether quarterly monitoring of performance information is providing a comprehensive picture of progress.*
- 3 In addition the CPA Corporate Self Assessment asks:  
*Do Members and managers have the right mechanism and information to enable them to both manage and measure effectively?*
- 4 To meet the above the authority needs to strengthen the range of Performance Information and report this on a regular basis to both Members and managers.

### Background

- 5 To achieve this a comprehensive performance system has been developed using around 60 performance indicators that are already collected within the authority. A copy of these indicators is attached at Appendix A. The revised system builds on existing good practice but has been extended to include all the sections within Uttlesford District Council.

- 6 Members will note that the system provides a snap shop of both the service and corporate health of the council. In addition the system will measure the requirements for our Public Service Agreements with Essex County Council. The performance information will be reported quarterly to Members via Scrutiny One and Two and to managers via Corporate Management and Service Management Team. Information will also be shared throughout the council and with our partners via our monthly Policy & Performance Newsletter.
- 7 The format for reporting the performance information is important. To keep the process simple and straightforward it is recommended that the reporting of Performance is linked to a Traffic Light System. All performance measures will have a quarterly target and the reporting will be based:

*Green for On Target to achieve agreed Performance Target*  
*Amber for 10% slippage from agreed Performance Target*  
*Red for more than 10% from agreed Performance Target*

- 8 This report is being circulated to all Committee's of the council so that both the Policy and Scrutiny processes have the opportunity to comment on the Targets, Traffic Light System and methodology for the future. The report is linked to the piloting of the process and a further report outlining any changes to the process will be brought back to all Committees in the early New Year. The next stage of the Performance Management system will outline making use of the data to improve performance within the authority.

RECOMMENDED that:

- 9 The comments of Members are sought on the Range of Performance Measures, Performance Targets and use of a Traffic Light System.
- 10 Note that comments from Committees will be incorporated into a report on Performance Management for 2004/05. This report will be referred to all Committees in the early New Year.









**Committee:** Scrutiny 2  
**Date:** 1 October 2003  
**Agenda Item No:** 8  
**Title:** BEST VALUE REVIEW OF REFUSE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING SERVICES  
**Author:** Richard Secker (01799) 510580

**MEMBERS:** Councillor V Pedder (Chairman), E Abrahams and S Flack  
**Officers:** Diane Burridge, Beth Hodge, David Maidman (Verdant), Ron Pridham, Val Rogacs and Richard Secker.

### Summary

- 1 This report summarises the progress to date of the Best Value Review and brings together information obtained from the extensive consultation surveys and comparative studies which will provide some of the changes which the Improvement Plan will deliver.

### Progress to date

- 2 Since the last report of this Committee extensive consultations have been carried out using questionnaires to householders and trade customers as attached Appendices A and B. In total some 1500 forms were circulated and currently approximately 500 forms have been returned for analysis.
- 3 The Reference Group has reviewed this information which shows that:
  - (i) Householders
    - (a) 92% have rated the refuse collection service as satisfactory.
    - (b) 87% would be prepared to place their refuse etc on their boundary. Subject to other arrangements being made for the old and infirm.
    - (c) 90% have rated the recycling collection service as satisfactory.
    - (d) 75% have rated recycling centre services as satisfactory. This is linked with comments relating to the existing Essex County Council CA sites and specifically the under provision in the south of the district.
    - (e) 96% have rated their contact with the Councils admin service and 95% for their contact with our contractor as satisfactory.

The difficulty of reaching all householders with information on actual collections for the separate refuse and recycling services was often an added comment.

- (f) 68% have rated the Special Collection service as satisfactory. Supplementary questions on charging or restricting the number and types of items were not popular with residents. Fly tipping, protecting the environment and poor CA facilities were stated as reasons for the status quo.
  - (ii) Trade Customers
    - (a) 90% of trade refuse service users rated the service as satisfactory.
    - (b) 88% have rated their contact with the Council admin service and 89% for their contact with our Contractor as satisfactory.
    - (c) 88% stated that at least half their waste could be recycled.
    - (d) 70% of customers rated service reliability as a priority over price/flexibility in remaining Uttlesford service users.
- 4 The comparative data and information from the other authorities in our audit group and other Essex authorities is still incomplete but will be available and used in the final report. Maldon DC and Brentwood BC are both undertaking BV Reviews and are co-operating with information gathering.

### **Partnerships**

- 5 Partnerships with other local authorities and in some cases with the private sector will become more important in future in providing good, efficient, cost effective waste management services to the public. Currently within Essex there is a Waste Management Advisory Board consisting of representatives of the County, districts and unitary authorities which is overseeing the delivery of long term disposal contracts and recycling facilities.
- 6 Recently the Board has agreed to the formation of three area sub-groups for the East, West and South of the county. Uttlesford is in the West group with Epping, Harlow and Brentwood all of whom require the earliest provision of facilities such as transfer stations and MRF's. Shared facilities using some of the Stansted Airport government money is also possible.
- 7 Specifically in Uttlesfords case as high lighted again by the householder survey Civic Amenity site provision is critical in providing an acceptable service to the south of the district and a step change in the recycling performance. The management of CA sites could be reviewed as part of the new area arrangements but in practice would not change the 50+% performance currently achieved.



- 8 The end of the current Uttlesford refuse/recycling contracts in July 2006 and the imminent start then of an Essex CC disposal contract for West Essex could provide a number of opportunities to:
- merge the Uttlesford services into a single competitively tendered service contract
  - utilise the entire fleet of collection vehicles, which except for the specialist trade vehicles would be twin bodied vehicles
  - residual waste and recycables could be collected using a single vehicle on the same day each week
  - easily understood district wide collection leaflets could be produced and issued. Notifications of changes for Bank Holidays etc would be easily and effectively communicated to all customers.
- 9 The completion of the information gathering process will enable the final draft of the improvement plan to be prepared, based also on the information above. This will then be considered by this committee on 3 December 2003. At this stage an initial draft improvement plan has been prepared and is attached to this report.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee accepts this report as the basis for the draft Improvement Plan for the Refuse Collection and Recycling Services Best Value Review.

Background Papers: Best Value Review of Refuse and Recycling Services (held by Richard Secker)

## BEST VALUE REVIEW REFUSE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING SERVICES

### DRAFT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Aim 1 To develop partnerships to assist in the delivery of service improvements and performance targets.

<b>How</b>	<b>What is involved</b>	<b>Improvement expected</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
(i) Work with Essex CC and all districts and unitary authorities	Develop long term waste disposal and recycling contracts. Agree to the pooling of statutory targets.	Increased recycling, non-incineration waste disposal solutions and able to meet EU targets.	On-going
(ii) Joint working and procurement within the West Essex Area	Agree facilities and arrangements which would allow earlier progress in recycling and waste minimisation	Increased recycling performances, meet individual targets and potentially reduce overall costs	On-going
(iii) Consider possible joint public/private partnership for future contracts.	Arrangements involving the DSO and Verdant or another contractor in post 2006 working.	Improved use of staff and management resources potentially involving two or more local authorities	2004/05

Aim 2 Merge the existing refuse collection and kerbside recycling services into a single contract.

<b>How</b>	<b>What is involved</b>	<b>Improvement expected</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
(i) Develop and prepare a specification for a single combined service	Prepare tender documentation for revised service to comply with EU Procurement.	Improved services for less cost.	Start preparation January 2005
(ii) Ensure that the vehicles are appropriate and available.	Continue the progressive replacement of existing vehicles with twin body RCVs	Simplified refuse collection and recycling service.	On-going to 2006.
(iii) Introduce a universal kerbside system for residual and recycled waste streams	Plan and publicise the revised collection day by information to each household. Some change is inevitable to almost all areas.	All households will then receive a kerbside collection of recyclables.	Implement in August 2006.

Aim 3 Implement service improvements and changes to meet national and local targets.

<b>How</b>	<b>What is involved</b>	<b>Improvement expected</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
(i) Investigate effective waste reduction initiatives	Examine all elements of the waste stream. Target trade and street sweeping waste particularly.	Reduces the total waste and household waste streams thereby improving recycling performance.	2004
(ii) Increase the range of materials collected for recycling and reuse	Increase partnership working and projects with other West Essex authorities and charities	Increase recycling performance and encourage re-use of household items	2004
(iii) Encourage the formation of a business waste forum	Organising an initial meeting and later providing technical and secretarial support	Reduces waste disposal pressures and improves business profitability	2004

Aim 4 Implement the service improvements and changes in most effective and efficient way.

<b>How</b>	<b>What is involved</b>	<b>Improvement expected</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
(i) Work with Essex CC to provide a CA site in Dunmow	Encourage earliest provision of the CA site or part of the joint development also involving a new UDC depot.	Reduced demand for weekend container and special collection services. Increased recycling performance of approximately 5%	2004/05
(ii) Redirect the current weekend bring services from mixed to recyclable collections.	Implementing a manned container service for green waste, timber and metals.	Reduces waste stream and increases the recycling performance by approximately 3%	2004/05
(iii) The use of a single vehicle and collection day.	Revised schedules and publicity	Simplified and more cost effective service	2006

Aim 5 To provide services which are appropriate and meet customer requirements

<b>How</b>	<b>What is involved</b>	<b>Improvement expected</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
(i) Extend the range of containers available for hire	Include the smaller sizes of wheeled trade bins in the options available	Increased customer base, improved on site storage, increased trade income	2004/05
(ii) Extend the range of materials collected for recycling from trade premises	Visit customers completing survey forms indicating that 50% of their waste could be recycled.	Reduce waste disposal problems, generate income from sale of materials.	2003/04
(iii) Survey customers annually.	Send out survey form each year with the Duty of Care documents.	Service more responsive to customers needs and changing circumstances.	Annually

Aim 6 Communicate information on services and collection variations more effectively to all customers

<b>How</b>	<b>What is involved</b>	<b>Improvement expected</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
(i) Simplified service arrangements	Single weekly collection day for all materials	Reduces number of recycling calendars produced from 10 to 5 versions	2005/06
(ii) Notification of all changes for Bank Holidays in a single notice	Distribute information sheet with recycling calendar in December each year.	Improved information for all customers	2005/06
(iii) Arrange for all boxes of the same colour (ie Green or black) to be in the same week.	Introduce change over during the Christmas period in 2003	Improved information available to the public	2003
(iv) Information on the internet of all collections.	Change information progressively as new systems are implemented.	Improved access to current information.	On-going