

Scrutiny Committee – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011

## 10. Update on Sort It Plus Service

*Executive Portfolio Holder:* Tom Parsley, Environment and Waste  
*Strategic Director:* Vega Sturgess, Operations & Customer Focus  
*Contact Details:* 01935 462200 or [vega.sturgess@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:vega.sturgess@southsomerset.gov.uk)

### Purpose of Report

To update Scrutiny members on the roll out of Sort It Plus across South Somerset.

### Action Required

That members of the Scrutiny Committee discuss the report, noting the progress made to date and the plans for phase 2 of the roll out.

### Progress Update

Members will be aware that the roll out of the Sort-It+ service was in two phases, the first in October 2010 covering over 20,000 households in South Somerset and the second phase starting imminently with all eligible households in the district being on the service by the end of March 2011.

At the point of writing this report, we have completed all preparations and are beginning to implement Phase Two. Appendix One is an example of the letter sent to parish councils and outlines the progress of the roll out and answers some frequently asked questions. Some additional points are laid out below:

- Staff at Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) work with the contractor, May Gurney (MG) to discuss how best to phase the roll outs across the county. Roll outs in Taunton Deane and Sedgemoor have led to learning and continuous improvement in the subsequent plans.
- Staff at SSDC's Customer Services and Spatial Systems teams support the SWP staff by helping identify the households in each round and phase of the roll out and by tailoring publicity and communications to fit the South Somerset context.
- All parishes and elected district members are informed when the roll out is taking place in their parish and ward (see Appendix One of the report). Media releases are also issued.
- The roll out in the autumn was completed according to the project plan, and was well received by the public.
- The new style of recycling collection vehicle is performing extremely well although members will be aware that there were some problems with completing rounds following Christmas and the snow and ice due to the exceptional amounts of material presented at the kerbside.
- The comprehensive preparation for Phase One proved worthwhile. There were remarkably few teething problems which can be evidenced by the lack of impact on the performance of the Customer First team. (See Appendix Two). Thanks should be expressed to all at SWP who worked exceptionally hard to ensure that the roll out

went smoothly, to the contractors who ensured that it all happened and to SSDC staff who supported either the preparation or by answering any customer queries.

- Preparations for Phase Two started as soon as Phase One was completed.
- Box and leaflet deliveries are being completed in record time for Phase Two. As of February 15 2011, contractors have delivered over 23,000 boxes to households in about eight days. Despite this, they have made very few mistakes, with rectification reports low. Currently we have only received 27 reports of boxes not being delivered, a failure rate of 0.11%. Undoubtedly there will be a few residents that are not yet aware that they are missed, but box delivery is the most notoriously difficult operation of the roll out.
- The information in the box tells the customer when their first collection will be, informs them of the way to present their plastic bottles and cardboard and reminds residents of what could already be recycled.
- This information appears to stimulate an increased volume of requests for extra boxes and food waste containers from residents who have not previously recycled or who want more storage capacity for their materials.
- Specific information regarding the timescale of the roll out is also on the 'Your Neighbourhood' section of the website. Residents simply insert their postcode and the website will tell them their refuse, recycling and garden waste collection days along with the first day of plastic bottle and cardboard recycling.
- Phase Two is taking place over a number of weeks. This "soft start" approach enables the crews to learn the new rounds and manage the large amount of stored materials set out by customers during the first two collection weeks.

In summary, Phase One was completed extremely successfully. It is acknowledged that Phase Two is twice as extensive and is being run concurrently with a large roll out in Mendip. There is also some risk of adverse weather affecting a roll out at this time of year. Notwithstanding the potential for some teething problems the experience so far tells us that the residents are pleased with the new service, the crews are able to collect the increased range of materials using the new vehicles and the rounds appear to be both planned and resourced well.