



WIN case study July 2010:

Less in the bin, more in your pocket: Wandsworth Council asks residents to throw less in the bin and saves £300 000 / year on disposal costs!



Summary

In summer 2009, Wandsworth Council launched a new, high profile and innovative waste awareness campaign which urged residents to consider the connection between the amount of waste they threw into their bin and the levels of Council tax they paid. Two key campaign messages were used:-

“Less in the bin, more in your pocket”

“1kg less waste per household per week saves £500,000 a year”

Residents were promised that if they reduced the amount of rubbish they produced by one kilo per week the Council would save half a million pounds a year in disposal costs. Up to April 2010, figures showed that the Wandsworth householders had gone a long way to achieving this target. The residual waste collected had fallen by almost 3 million kilos!

This case study examines how a simple campaign message and a back-to-basics ‘waste hierarchy’ approach can help to achieve significant disposal cost savings for an authority.

Case study focus

- Innovative communications campaign
- Linking waste disposal costs to Council tax
- Differential charging system for disposal
- No ‘hard’ measures
- Cash savings per tonne of waste avoided
- Focus on food & garden waste
- Targeting the hard to reach
- Clamp down on commercial
- Big £££ savings on disposal costs!

Introduction of differential weighbridge charging and rising disposal costs stimulates a shift in waste policy for Wandsworth

In April 2009, Wandsworth Council’s waste disposal mechanisms were altered when Western Riverside Waste Authority (WRWA) moved over to a differential charging system for the disposal of household waste. A tonnage based levy was replaced by a cost per tonne or ‘gate fee’ for different types of waste, reflecting the actual disposal or recycling/processing costs.

As a result, during 2009/10, the gate fee or ‘saving per tonne’ for every tonne of ‘residual waste avoided’ was £90. The saving achieved by diverting one tonne of comingled recyclables



from the residual waste stream was £23. With disposal costs rising, these savings have already increased to £107 and £38 respectively for 2010/11 and are set to increase further in future years.

This meant that Wandsworth would receive a clear financial saving in waste disposal costs for every tonne of waste avoided and for every tonne of materials recycled or composted. A clear incentive for reducing waste and recycling the rest!

Michael Singham, Waste Policy Manager at Wandsworth Council explained how the differential weighbridge charging had a knock-on effect on policy...

“The change in disposal charges combined with the increased need to reduce costs as a result of the current financial climate has pushed waste minimisation up Wandsworth's agenda - our priorities reflect the waste hierarchy more closely as a result.”

The Campaign

Campaign materials included:-

- Livery on most Council vehicles across all Departments (see picture opposite)
- Posters on Council poster boards
- Prominent articles & adverts in the Council's 'BrightSide' publication distributed to local households
- Promotion on regular outreach stands organised by the Council's waste management team and Recycle Western Riverside (RWR)

- Guaranteed space in the Wandsworth Guardian and associated web-site as a result of the Council's "Green Guardian" partnership (see: <http://www.greenguardian.co.uk/>)
- Section on website devoted to waste reduction with top tips for home, work and smart shopping (see: www.wandsworth.gov.uk/save)



Photograph of livery on Council vehicles

The key messages used in the campaign material reflected the Council's overarching aims to improve efficiency and achieve savings whilst avoiding or minimising service cuts. The initial key messages were simple, direct and to the point. One brightly coloured poster with bold print simply reads:-

**Less in the bin
More in your pocket
One kilo (2.2 lbs) less in the bin saves council
taxpayers £10,000 a week**



Articles in the Council's BrightSide publication made the direct links between the residents throwing away less, disposal costs being lowered and this in turn helping to keep council tax bills low. They also provided practical advice and information on reducing waste along with feedback on achievements to date. The paragraph below is from the July 2010 edition:-

Fantastic response to waste campaign

The people of Wandsworth have cut the amount of rubbish they produce by more than half a kilo per household per week. This has helped save the council around £300,000 a year in waste disposal costs, helping it to keep council tax bills low.

A focus on the hard to reach - doorstepping

The Recycle Western Riverside (RWR) programme provides communications services to the WRWA constituent authorities and is delivered by WasteWatch. RWR aims to increase waste awareness and encourage recycling, composting, re-use and waste minimisation.

During September 2009, RWR doorstepped 13,800 of Wandsworth's high-rise premises. The primary aim of the doorstepping was to increase participation and raise awareness of what should and should not be deposited in orange recycling banks. Face-to-face contact was made with 4,518 households, of which 77% claimed to recycle and 35% had received and used re-usable orange recycling bags.

A focus on garden & food waste

Waste compositional analysis conducted in Wandsworth during 2009/10 had demonstrated that:-

Garden waste was the most significant targeted recyclable material still present within residual waste collected from low-rise households. (Despite residents having been advised not to include it with their residual waste since April 2007).

Food waste was also still present in high levels in the residual waste stream.

It was for this reason that garden and food waste were specifically targeted in the campaign.

Focus on Food Waste..

Poster campaigns encouraging the home composting and minimisation of food waste were used. This included intensive local delivery by RWR of WRAP's 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign along with outreach stands targeting residents directly at venues such as supermarkets, giving face-to-face advice on food waste reduction.

RWR also provided local street market traders with Love Food Hate Waste branded paper bags, recipe cards and freezer clips to pass on to customers.

Focus on Garden Waste..

Home composters: A total of 263 home composting containers were sold via the Council's special offers to residents during 2009/10. This brought the total number of home composting containers supplied via the Council's offers to 10,357 since the first such offer in the mid-nineties. High profile promotion of home composting and associated special offers is expected to increase sales during 2010/11.



Eco Fund Grants & Project Dirt: The council is working with Project Dirt (an online network which puts people involved in green projects in touch with each other) to make small grants (totalling £5 000 annually) to local residents to help fund green projects. See www.projectdirt.com/page/wandsworthcouncil for more information. The Eco Fund is financed via disposal savings achieved!

Shared shredding: An initiative to help people to compost more at home comes in the form of neighbourhood shredding groups. Small groups of residents have been invited to apply for an Eco Fund grant to help with the cost of purchasing a shredder. It is anticipated that making the composting process quicker and simpler by shredding larger garden materials will encourage more home composting in the community. The Council is also seeking to negotiate reduced price offers on shredders similar to those already available for composting containers.

Further work of Recycle Western Riverside

In addition, RWR conducted a number of research projects and produced documents & reports on behalf of the constituent authorities of the WRWA.

The availability of this area and demographic specific information has helped Wandsworth to shape their communications campaigns and to target resources in the most effective way. This has been a significant factor in helping the authority to get the right messages through to the right sections of the community at the right time.

Michael Singham, Waste Policy Manager at Wandsworth Council highlighted the value of this work...

"We are fortunate to have access to a range of area specific data, resources, reports and officer time through our links with Recycle Western Riverside. This close working relationship has helped us to get the campaign messages right and deliver them to our target audience".

Other impacts to consider...

1. Time Banding & a clamp down on commercial waste

New 'time banding' regulations are also likely to have played a part in helping to prevent commercial waste from entering Wandsworth's domestic waste stream.

The Regulations use new powers under the London Local Authorities Act 007 to enforce powers already available under EPA 1990 but without serving Notices on occupiers. LLA 07 also enables enforcement via Penalty Charge Notices rather than prosecution.

It was believed that prior to the time-banding regulations, substantial quantities of commercial waste were being collected by the Council's nightly collection service for household waste as it was difficult for crews to distinguish one from the other.

Sample bag counts for Balham town centre before and after the application of the regulations has indicated a 59% reduction in the number of sacks present on the pavement in



advance of the nightly collections. A similar reduction in the tonnage of material collected by the service would result in substantial waste disposal savings.

2. Service design & charges

Another important element to consider is Wandsworth's approach to charging and so called 'hard' measures (for example alternating weekly residual collections, restricted residual waste capacity, side waste policies etc).

No such measures have been introduced to date but the Council has had a long standing policy of making reasonable charges to cover the cost of collection where it has the power to do so (e.g. garden waste & bulky items). The Council has therefore avoided much of this type of waste from entering the domestic waste stream without the need to implement unpopular and harsh measures.

3. Innovative Pyrolysis project

The Council has also conducted a successful trial of an on-site small scale pyrolysis of residual domestic waste at a directly managed block. Most of the waste is turned into a carbon ash which is flushed down the sewerage system before the waste is collected or measured!

Michael Singham, Waste Policy Manager at Wandsworth Council commented on the Pyrolysis project...

"Our tender documents for the next Housing maintenance contract are likely to seek bids utilising this or other technology achieving similar outcomes - whether any such technology is economically viable remains to be seen".

Waste Arisings: Comparative data available for 2008/09 shows that Wandsworth had the 6th lowest household waste arisings of 33 London authorities and the 55th lowest of 394 English authorities. As Wandsworth does not co-collect household and commercial waste it is able to measure household waste arisings accurately.

Decrease in overall tonnage of municipal waste: During 2009/10 the overall tonnage of municipal waste delivered to WRWA decreased by 3,798 tonnes (3.5%) to 106,162 tonnes, the seventh year in succession that municipal waste has fallen. This represents a 21% decrease since 2001/02, despite a 7% increase in the number of households during that period.

Outperforming the rest: Provisional data for England (for July - September 2009) shows a 1.6% decrease in municipal and 1.7% decrease in household waste, suggesting that local waste reduction related activities may have been successful in enabling Wandsworth to out-perform the rest of the Country.

A WRWA report published in October 2009 analysing the composition of domestic waste in Wandsworth demonstrated that both the quantity of waste overall and level of recyclable waste within it were low compared to the two other WRWA boroughs for which comparable data is available.

Customer satisfaction – Place Survey 2008

Customer satisfaction has been monitored recently in Wandsworth... When residents were asked about their **level of satisfaction with services for refuse collection**, 78% said they were very or fairly satisfied, up from 74% in 2006/07.



Focus



Waste Improvement Network

Helping councils do more with less.

When asked about their **level of satisfaction with services for doorstep recycling**, 75% said they were very or fairly satisfied, up from 64% in 2006/07.

A separate survey of residents of directly managed premises commissioned by the Housing Department found that most respondents had already taken action to reduce the waste they produce. The most popular actions included using a bag for life when shopping (86%), wasting less food (81%) and using both sides of paper (65%).

Key components of the project that led to the successful delivery were:

- Use of a new, innovative and ‘of the moment’ campaign message which appealed to the residents, particularly in the current economic climate
- Foreseeing and embracing the potential for big cash savings with the onset of the new differential charging system for waste disposal
- Understanding which sectors of the community to target
- Using data wisely for example using the compositional analysis to identify and focus on the ‘problem’ waste streams such as food & garden waste
- Identifying other areas where an impact could be made – e.g. commercial waste and the introduction of the new ‘time-banding’ to avoid commercial waste entering the domestic collection stream
- Targeting several issues at once to create a maximum impact and to get campaign momentum from the outset

- Celebrating success and involving / congratulating residents on their achievements
- Making best use of the work delivered by the RWR
- Working closely with neighbouring authorities under the WRWA
- A high level of Corporate commitment to the campaign.

Costs of the campaign

Many of the costs associated with the campaign were ‘in-house’ resources including:

Officer time and expertise (Wandsworth’s Corporate Comms Manager, Wendy Phillips was crucial in achieving the high profile the campaign has had)

Editorial within the Council’s publications

Council poster board space

Input from RWA’s activities

As such, cost data is not readily available as many of these resources are not internally re-charged to the department.

The changeable signage system that was fitted to the refuse vehicle fleet cost in the region of £30k – this system will also support future campaigns and communications. Campaign specific signs to fit onto this system cost around £5k and campaign stickers for the general vehicle fleet around £3k.

Links and Contacts

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