

OPEN briefing on proposed changes to recycling and rubbish

Date of Briefing: 24 August 2020

Attendees

Elected Members:

Mayor Barry, Cr Bassett, Cr Briggs, Cr Dyer, Cr Edwards, Cr Lewis, Cr Milne, Cr Mitchell, Cr Sutton and Cr Shaw

Staff:

Jo Miller (Chief Executive), Jorn Scherzer (Sustainability and Resilience Manager, Bruce Hodgins (Strategic Advisor), Wendy Moore (Head of Strategy and Planning), Jenny Livschitz (Chief Financial Officer), Helen Oram (Director Environmental and Sustainability), Anna Welanyk (Director Transformation and Resources), Catherine Taylor (Senior Research and Evaluation Advisor) and Caryn Ellis (Advisor to the Chief Executive).

Public:

Emma Gregory (Low Cost Bins) and Hugh Wiffen (Low Cost Bins)

Apologies / Absences

Elected Member Apologies: Crs Hislop and Rasheed

Elected Members Absent: none

Key Objectives of the Briefing

The purpose of the briefing was to provide Council with a summary of submission and engagement data to ensure Councillors have a good understanding of feedback and issues.

Discussion

Overview

The consultation underwent sustained engagement because the decision was deferred until after the Annual Plan. Over that time there was considerable advertising, media releases, articles, an online presence, live sessions with the Mayor and CE and a bin tour of key city facilities. The consultation received the highest number of submissions ever received.

- *Slide 3-4:* Demonstrated the representativeness of submissions received. The Western ward was slightly over represented and the Wainuiomata ward was slightly under represented.
- *Slide 5:* Showed the proportion of submitters by household size. One person and five person households were slightly underrepresented. More submitters came from two – four person households.
- *Slide 6:* Under 30 and over 80 year olds were under represented with only a small number of under 20 year old submitters.

- *Slide 7:* Mostly submitters were from standalone houses. 82%. Apartment dwellers and renters were under represented.
- *Slides 9-10:* 76% of submitters supported the proposed changes to recycling. Support for recycling was higher among larger households but was still supported by well over 50% of smaller households. Free recycling for education providers received 81% support.
- *Slide 11:* 76% supported an opt-in green waste system, and nearly half said they would use it. Some worried about the smell, others compost their green waste, and some use their rubbish bin for green waste.
- *Slide 14-16:* 71% of submitters supported either Option one or Option three. Household size drove most preferences with a weekly service preferred by larger households. Submissions through the Modern Waste website were unable to be included with this data.
- *Slide 18:* The Modern Waste submission form caused some submitters to mistake it for a Council submission form. Some submitters asked Council to remove their submission when they became aware of where it was from. Other submitters made changes which made it difficult to analyse responses. There were many duplicates. Submitters' key concern was the impact on the private sector.

Modern waste submissions

- Modern Waste submissions were counted as individual submissions. In the final analysis, any alterations submitters made to the standard submission would be highlighted.
- Although some submitters made comments that contradicted their quantitative response, the submissions would be analysed as they were.
- All submissions that arrived through Council channels were loaded on the website, but Modern Waste submissions were still to be uploaded.
- The option chosen by submitters who used the Modern Waste form was unclear. These submissions were therefore unable to be quantitatively analysed but their content would be considered alongside all other submissions.

Overall timeline

- The Sustainability and Resilience Manager provided a timeline of the rubbish and recycling process.
- The procurement process had run alongside the consultation process. It began in February but was extended to June because of the lockdown period. Changes were made to the tender to make PAYT possible and the requirement for electric vehicles was changed to prompt a better response. An advisor from MBIE was involved to ensure good process was followed. Tenders were received from six companies and the pricing closely aligned with pricing used in Council's consultation.
- The Strategic Advisor was not aware of any impact on companies' ability to submit to the tender process due to the time period or lock down period. The tender panel was ready to offer the contract to its preferred supplier once Council had made their decision and the tender report was signed off by the Chief Executive.

Recycling

- Council was preparing to implement changes to recycling and would negotiate a contract with the preferred supplier. An information awareness campaign would follow, alongside a process for residents to choose the size of bin they preferred. A decision would be made on whether existing crates or new crates would be used.
- Lower Hutt had five public recycling stations which Council was planning to phase out once a new system was implemented. Of these, four had not re-opened since lockdown. An information and

awareness campaign would be important to let the public know about the changes. The privately run recycling station at Seaview could still be used for big pieces of cardboard etc. A redesign at the landfill was a possibility to provide another free outlet for recycling cardboard.

- An across-Council team of officers would be working on the best way forward to implement the new recycling and rubbish systems.
- A service for education providers was included in the existing rubbish and recycling tender.

Rubbish

- The process for implementing Options 1 and 3 would follow a comparable process to the implementation of recycling changes, with the same team working on it once the contract was awarded. It was hoped to have the process in place and ready to go by March 2021.
- Option 2 (PAYT) would involve an information awareness campaign and internal processes working alongside the contractor. Timing was critical for this option. If not implemented until July there was concern that the 30% market share held by Council would be reduced during the transition, with private operators gathering this share before Council could implement it. Users would pay for the service but there were also fixed costs. If a lower number than expected signed up Council would need to recover costs from a smaller customer base. This could be a problem for low income service users.
- Option 4: Would stop the procurement process. An information and awareness campaign would begin and Council would need to consider the ramifications and add more resources to education and enforcement. Some residents would not use any service and Council would require the ability to enforce using a licensing system and a bylaw. A bylaw required a two year lead in.
- Kāpiti District Council used PAYT and a licensing system. The Sustainability and Resilience Manager was unsure of the level of enforcement in place if residents did not use any service. He did not know if Upper Hutt had problems with fly tipping.
- An information and awareness campaign would be important for Options 2 and 4 since Council would not initially have the ability to enforce the use of a service.
- Council consulted on only 4 models but could be more flexible in future years and look at adding other elements if there was a need.
- ETS obligations were charged by the tonne and the national Waste Disposal Levy was set to increase each year to 2024. These applied to both private companies and Councils. This might mean more recycling, less contamination and more green waste diversion in years to come. Tonnage was expected to increase if the population increased. It was difficult to compare kerbside rubbish with landfill rubbish in a shared landfill.
- The tender process would ensure costs were controlled for the next 8 years. There would be some inflationary costs to consider.
- Data that showed the amount of waste going to landfill from the rubbish bag contract was only a share of the waste produced. It would not capture all waste not in bags.
- Construction waste was Lower Hutt's biggest waste product. This was an area of waste reduction Council could encourage as part of its own procurement process.

Food waste

- A food waste collection was not offered due to a lack of processing infrastructure in place. Also Council was awaiting Wellington City Council's food waste trial results. More analysis and preparation work was needed, ideally in cooperation with other councils to provide economy of scale. This would need an information and awareness campaign, including how to compost at home.
- A future waste levy could provide a potential funding source to address this problem, ideally in collaboration with other councils.
- Council could provide more information on bokashi/composting as a new rubbish and recycling service was rolled out. This could possibly include subsidised bins but would have to be alongside the strategic context of other councils.

Next Steps

- Officers were available to answer any questions councillors might have. Councillors were asked to send elected member requests in promptly so that officers could answer them before decisions were made on 15 September.

Briefing Materials

Attachment 1 – Presentation on Rubbish and Recycling Changes