

The Highland Council

Transport, Environmental and Community Services Committee
16 May 2013

Agenda Item	9
Report No	TEC 42-13

Review of Bulky Uplift Service

Report by Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Summary

This report updates Member of the review of the Bulky Uplift Service, and invites Members to approve that work is undertaken to strengthen the message in relation to the services offered by our Social Enterprise Partners who offer a free collection service for items which can be re-used, and that we work with our Social Enterprise Partners to examine opportunities to carry out both re-use and reprocessing within the Highlands.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Programme for the Highland Council includes a commitment to carry out a review of the Council's Bulky Uplift Service, and the outcome of the review is detailed in this report.

1.2 The Review examined the following:

- Current and historical use of the service
- Current and historical fly-tipping
- The charging mechanism
- Survey of Community Councils and the Citizen's Panel
- Views from our Social Enterprise partners

2. Historical use of the Service (Before April 2009)

2.1 Prior to April 2009 the Council operated a free bulky uplift service whereby virtually any waste in any quantity (including bagged waste) would be collected from the kerbside free of charge. This resulted in nearly 50,000 service requests being met annually.

3. Introduction of Charges for Bulky Uplifts

3.1 Charging for bulky items is permitted under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Controlled Waste (Scotland) Regulations 1992, and the Council approved the introduction of charges with effect from 1 April 2009, as a means of supporting the Council's commitment to recycling and also as a revenue budget saving.

- 3.2 The Controlled Waste Regulation 1992 only allows for the collection of “certain household wastes” and the bulky uplift service is limited to the collection of large household items, including beds, mattresses chairs, etc, from a domestic property.
- 3.3 The scheme does not apply to waste arising from construction or demolition works within a domestic property.
- 3.4 The level of charges were set at £15 for the collection of up to 3 bulky household items, and £30 for the collection of between 4 and a maximum of 6 items. The charges, which are increased in line with inflation, are currently £15.60 and £32.20.
- 3.5 A bulky uplift can be requested through the Council's Service Centre or Service Points, and online applications can be made through the Council's website. When making a request, customers are advised that there are a number of local community groups who offer a free collection service for goods which can be re-used.

4. Relationship between Fly-tipping and Requests for Bulky Uplifts

- 4.1 When charges were introduced in 2009, there were concerns that charging would lead to an increase in fly-tipping, however there has been no evidence to support this view.
- 4.2 The table below summarises the relationship between the incidents of fly-tipping reported through the Council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System and the requests for bulky uplifts.

Year	Reported incidents of Fly Tipping through CRM	Requests for Bulky Uplifts	Income
2008/09	2,458	48,751	-
2009/10	2,286	5,650	£71k
2010/11	1,439	4,102	£65k
2011/12	1,082	3,603	£58k
2012/13	1,098	3,401	£54k

- 4.3 Not all incidents of fly tipping will be reported through the CRM System, however the above figures represent a “like for like” comparison.
- 4.4 The number of fly-tipping incidents recorded through the Council's CRM System has decreased from 2,458 in 2008/09 to 1,098 in 2012/13, a reduction of 55%.
- 4.5 It is also worth noting that incidents of fly-tipping involve commercial waste and other items, which would not qualify for a bulky uplift.
- 4.6 In the same period there has been a slight increase in the use of Recycling

Centres but this is not consistent across Highland.

5. Survey Results

5.1 Two surveys were undertaken to help assess how the current level of service is viewed by the public.

1. Community Councils (152)
2. Citizen's Panel

5.2 152 Community Councils were sent a copy of the survey, 45 (30%) of which returned a completed questionnaire. A copy of the Survey which was issued to Community Councils is contained in **Appendix A**.

5.3 In summary, the respondents indicated that few individuals had contacted Community Councils about the Service. However 62% recorded some contact regarding fly-tipping. Over half advised that they were aware of local charities that would collect bulky items.

5.4 In terms of comments regarding charging there were 12 comments stating they were too high; and four stating charges hit the disadvantaged most. There were three comments that referred to the removal of village skips.

5.5 2,296 questionnaires were sent to the Citizen's Panel with 1,269 responses received (55%). A copy of the Survey which was issued to the Citizen's Panel is contained in **Appendix B**.

5.6 In summary the results were as follows:

- The majority of people are aware of the service;
- Two thirds are aware that there is a charge for the service;
- A third have used the service;
- Just under a quarter have used the service in the last 12 months, a third in the last three years and almost 45% before that;
- Just over 90% were satisfied with the service received;
- Of those who haven't used the service, just under three quarters indicated this was because they take things to the recycling centre themselves;
- Just over a fifth of respondents felt the charges were too high – 60% were not aware what the charges were;
- Of those who had used the service, 29% felt the charges too high, a third that they were about right and 39% were not aware what the

charges were.

6. Social Enterprise Partners

6.1 The Council began to make significant investment in our existing social enterprise partners in 2004 using in part the Strategic Waste Fund. The Council continues to be the most important stakeholder and provides a significant level of funding to the groups (except ILM which has reached the position where it is self-financing).

6.2 Our partners:

- Blythswood Care
- HomeAid
- Newstart Highland
- ILM (Highland)

operate throughout Highland (and beyond) and between them provide the following waste services:

- Free collection of waste items from households for refurbishment and re-use;
- Clearing of waste furniture, household items bric-a-brac and textiles from the Council's recycling centres for refurbishment and re-use;
- Collection of white goods from recycling centres for recycling.

6.3 HomeAid has three retail outlets, containers, and a warehouse within and covering the Caithness & Sutherland areas. HomeAid's core customer referral clients are individuals/families in need in this area, who receive starter packs and all essential household items for a nominal fee.

6.4 Blythswood (based in Evanton) and Newstart (based in Inverness) are significant social enterprises on a Scotland wide scale.

6.5 ILM (Highland) no longer receives payments from the Council. It has made the transformation to a business which collects waste electrical goods from the Council's recycling centres on behalf of REPIC (a UK compliance scheme). As such it is one of very few Social Enterprises in the UK which delivers re-use evidence to a compliance scheme.

6.6 In terms of the wider economic and social benefits, partnership with the social enterprises provides:

- Over 160 jobs;
- 100s of volunteering opportunities (including individuals with special needs and the long term unemployed);
- Over 500 training opportunities;
- The provision of housing furniture and starter packs (for example Newstart has provided 24,000 packs)

- 6.7 It is therefore difficult to underestimate the overall impact on the fabric of Highland society of the partnership given that at its most basic it simply diverts waste from landfill.
- 6.8 This catalyst has resulted in the transformation of the prospects of an extremely large number of vulnerable people, the vast majority of whom have suffered crisis and challenge in their lives.
- 6.9 The practical training element of the work of our partners (in some cases the only option available), has led many beneficiaries to reduce their dependency on welfare as they progress out of unemployment and into long term sustainable jobs.
- 6.10 As the Zero Waste policy evolves our relationship and the services offered by our partners will doubtless evolve too and they have all expressed a willingness to explore every avenue possible to extract the maximum value from the waste stream to benefit the Highland community.
- 6.11 On the specifics of the current work they stated that the message to redirect the public to them could be made more emphatic. They also advised that they were planning to work more closely with each other thereby maximising each group's particular expertise and are looking closely at greater opportunities to carry out both re-use and reprocessing in Highland.

7. Conclusions

1. The current service appears to be working well.
2. There is no evidence to show that the introduction of charges for bulky uplifts has led to an increase in fly-tipping, and the current charging system should remain in place.
3. The message and emphasis on re-use when the public contacts the Council requesting a bulky uplift needs to be strengthened.
4. Our social enterprise partners are committed to working with the Council in the long term to re-use and to examine the options for re-processing in Highland.

8. Implications

- 8.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.
- 8.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 8.3 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.
- 8.4 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

8.5 There are no risk implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Members are invited to approve that work is undertaken to strengthen the message in relation to the services offered by our Social Enterprise Partners who offer a free collection service for items which can be re-used.

9.2 Members are invited to approve that we work with our Social Enterprise Partners to examine opportunities to carry out both re-use and reprocessing within the Highlands.

Designation: Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Date: 3 May 2013

Author: Colin Clark, Head of Waste Management

Community Council Questions

Q1. Has anyone contacted the Community Council regarding the Council's Bulky Uplift Service?

Q2. If yes, what was the contact about?

In 2009 the Council introduced a charge for the bulky uplift service.

Q3. Has anyone from your community contacted the Community Council with concerns about the charges for the bulky uplift service?

Q4, If yes, please provide details:

Q5. Has the Community Council received any complaints about fly-tipping over the past 12 months?

Yes ¹ No ²

Q6. If yes, how many complaints have you received?

Q7. Please provide details of any areas in your Community Council area which regularly suffer from fly-tipping.

A number of local voluntary groups will uplift goods for free as long as they can be recycled.

Q.8 Are you aware of any local organisations (charities) who will pick up bulky items if they are reusable within your community?

Citizen's Panel Questions

Q1. Were you aware that the Council offers a bulky uplift Service?

Q2. Were you aware that there is a charge for this service?

Q3. Have you ever used the bulky uplift service?

Q4. If you have used the service, was this in: *(please select only one)*

The last 3 months ₁	The last 6 months ₂	The last 12 months ₃	The last three years ₄	Before that ₅

Q5. How satisfied were you with the bulky uplift service?

Very satisfied ₁	Quite satisfied ₂	Not very satisfied ₃	Not at all satisfied ₄

Q6. If you have not used the bulky uplift service, why was this: *(please select as many as are relevant)*

No need for the service ₁

I take things to the recycling centre myself ₂

I did/do not want to pay the charge ₃

I use a local charity/voluntary group who will uplift and recycle for free ₄

In 2009 the Council introduced a charge for the bulky uplift service.

Q7. Do you think the charges are:

Too low ₁	About right ₂	Too high ₃	Don't know what the charge is ₄

A number of local voluntary groups will uplift goods for free as long as they can be recycled.

Q.8 Are you aware of any local organisations (charities) who will pick up your bulky items if they are reusable?

Yes ¹ No ²

Q.9 If yes can you name them?

Q.10 Have you used any of them for a bulky uplift in the last 12 months?

Yes ¹ No ²

Q11. Are you aware of the Scottish Reuse Hotline?

Yes ¹ No ²

Q12. Are you aware of the Freecycle website?

Yes ¹ No ²

Q13. Do you use Freecycle or any other website to offer items free of charge?

Yes ¹ No ²