



LINCOLNSHIRE WASTE PARTNERSHIP

25 JULY 2013

SUBJECT : Reducing	WASTE POLICY - REDUCING THE PRESENCE OF BLACK SACKS IN THE DRY RECYCLING WASTE STREAM
REPORT BY:	CAROLINE PRITCHARD, CITY OF LINCOLN COUNCIL
CONTACT NO:	01522 873405

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the past year or so the City Council has analysed, using information provided by Viridor, the materials being collected through our kerbside dry recycling collection service.

This analysis has been undertaken in response to a reported increase in contamination levels, and has been used to inform our response to this problem.

In the six months January to June 2012 black plastic sacks made up over 4% of brown bin waste, according to sample results. Of nine non-conformance loads delivered to Viridor in August / September 2012, black sacks were listed as present in every load. Whilst other contaminating materials were present in each load, and some in multiple loads, black sacks were the only contaminant present in all nine.

As well as the problems caused by the presence of the black plastic sacks themselves, the contents of these sacks were also found to be an issue. In a spot check at the kerbside, around 50% of black sacks used to present side waste were found to contain an element of residual waste.

It should be noted that when the City Council started using wheeled bins in 2006, residents were encouraged to present side waste alongside their brown bin (as they still are), and it was acknowledged and accepted that this was often presented in black sacks – residents were simply asked to ensure the waste was clearly marked as ‘recycling’. In order to remove black sacks from the dry recycling stream the Council therefore needed to change behaviour that it had accepted for some years.

ACTION TAKEN

In order to reduce the presence of black sacks in the dry recycling stream, with the aim of removing this type of contamination altogether, the Council needed first of all to make sure that its position was clear to members, officers, and residents. This coincided with the formation of the Council's 'Waste Policy' which brings together the operating rules of the various waste services delivered by the Council, in to one document.

The Waste Policy (attached as Appendix A) was amended to make clear, at each pertinent point, the authority's position with regard to black sacks in this waste stream:

"We are not able to take any recycling material placed out in black sacks, no matter how well marked or presented".

This enabled the Council to move forward with the various elements of its contamination action plan, including the use of tags (for bins left un-emptied due to contamination), stickers (affixed to all brown bins), general publicity, and the advice provided to residents by Council and contractor's staff. The clear message to residents is that collection staff will not collect side waste presented in black sacks, nor will they empty brown bins known to contain black sacks.

The Waste Policy will be put before the Council's Executive on 22 July 2013, although the principles of the policy, with regard to contaminated bins, have been in operation since September 2012. Since that time there has been a significant increase in awareness amongst residents and a reduction in levels of contamination (relating to black sacks and more generally). The delivery of the action plan is ongoing, and the results of Viridor's sample tests continue to be monitored.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Lincolnshire Waste Partnership is asked to note the contents of this report, and other District Councils are asked to consider adopting a similar policy and stance with regard to the collection of black sacks in the dry recycling stream, where this is not already the case.