

# LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

**Executive - 23 May 2005**

## **Report from the Director of Policy and Regeneration**

For action

Wards affected:  
All

### **Report Title: Domestic Household and Bulky Waste Collection**

Forward Plan Ref: PRU-04/05-16

#### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report presents the recommendations of the Performance and Finance Select Committee's task group on 'Domestic household and bulky waste collection' along with the service department's response and advice on the finance, legal, and diversity implications.
- 1.2 The service area accept the task group's recommendations and are engaged in implementation.

#### **2.0 Recommendation to the Executive**

- 2.1 Note the recommendations made in this review, thank the task group for their work, and the service area for implementing the recommendations.

#### **3.0 Key Points from the Task Group**

Introduction:

- 3.1 Brent Council has a waste management contract with Onyx UK Ltd which has been in place since 1997 and will run until 2007. Its value is £6.7m a year and covers three main areas: domestic household waste collection, special bulky waste collection, and street cleaning.

## Overview:

The task group looked at aspects of the domestic household and bulk waste collections and as a result several key areas of concern were highlighted. Namely:

- 3.2 Onyx was operating the contract at a loss. As a consequence, this has limited the amount of capital and human resources that Onyx has been able to invest in the contract.
- 3.3 Reoccurring communication and the lack of a problem solving approach between StreetCare and Onyx appear to be a recurring source of service breakdown.
- 3.4 StreetCare has agreed a target with Onyx to collect 95% of special bulky waste on the scheduled day and 100% by Friday. Current performance hovers around 75 – 80 %.
- 3.5 On site visits unearthed that housing association environmental managers, unable to rely on the council's special bulky waste services, are using their own contractors to remove waste from their estates causing housing associations to pay for special bulky waste collections twice.

## Conclusion:

- 3.6 StreetCare has agreed an action plan with Onyx to improve all of its waste management services between the time of this report and March 2005.

## **4.0 Recommendations from the Task Group**

- 4.1 Update the contract with Onyx urgently and maintain a list of amendments to it.
- 4.2 Agree with Onyx a more accurate way to measure missed collections in the borough and ensure that this measure can identify local problems on rounds.
- 4.3 Improve communication links and problem solving approaches with Onyx, for example with regard to the condition of the refuse fleet.
- 4.4 Put in place systems with Onyx to ensure the accuracy and effective use of the refuse collection schedule and the Contender computer system.
- 4.5 Hand in hand with improved management information tools, use defaults where appropriate to improve service delivery.

- 4.6 Convene a forum with housing associations to address their concerns, in particular about bulky waste collections.

## **5.0 Service Department's Response**

### 5.1 Service response:

The Assistant Director for Environment would like to thank members of the Task Group for taking the time to carry out this review. The information in the report provides an interesting back drop of the Service from a user's perspective. The report highlights areas of concern and makes recommendations to address those service failures.

### 5.2 What has already been actioned:

Actions taken to address the problems of service delivery in the last six month October 2004 to March 2005:

- Both the matters of a poor service and missed refuse and bulky waste collections were on the list of item discussed with Onyx at three levels of management.
- The most senior level includes the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader, the Portfolio Holder for the Environment, the Chief Executives of both Brent and Onyx, the Managing Director and Director of Onyx London, Brent Directors of Finance and Environment and the Assistant Director Environment.
- The Second Level included the Managing Director and Director of Onyx London, the Director, Assistant Director of Environment and Director of StreetCare.
- The third level included the Contract and Operations Managers from Onyx, the Director and Operations Manager from StreetCare.
- Initially the meetings for level one and two were every two month and level three met once a month.
- Onyx were asked to produce an action plan and the targets set for missed refuse collections as set at one missed bin per 100,000. This was based on the audited methodology for original BV 88
- In addition Onyx were asked to achieve 95% on the bulky collection service Monday to Thursday and to pick up any missed collection by Friday of the same week.
- The information on performance is monitored and presented at each level of meeting. This has resulted in Onyx purchasing 3 new vehicles and bringing into service from other contracts another 3 vehicles for both domestic and bulky waste collection.
- Onyx were asked to replace the Operations and Contract managers for the Brent Contract. The replacement managers have come from the Westminster and Camden contracts. A new management structure has been introduced which has resulted in an increase in the numbers of managers / Supervisors by 3 and 2

charge hands. They have also brought back dedicated supervision for the refuse collection services.

- The additional supervision has resulted in ensuring all vehicles have working radios and that the radios are used. An additional crew have been set up to collect missed collections on the same day. Onyx are keen to move to an actual based system for monitoring missed collections and work on how this will be implemented is being considered. The Christmas 2004, Easter and May Day bank holiday 2005 collections have worked well.
- The Contender system now is now properly resourced by Onyx and the monitoring information we now receive is better than our neighbouring borough Camden. In addition Brent is also seeking to upgrade its own Contender system.
- Onyx management are considering introducing hand held monitoring aids in both Brent and Camden by the end of the year.
- The working relationship between Onyx and StreetCare staff on the ground has also improved and will get better with the joint training planned when the new Ward based Street are in post.
- StreetCare are in the process of organising a forum for consulting with both private and public housing clients.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 It is anticipated the majority of actions required are already provided for in the 2005/6 budget.
- 6.2 While the Onyx contract was economical at the start of the contract period, having indexed the contract price in line with the Baxter index resulted in increases far in excess of inflation. The Baxter index has increased by 46.23% since the start of the contract while inflation based on the RPIX index is only 21.03%. This additional 25.2% equates to some £1.2M p.a. on the total Onyx contract.

## **7.0 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 The task group recommends that the contract with Onyx be updated and that a list of amendments to it be maintained. Where the contract has been amended by agreement since award of the contract then all amendments should be properly documented. The Council cannot impose unilateral variations of contract on Onyx and therefore any future variations of contract would need to be agreed in writing with Onyx and would usually have a cost implication. Pursuant to condition 4 of the contract, the Council can in some circumstances impose unilateral modifications in the service on Onyx (such as requiring Onyx to cease to provide parts of the service or to provide additional services). Like with variations such modification would usually have a cost implication (although in some cases this might be a reduction in price). Additionally, any future variation of contract must be permissible

under the EU Public Procurement Regulations which constrain variations and amendments to contracts post award.

## **8.0 Diversity Implications**

- 8.1 Recommendations from task groups are incorporated within service department's delivery or development plans and as such will be subject to the equalities impact assessments carried out by services as part of their work program. In addition, the annual review of Overview & Scrutiny activities includes an equalities impact assessment.
- 8.2 This report hopes to address equalities issues to help make services fairer and more easily accessible to all.

## **9.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications**

- 9.1 There are no specific staffing or accommodation issues to be considered in this report.

## **Background Papers**

Report of the Task Group of the Performance and Finance Select Committee on 'Domestic Household and Bulky Waste Collection'.

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