

Is the West Berkshire new Waste Strategy flawed!

As the previous portfolio holder at West Berkshire

“I would not have proposed this strategy”

Background:

- The overwhelming feedback from 5000 people, i.e. 71%, disagreed with the strategy of adopting a 3-week waste collection schedule.
- South Oxfordshire is the 2nd best for recycling in the country at 62.7% - West Berkshire is 49.8%.
- South Oxfordshire is fortnightly collections but already 12.9% better than West Berkshire
- What can be recycled is already comparable between the two authorities.
- The two area's are very similar in makeup.
- There appears to be just 3 real differences
 1. The waste contract for South Oxford is with Biffa and for West Berkshire it is with Veolia
 2. South Oxfordshire has 1 recycling bin, West Berkshire Has 3
 3. South Oxfordshire has 3 to 4 containers for kerbside collection whilst West Berkshire has 5 to 6

So why **MUST** West Berkshire, with this short-term strategy, go to 3-week collection.

The new strategy only hopes to get closer to the rate already achieved by its Neighbour?

- We already know that
 - Those that are willing and able are already doing what they can.
 - We know from data in the strategy that for 13 years plus, education has been the main thrust of changing people's habits and trying to get recycling rates higher. See figure 1.2 Essentially a flat line.

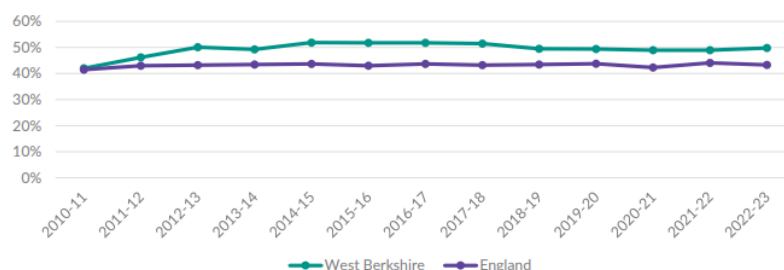


Figure 1.2. West Berkshire's Current and Historic Recycling Rate Compared to England's Average

- The new short-term strategy tries to use the stick to force people to change.
- Human nature is such that the more we ask of people, the less chance there will be that they do it. Remember those who are willing and able are already doing their bit.
- We also know there is finite room at homes to sort into subgroups of recycling . Therefore we have an unchangeable barrier for increased recycling.
- The more separation we ask for upfront, the greater chance of contaminated separated waste and so the lower the value when re-selling.
- The solution to the nappy issue at 3 weeks is unlikely to be resolved by trying to persuade people to use "Real Nappies". If this was the case, disposable nappies would not be so popular.
- As West Berkshire asks people to separate their recyclables at home, it then needs to collect those separated recyclables with a fleet of special vehicles.

Given the above I must question the strategy and have been asking West Berkshire administration to do just that.

Look again

Look at alternatives

- If the strategy is really about better recycling, then surely, we would learn from those that are already better?
- If it's actually about saving money (that may be, as we know the Council is cash strapped) then.
 - Less containers saves money
 - Less vehicle types saves money
 - Less vehicle movement saves money and the environment.
- My own strategy would have been to
 - Use as much new technology at the recycling plants as possible to keep and improve the breadth of what can be recycled and the resulting quality
 - Lobby and lobby again to reduce use of non-recyclable materials
 - Minimise the range of Vehicles needed by minimising the number of containers needed
 - Take the savings associated with simplification of the collection process and spend on improved MRF's

"It really is time to find a way to step change West Berkshire recycling rate"

What might that look like

