

**Report OSB/03/11 of the Overview and Scrutiny Board
to the Mayor**

**Implementation of New Refuse and Recycling Service by TOR2:
Lessons Learned**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the Overview and Scrutiny Board's review was to consider and identify further lessons learned from the implementation of the new service that began in September 2010. The purpose was not to question or examine the principle of the introduction of TOR2 or the need to increase the recycling rate in the Bay. The Board's aim was to determine what lessons could be learned from the implementation of the new refuse and recycling service.
- 1.2 At its meeting on 7 February 2011 the Overview and Scrutiny Board considered Report 21/2011 which set out information on the implementation of the new refuse and recycling service by TOR2¹. The meeting was attended by representatives of TOR2's Board, the Environment Commissioner, the Cabinet Member for Community Services, and the Service Manager (Town Services). Report 21/2011 is attached as Appendix One and the minutes of the meeting of 7 February 2011 as Appendix Two.

2. Reasons for Review

- 2.1 While the Mayor has indicated (through the local news media) that he would be extremely unlikely to ever consider changing the refuse and recycling service again, Overview and Scrutiny Board members are mindful TOR2 has only an initial ten-year contract to provide services. Moreover, large-scale changes to service are possible during this ten-year contract period and in the interests of best value the Council would be expected to examine other procurement options before any extensions of the contract period are agreed. The Overview and Scrutiny Board additionally consider that many of the lessons identified can, if implemented, help improve the performance of future projects other than TOR2 and across the Council.

3. Findings and Recommendations

- 3.1 With reference to Report 21/2011, Board members considered the lack of focused information provided to the Board to inform their review of the implementation as extremely disappointing, particularly given the special meeting of the Board arranged to consider the

¹ TOR2, is a Joint Venture Company (owned by May Gurney (80%) and Torbay Council (20%)) created in July 2010 to take over operational delivery of certain services in Torbay, including waste and recycling collections.

issues and its rearrangement (from early December 2010) at the request of the Cabinet Member for Community Services. (It was noted that council officers felt that the original brief was responded to fully.)

- 3.2 Overview and Scrutiny Board Members found a lack of evidence that lessons had actually been learned by TOR2 and others as a result of the problems experienced during implementation of the new service. For example, Board members heard from a member of TOR2's Board that with hindsight the implementation of the new refuse and recycling service could not have been enacted differently and that resources to assist the change could not have been increased. Board members had hoped those responsible for implementation would bring together insights gained to usefully apply in future and put forward recommendations on 7 February 2011.
- 3.3 Following its investigation the Overview and Scrutiny Board framed 10 recommendations where it judged lessons could be learned. These recommendations are considered below, with a statement of the Board's reasons accompanying each.
- 3.4 **Recommendation 1: If adopting a strategy likely to lead to sustained high levels of customer enquiries, such as a big-bang deployment, ensure that measures and capacity are planned and implemented to deliver an acceptable service level.** Better call centre forecasting and planning to meet the volume and intensity of calls might have enabled the call centre to achieve an acceptable service level; however, Board members doubt the limited work station capacity of the call centre was adequate for the demand created by a big-bang deployment and the relatively late release of information to the public. The Board received evidence indicating that, despite the Council's in house staff commendably taking on additional hours and responsibilities, the arrangements to handle calls relating to the service change were inadequate. Board members were also mindful that the customer service for Council customers with non-TOR2 enquiries was affected adversely during the deployment period.
- 3.5 **Recommendation 2: Ensure that a customer-oriented approach is central to frontline service changes and transitions and make certain that Service Level Agreements and service specifications both reflect such a focus and are met.** Board members found that in terms of customer service, the rationale for a big-bang deployment compared to a longer scale staged deployment approach was not established. Board members found evidence that in relation to customer service the merits of a longer-scale staged deployment were unduly downplayed by representatives of TOR2 and other decision-makers in favour of a big-bang deployment. For example, the Board was advised by representatives of the TOR2 Board that such a significant service change was expected to create a 'hiatus' in the refuse and recycling service and to take three or four collection cycles to settle down. Board members were also aware of the apparent inconsistency from representatives of TOR2 between acknowledging that a break in continuity of service was expected and yet also citing judgement and forecasts of the transition plan as exemplary.
- 3.6 Board members would caution against any outlook that tolerates the notion that significant changes to the recycling and refuse collection are accompanied unavoidably by such problems as experienced in Torbay. Moreover, the rationale put forward to explain the speed and timing of the introduction of the new service (outlined in Appendix One) suggests customer service was compromised by a timetable driven by concerns with possible LATS (Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme) fines and efficiencies in operational planning; the

implementation options were compromised by time crunch as decisions were made to fit a timescale.

- 3.7 **Recommendation 3: Ensure that high-quality information is given to all stakeholders in a timely and appropriate manner – make certain a robust Communications Plan is developed and implemented, for example, one with a clear strategy and a stakeholder analysis.** The provision of more information to residents at a far earlier stage prior to the implementation of the deployment may well have proved worthwhile, particularly given the lack of public consultation (discussed below). Board members were advised by a member of TOR2's Board that experience elsewhere suggested information relayed early in a deployment process would not be remembered by the majority of the public; however, given the lack of public consultation there was a strong case for widespread information-giving to customers at the earliest possible stage in the process prior to implementation. Such an approach could have reasonably been expected to both reduce the number of overall enquiries from customers concerning the actual service change and reduce the peak in enquiries and complaints during the big-bang deployment phase of implementation.
- 3.8 **Recommendation 4: Ensure that communicating the anticipated benefits for stakeholders, the rationale for change, is accorded a sufficiently high priority in the implementation of service changes – make certain a robust Communications Plan is developed and implemented, for example, one with a clear strategy and a stakeholder analysis.** The advantages and improvements of the service change (and the shortcomings or limitations of the existing in-house service system) could have been communicated better to the public prior to implementation. Enhanced communication would have been expected to alleviate customer dissatisfaction issues with implementation, particularly concerning the appropriateness of the changes to the service. For instance, the issues could have been framed more suitably in terms that more members of the public were better able to engage with through the use of a consistent message containing more information about the limitations of the in-house service. Although perhaps judged less favourable to the Council in the immediate short-term, provision of information to the public on the shortcomings of the in-house service compared to the proposed service could have aided the implementation. For example, members of the public perceived the new service as inferior to the previous service with respect to the recycling of soft plastics. If information had been forthcoming that not all the materials collected under the previous co-mingled green bin service had been recycled (namely, soft plastics) then the likelihood of a more ready and widespread acceptance for the changes would have been increased. Additionally, the reported improvements in recycling rates attributed to the service change might have been questioned less by the public.
- 3.9 **Recommendation 5: In combination with recommendation 4, seek to ensure comprehensive planning and contingency planning processes are put in place, especially when a big-bang implementation is adopted.** If viewed in terms of meeting a tight implementation timetable, the rationale for a big-bang deployment compared to a longer scale staged deployment approach appears clearer, but is not entirely convincing. The potential difficulties of a big-bang deployment compared with a staged deployment are significant: for example, switching all users at once in contrast with converting neighbourhoods at a time; or large scale disruption to collections versus minimal disruption. While acknowledging the advantages to TOR2 of operating one system, rather than two, the Board members found clear evidence that TOR2 and others failed to spot the magnitude of some issues and to address them sufficiently in advance of the big-bang deployment. By opting for a big-bang deployment the need for comprehensive planning

and contingency planning processes was essential, more so than with a staged deployment implementation.

- 3.10 **Recommendation 6: Acknowledge explicitly that frontline service changes are most successful when members of the public understand and accept them.**
- 3.11 **Recommendation 7: Ensure that public consultation is central to the planning of service changes, especially frontline services, and factored into project plans.** The lack of public consultation concerning the change to recycling and waste collection services ultimately hindered the implementation phase of the change. While the Board members understood the commercial sensitivity and procurement timescales put forward to explain the lack of consultation, greater public input on a matter that affected every household in the Bay would have been advisable – even when not seeking views to influence implementation, making information available to the public (as discussed in Recommendation 3 above) would have aided the service change. Conceivably, earlier engagement with the public would have exposed to public scrutiny the implementation options under consideration and those rejected.
- 3.12 **Recommendation 8: Ensure that the potential value of a pilot in large scale service change is thoroughly appraised.** In terms of customer service and satisfaction, the decision to not adopt a staged roll-out deployment with a pilot or a big-bang deployment with a pilot appears unsound. The Overview and Scrutiny Board heard that learning from a pilot in one locality within the Bay might have limited applicability to other Bay localities; however, although a pilot might not have been expected to add anything new or important to the main deployment it could have been reasonably expected to flag up and work out any implementation issues on a small-scale, rather than on the Bay-wide scale likely with a big-bang deployment. A pilot could be expected to reduce the number of unanticipated problems prior to implementation and ultimately improve quality and efficiency.
- 3.13 **Recommendation 9: Acknowledge explicitly that most credit for the success of the new refuse and recycling service should go to both TOR2 operatives and members of the public for their efforts and resilience throughout the implementation of the new service.**
- 3.14 **Recommendation 10: With specific reference to TOR2 collection vehicles, seek to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on the local authority's network.** The Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed the need for better planning of scheduled times of collection along busy main roads to minimise traffic hold-ups. Board members welcomed confirmation from representatives of TOR2 that this was an issue that would be revisited.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Notwithstanding the perceived and stated advantages of and need for a big-bang deployment, the Overview and Scrutiny Board consider that the merits of a staged roll-out option appear not to have been considered adequately or the implementation was an example of an unrealistically tight timetable imposed upon a project. In terms of customer service the rationale put forward by TOR2 to justify the decision to pursue a big-bang deployment is unconvincing: either, customer service and satisfaction were lowly criteria or the risk assessment and contingency planning were defective or perhaps implementation was subject to time crunch – a decision made to fit a timescale. Success criteria which included how customers and the Council were affected by the implementation would seem

pertinent to any such high-profile frontline service change.

- 4.2 At the risk of stating the obvious, there needs to be comprehensive planning and superior contingency-planning processes when adopting an ambitious big-bang deployment. Any notion that even with hindsight the implementation of the new refuse and recycling service could not have been enacted differently or that resources to assist the change could not have been increased was judged by Overview and Scrutiny Board members as unhelpful. For example, Board members judged that improved communication in terms of language, responsiveness, timeliness, and planning could have ameliorated the big-bang deployment decision.
- 4.3 Given both the adverse publicity of the implementation and the purpose of the special Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on 7 February 2011, Board members were surprised that there was not more atonement offered for the problems accompanying the service change. Equally Board members expected more evidence from representatives of TOR2 and others of reflection upon what they would do differently if they could go back and start over again. Board members were looking for more ready acknowledgement that things could have been done differently, and would be if similar circumstances or changes to service arose again. In contrast, the Board heard that a similar approach to deployment had been adopted by May Gurney in the introduction of new services elsewhere (in Bridgend and in West Oxfordshire).
- 4.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Board advises against any expectations developing in the local authority that significant changes to the recycling and refuse collection are inevitably accompanied by problems such as those experienced in Torbay. Similarly, Board members would challenge sentiments expressed by the Executive that every local authority that changes its refuse and recycling collection system has problems similar or on the scale experienced in the Bay.
- 4.5 As stated above, the Overview and Scrutiny Board consider that many of the lessons identified can, if implemented, help improve the performance of future projects across the Council. Accordingly, the Overview and Scrutiny Board request the Mayor prepare a report, setting out his response to this report, within 2 months.

5. **Response from TOR2**

- 5.1 TOR2 have considered the draft recommendations issued by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel regarding the new kerbside waste collection and recycling service introduced in September 2010.
- 5.2 Within the 10 recommendations and conclusion two main themes are apparent, namely Communications and Method of Roll Out.
- 5.3 In finalising the recommendations it is appropriate to recognise both the approaches and efforts taken to date and also the very positive progress and success achieved as set out below.

5.4 **Communications**

In any change process effective communication and consultation is vital and, in retrospect, there will always be elements that could have been done differently, both in the period

leading up to the change and throughout the process.

In considering recommendations going forwards consideration should be given to what was actioned and continues to be actioned:

- Comprehensive Communications Plan launched
- Call Centre - 25 additional Staff provided by TOR2 in recognition of the additional short term workload
- Teams of Waste Doctors and Canvassers engaged
- Additional lines of communication established to support Call Centre including Website, telephone helpline, and twitter page
- Extensive range of explanatory leaflets explaining recycling to every dwelling
- Many presentations to Community Groups and Public Forums
- Press and radio articles and adverts including Council's Torview magazine
- Specific training to Staff on briefing Residents
- Ongoing PR and communications programme to keep residents informed of service changes and improvements

5.5 Method of Roll out – Planning and Sequencing

Considerable attention to detail was given during the planning stages as to the most effective way of introducing the service change which was the largest change from co mingled collection in the UK. Factors which needed to be taken into account included;-

- The close knit nature of Torbay's Urban Community. Operating different systems in close proximity would cause inevitable confusion ,concern and inefficiencies
- The Recycling Depot does not have the capacity to accommodate multiple types of collection services and would necessitate the expensive provision of a 3rd party transfer station
- Training of Operatives and Staff would take longer and be more complex
- The inefficient use of plant ,vehicles and equipment would be inefficient reducing the viability for capital investment
- The available timescale set by the Council

The implementation in practise had also to contend with the accuracy of the data inherited from the previous regime including 12,000 properties unclassified on the LLPG. This resulted in the need to gather the critical information as the service was rolled out. It was also necessary to assimilate an increase of 77% in assisted collections.

5.6 Successes

- The single stage mobilisation generated the maximum possible savings in running costs from day 1
- The Council's exposure to landfill charges was reduced
- The Council were able to start meeting it's objectives under the Government Waste Strategy for England 2007 legislation
- New jobs were created earlier and support for local employment initiatives
- Positive and constructive response to Customers' concerns and queries
- Collection service fine-tuned to meet Customer circumstances where practical

- High participation and engagement by the Community
- Positive feedback on conscientious and caring approach by TOR2 employees
- Recycling rates already up from 37% to 44% in 6 months
- The upgrading of the HWRC site for the Public
- Development of good partnering relationships with Clients
- Successful launch of Schools Liaison programme raising the importance of recycling

Appendix One: Report 21/2011, Implementation of new refuse and recycling service, Overview and Scrutiny Board, 7 February 2011

Appendix Two: Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Board, 7 February 2011



Briefing Report **21/2011**
No:

Public Agenda Item: **Yes**

Title: **Implementation of new refuse and recycling service**

Wards Affected: **All Wards in Torbay**

To: **Overview & Scrutiny** On: **7 February 2011**

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1. Key points and Summary

1.1 This report has been produced in response to the request from the Overview and Scrutiny Board to review the implementation of the new refuse and recycling service by TOR2.

The Board would like to review lessons learnt from the exercise and how improvements are continuing to be made.

The Board have identified a number of specific areas which they wish to address during this review which have been circulated to the relevant Council Officers and TOR2 senior management. The report is presented in a question and answer format so as to provide an initial response to the points raised and to allow the opportunity for further discussion as each issue is addressed.

2. Introduction

2.1 Torbay Council has commissioned the delivery of the refuse and recycling service from a newly formed company TOR2 following an extensive tender and evaluation process. TOR2 has been formed jointly by Torbay Council and May Gurney with May Gurney holding the majority interest in the company.

As part of this process the Councils existing resources including the Council staff undertaking these services prior to commissioning, transferred into the new organisation.

During the tender process, in respect of the refuse and recycling service, bidders were asked to propose options for meeting Torbay Councils targets to improve the level of recycling and to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. The option selected by the Council through the evaluation process, whilst essential to meet our recycling challenges has required both staff within the service delivery and residents to adapt to new processes for refuse collection and recycling. This change of process for the delivery of this large scale and vital service through a new organisation has presented considerable challenges.

TOR2 commenced delivery of the new refuse and recycling service in July following a lead in

period to put in place the necessary processes and equipment. Actual domestic collections did not commence until September. The service collects from approximately 63,000 households, or 12,000 per day, each with up to 5 separate containers.

Since its introduction there has been considerable support from the public for the new recycling process, however, as may be expected with the introduction of a new service on this scale there have been difficulties during the implementation and mobilisation period. The Council and TOR2 have been meeting regularly during this period working to resolve issues and to move the service forward.

Clearly dealing with the issues that have arisen has presented the opportunity to learn how to do more of what has worked well and where improvements might be made when undertaking similar projects in the future.

The issues identified are addressed in more detail below as response to the specific points raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

1. What was the rationale behind the speed and timing of the introduction of the new refuse and recycling service? What is it more to serve to the mobilisation of the new company rather than to serve the community?

The early implementation of the new refuse and recycling service was essential to avoid paying increased LATS fines, due to the reduction of biodegradable waste to landfill target from 2009/10 to 2010/11 by 3,589 tons.

In addition, the Council has a target within its agreed waste strategy to offer at least two types of recyclable to every householder across the bay by December 2010, without the early mobilisation of TOR2 the Council would have missed this target.

Mobilisation of this new service across the Bay rather than area by area was anticipated to minimise confusion for residents whilst offering efficiencies in work planning. This approach has also delivered efficiencies in relation to the purchase, provision and delivery of new equipment including vehicles.

Efficiencies through this approach and any potential savings would obviously enable other community services to be supported.

2. What were the obligations of TOR2 in relation to introducing new refuse and recycling service? The Board would wish to see the appropriate section of the contract in relation to this.

Supply Schedule 2 of the contract in Members Room

3. Why did the re-used wheelie bins have the wrong information on them? How is this being rectified?

Approximately 10,000 wheelie bins were collected from twin bin customers, emptied, cleaned and redistributed to customers who previously had seagull sacks. In the cleaning process a sticker on the inside of the green bin lid providing information on the previous co-mingled recycling bins should have been removed. We know that this was not always the case. This is being rectified by crews sticking a new sticker on the lid to confirm to

customers that these green bins are now for residual waste only. Various communications have been sent to support this message.

4. Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out prior to the implementation of the new scheme? What issues were identified? How have these been addressed?

An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been completed prior to the implementation of the new refuse and recycling service.

The assessment considered the profile of residents within Torbay who would be receiving the service taking into account the high percentage of older residents and the existing number who required assistance with recycling and refuse collection.

The assessment also drew attention for the need to ensure information can be provided in various forms to meet the needs of the community, including, braille, large print and different languages and that new and existing staff are trained to be able to support customers with disabilities.

Provision for assisted collections has been included within the contract which during implementation included the support of waste doctors to meet with those members of the community receiving this support to agree suitable collection arrangements.

Consideration has also been given to the logistics of some less accessible premises and alternative collection arrangements made including the use of alternative size refuse collection containers.

5. How was the level of phone calls about the introduction of the new scheme so badly underestimated? What additional resources were needed to meet demand? Could these have been put in place earlier?

It was agreed through the project board that the Councils Customer First team would handle calls relating to TOR2 provision of services including the refuse and recycling service.

TOR2 have an obligation to support this team when a service change has a significant impact on call volumes. TOR2 planned to provide this support to the call centre pre service change and to maintain this support for three and a half months reacting to increases in call volume. There were some initial difficulties in providing adequate resources and in retaining suitably trained agency staff.

Additional staff peaked at twenty five with a normal shift total of fifteen personnel which was the maximum capacity that the call centre had work stations for. For a two week period the call centre worked extended hours including evenings and Saturdays. In addition to this, calls were being handled by TOR2 admin team, dedicated Waste doctor email and phone line which involved a further eight personnel.

Lessons learned during this period relate to the use of agency support and the fluctuation in the availability of these staff and their varying abilities to undertake this demanding work. In addition the Council call centre management have experienced communication problems when having to arrange for agency staff indirectly through TOR2, which has on occasions led to confusion as to when staff would be available to support demands in service. To

combat these issues the Council's in house staff have been required to take on additional hours and responsibilities.

6. Can we have a monthly breakdown of “missed assisted collections” since implementation compared with the same period for the previous year? Does this continue to be a significant problem? How is this being addressed?

Missed **assisted** collections were not and are not logged separately, but included in the overall missed bins. The contract states that TOR2 have one calendar month from application to put an assisted collection in place, so with a large increase in requests, this issue took time to settle down. The month allowed time for TOR2 to make the necessary contact and agree arrangements; however the majority of such applications have been added to collections rounds immediately and issues resolved at front line level to speed up this process.

There were some issues relating to the accuracy of assisted collection information held for existing customers which may have not been up to date and led to some confusion

Improvements are now being made with the implementation of in cab technology which will enable assisted collection data to be sent directly to the front line operators and up dated as changes in arrangements are required.

TOR2 are currently providing assisted collections for 6,800 households

7. Can we have a monthly breakdown of “missed bins” since implementation compared with the same period for the previous year?

Reported Missed Collections 2010/2011

Total of reported missed collections as recorded on Civica call centre log.

November 2010 0.04% (1404 reported missed collections)

December 2010 0.02% (863 reported missed collections)

January 2011 0.04% (1050 reported missed collections)

Comparable figures are not available for the same period last year as the service is now delivered using a completely different process.

8. What level of performance deductions have we received (or are due to receive) from TOR2 since its inception? What's the breakdown of those deductions?

To date in respect of the refuse and recycling service the following deductions have been made which are subject to ongoing discussions

July- 15%

August- 15%

September – 10%

October – 10%

These deductions relate to front line service delivery and the supply of performance information/reports.

Payments are made as a twelfth of the agreed annual sum each month

9. On a general point, what performance targets have been set for the payment of invoices by TOR2 to its suppliers? Are these in line with the targets/requirements placed on the local authority? What sanctions are there for non-compliance with this target?

No performance targets were set within the contract for TOR2 on the payment of suppliers as this was considered to be a business decision to be made by the company acting as a limited company outside the Council's control.

It is expected that good business practice would require suppliers to be fully aware of TOR2 trading terms prior to agreeing to supply goods and services to the company.

Whilst it is acknowledged that TOR2 is a limited company outside the Council's control and therefore free to set its own terms of trade, the Council is fully cognoscente of both its and TOR2's responsibilities regarding the future and needs of local businesses. As such the Council's Chief Financial Officer and the Council's Director on the board have both made clear to the management of TOR2 the impact that adverse terms of trade could have on local businesses and asked that the company reconsider the quoted terms of trade or ensure that local businesses are fully aware of them before entering into any agreement.

TOR2 have agreed to discuss alternative terms with individual suppliers where the standard terms may be causing difficulties.

Name of Head of Business Unit **Sue Cheriton**

Title of Head of Business Unit **RVS Executive Head**

Appendices

None

Documents available in members' rooms

Schedule 2 of Contract

Background Papers:

The following documents/files were used to compile this report:

TOR2 contract

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

7 February 2011

-: Present :-

Councillor Thomas (J) (Chairman)

Councillors Baldrey, Darling, Excell, Manning, McPhail, Parrott, and Richards

(Also in attendance: Councillors Butt and Oliver)

510. Implementation of new refuse and recycling service

The Board considered Report 21/2011 which set out information on the implementation of the new refuse and recycling service by TOR2. The Board was advised that the joint venture company approach of TOR2 was innovative, was predicted to save approximately £1million revenue expenditure per annum, and would avoid future landfill fines. The Board was advised that alternatives to the new refuse and recycling service would not have produced such recycling outcomes as were achieved and anticipated in Torbay.

The Board was advised that services had improved significantly since the roll out of the new refuse and recycling service. A member of TOR2's Board apologised for the problems experienced during the deployment of the new service and indicated that difficulties had been anticipated with such a significant change in service. The Board was informed that official assisted collections had increased by seventy-seven per cent compared with the previous in-house service. The Board was advised that under the previous in-house service a large number of assisted collections had been provided by operatives and not recorded. Members were informed that there was an average of thirty to forty collections per day missed during refuse and recycling collections across the Bay.

In response to questions, the Board was advised that between thirty and forty new posts had been created through the new refuse and recycling service. The Board was advised that although members of original in-house crews were still employed by TOR2 the local knowledge of operatives had been diluted somewhat during the change in service.

Members asked how many members of staff from the in-house service were employed still at TOR2 and were advised that the number could be provided.

Members questioned why the contract establishing TOR2 did not take contain any element concerning bringing the Council into disrepute. Board members questioned the level of information contained within Report 21/2011 and were advised that the

report was intended to facilitate discussion and further information could have been provided if requested.

Members were advised of the roll out of refuse and recycling services in Somerset. In response to questions, the Board was informed that the service change in Somerset had been introduced over an eighteen month period as the councils involved had decided to compromise on savings.

In response to questions, the Board was advised by the Environment Commissioner, Torbay Council, that the decision to introduce the new system as a big bang deployment had not compromised customer service. The Board was advised that issues had arisen during deployment that had not been foreseen in planning. In reply to questions, members were advised that a staged rollout was judged likely to cause more confusion for customers and difficulties than the approach employed.

The Board was advised that the big bang deployment used for the new kerbside-sort refuse and recycling service, unlike a longer scale staged deployment, avoided the difficulties of operating two systems at one depot.

Members questioned the rationale of the big bang deployment approach compared to a longer scale staged rollout or deployment approach. In reply, the Board was advised that a consultant engaged had judged the transition plan to be exemplary.

Members questioned the lack of information and education that had led to a public perception of a reduction in the recycling service for soft plastics. In response, the Board was advised that under the previous co-mingled green bin service materials were sorted and sold if possible but there had not been a market for soft plastics. A member of TOR2's Board indicated that the public perception the new service was recycling less than the previous service was understood.

Members questioned the lack of emphasis on home-composting and suggested the value of introducing Compost Ambassadors to help minimise waste.

In reply to questions from members, a member of TOR2's Board stated that with hindsight the implementation of the new refuse and recycling service could not have been enacted differently and that resources to assist the change could not have been increased. The Board was advised that implementation of such a significant service change was expected to take three or four collection cycles to settle down. The Board was advised that TOR2 did not anticipate the Facebook campaign that sought to create more complaints concerning the new service.

In response to questions, the Board was advised that at the launch of the new refuse and recycling service there was one driver and two loaders per collection vehicle and that most collection rounds had since reduced to one driver and one loader. A representative of TOR2 advised that two operatives was the preferred number as three started to get in each other's way once they became more practised and familiar with the role. Members were advised that on Mondays approximately seventy per cent of collection rounds had two loaders per vehicle at present but this was planned to reduce in line with operational requirements. Members questioned the reduction in loaders, with particular reference to busy roads and the exacerbation of traffic hold-ups.

Members suggested that the publicity and advance notice relating to information and education events about the new service could have been better.

Members recounted difficulties experienced in reporting problems such as fly-tipping to TOR2 and suggested there had been a communications gap experienced by councillors and perhaps by members of the public also. Members were advised that TOR2 only collected fly-tipping from local authority controlled land.

Members questioned the absence from Torbay of the relevant Cabinet Member at the commencement of the new refuse and recycling service.

Members questioned TOR2's standard terms of trade, with particular reference to payment of invoices, and were advised that Council officers had asked the company to reconsider its terms of trade.

Members were advised that the financial results for TOR2 would be published in an annual report and made available to Councillors.

Members questioned the merit in using a big bang deployment with such an innovative system, the apparent lack of detailed planning for the deployment, the scale of the problems encountered, and suggested the three to four month period of difficulties was a significant period for those members of the public affected. In response the Board was advised that the merits of big bang deployment had been established elsewhere, communication and planning could have been better, and due to commercial sensitivity and procurement timescales there had not been time for consultation. The Board was advised by a member of TOR2's Board that experience elsewhere suggested information relayed early in the deployment process would not be remembered by the majority of the public. The Board was also informed that a similar big bang deployment approach had been adopted in the introduction of new services in Bridgend and in West Oxfordshire.

Members recapped key information presented and considered possible lessons to be learned from the implementation of the new service. A number of points were raised during the ensuing discussion, including:

- the lack of focused information provided to the Board to inform their review unacceptable;
- Members' lack of confidence that lessons had been learned from the problems of the implementation;
- the provision of more information to residents at a far earlier stage prior to the implementation of the deployment would have proved invaluable;
- the apparent inadequacy of the consultants' report that informed the implementation of the new service, the value of penalty clauses in contracts employing consultants, and the possible merit of pursuing any such clause in this instance;
- the impact of the changes on the workforce;

- the merit in looking at scheduled times of collection along main roads, to minimise traffic hold-ups;
- improved communication in terms of language, responsiveness, timeliness, and planning could have ameliorated the implementation of the new service;
- the merit of a longer-scale staged deployment, with the potential advantages of less disruption to customer service;
- the potential limited value of a pilot to assess suitability and learn lessons prior either to a big bang deployment or to a staged deployment;
- the need for comprehensive planning and better contingency-planning processes, particularly when adopting a big bang deployment approach; and
- agreement concerning the resilience of both the public and TOR2 operatives throughout the implementation of the new service, to who most credit for the success of the new refuse and recycling service should go.

Resolved: that the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board concerning lessons learned from the implementation of TOR2's new refuse and recycling service be finalised by Board members and provided to appropriate decision-makers.

Chairman