

THE MOSELEY SOCIETY
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 21st MAY, 2008, 7.00 p.m.
at The Post Office Building, Alcester Road, Moseley.

Keynote address: Jeremy Shields on Recycling

Jeremy Shields, who is in charge of Waste Management for the City Council, then spoke and answered questions about recycling.

He said that 91.4% of properties in the city now benefited from at least two of the three streams of kerbside collections – of

green waste,

paper in the blue box,

mixed glass bottles and jars/plastic bottles/food and drink cans in the green box.

He said that in the two years it had taken to roll the collection programme out across the whole city and that the recycling rate had now risen to over 26%. He then said that he could make some straightforward suggestions about sort of things that people could do to increase the success of the service.

1. Greenwaste.

Jeremy apologised for recent delays in collections – which were due to the huge amounts of green waste being put out. The tonnage had doubled in a fortnight, and although the collection rate had been increased, the very specialised vehicles that are needed cannot be increased in line with the sudden appearance of the material. He said that weather conditions affected the amount of green waste put out, and that if the teams did not complete collections in an area they returned on the next working day to do so.

He said that the crews work extremely hard [one member had said ‘why do we need prisons when there are jobs like this?’] because everything put out has to be lifted into the vehicle. He said that householders could help by:

- Tying branchy materials with jute or bio-degradable twine rather than pushing it into green sacks from which the crews would have to extract it.
- Not tying the necks of bags.
- Not allowing any litter to be put in the bags, or it will not be collected.
- Not putting green waste out at the same time as the boxed waste.
- In reply to a question, Jeremy said that they were experimenting with fabric bags rather than green plastic sacks. One member said that he used his own collapsible crate and that this seemed to suit the collectors.

2. Blue Box collection.

Jeremy’s requests are:

- Put paper in on edge, as is shown on the instruction leaflet, and not flat, as it is much less likely to blow out and cause litter in the street.
- Flatten boxes before adding them to the blue box.
- Do not put shredded paper straight into the blue box – put it securely into a cereal or similar type of box.

3. Green Box collection.

Jeremy's request's are:

- The leaflet deliberately only mentions **plastic bottles**. No other type of plastic can be recycled by the firm that deals with Birmingham's Green Box waste. Jeremy demonstrated how easy it is to flatten a plastic bottle, resealing it with the top so that it stays in that condition and takes up much less space in the vehicles. As this waste is taken to Essex for automatic sorting, efficient use of the vehicles really makes a difference.
- There is no need to wash cans, tins and bottles meticulously. A swill at the end of the washing up is sufficient – the main benefit of cleaning them is to prevent them smelling before collection. The recycling process does not require items to be perfectly clean.

Jeremy recommended that people look at the video clips available on the Greenstar website: www.greenstar.co.uk [click on Downloads and then chose the option at the bottom of the drop-down menu 'Greenstar video clips'. There is one showing the materials being collected in a dual-purpose vehicle and a second showing how it is separated automatically.

In answer to specific questions he said that

Greenwaste is composted within or a few miles outside the city.

Paper is taken to the Kappa mill at Nechells.

At present there is no plant nearby that is capable and has the capacity to deal with the contents of the green box collections, and so this material goes to Essex. The city is planning its own facility but because of the amount of traffic such a plant generates, finding a suitable location is not easy. However, a processor in the Midlands is still being sought.

Jeremy said that there are some specialised vehicles that can collect blue and green box materials simultaneously, so reducing the need for two separate vehicles, but that they are very expensive and the time between order and delivery can take over a year.

He said that only plastic bottles are collected as they are the only plastics for which there is a market. The mix of polymers in other plastic containers make recycling of those too difficult.

Jeremy said that although there is an income from recycling it does not balance the cost – if it did local authorities would not need to provide the service and commercial firms would do so.

There was discussion about the leaflets and information given out to householders. Jeremy said that leaflet design is under review with the aim of making leaflets entirely visual. Despite the difficulty some people have in understanding the scheme, Birmingham's 11% reject rate from recycling schemes is better than some other cities. Various suggestions were made – including the use of the city's information boards to increase public awareness of the scheme. Jeremy said that work was being done in schools in the hope that children would take the message home.

There was a discussion about the pros and cons of continuing to use bottle banks. Jeremy said that the value of colour sorted glass collected through the banks was greater than unsorted glass via the Green Box collection. Of the 3 colours, green is the least and clear glass the most valuable. Glass collected from bottle banks is taken to kilns to be remade into glass. However the Green Box collections had resulted in an additional 10,000 tons of glass being recycled from the city. Previously this 10,000 tons would have gone to the Tyesley incinerator or to landfill.