

19. RUBBISH BAGS OR STICKERS

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The purpose of this report is to assist the Committee to make a policy decision on the use of stickers for domestic rubbish collection and disposal.

BACKGROUND

A sticker system, (where residents purchase an official Council sticker and place it on a bag of their choice as a way of disposing of household rubbish) has been discussed at Council level on numerous occasions in relation to waster pays. The Council still has to decide if it will pursue this option or remain with the current black rubbish bag system. This report sets out the advantages and disadvantages of the sticker system so a decision can be reached.

WHAT IS A STICKER SYSTEM FOR DOMESTIC RUBBISH DISPOSAL?

- A method of direct charging for domestic rubbish collection and disposal (ie waster pays).
- 26 Stickers would be mailed out to residents in April 2005 as an alternative to a redeemable coupon for 26 standard black bags. Extra stickers would be available for purchase from supermarkets and service centres (for around \$1.15 per sticker).
- Any bag placed at the kerbside with an official sticker on it will be collected by the Council (within specified weight and size limits). Typically residents would use plastic supermarket carry bags and other commercially available plastic bags that they would purchase or acquire.
- Stickers could be designed in such a way that would allow them to be torn in half and placed on smaller sized bags (eg supermarket bags). This option would be investigated further if stickers are pursued.

(Note: The contract for manufacturing bags for the April 2004 allocation has been let. Consequently, a move to stickers would only be possible for the 2005/06 financial year.)

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF A STICKER SYSTEM

1. Advantages

- **Greater choice.** Stickers allow residents to use a bag of their choice (within specified weight and size limits), offering considerable flexibility in the bag used. Residents could use supermarket bags or any commercially available bag to dispose of their refuse. This flexibility may suit households that generate small amounts of waste because they can use smaller bags.
- **Makes use of unwanted bags.** A sticker system allows residents to use old or unwanted bags (eg supermarket bags) to dispose of their refuse rather than the Council buying bags manufactured specifically for the purpose.

2. Disadvantages

- **Non-compliant and low quality bags.** Experience from elsewhere is that a sticker system encourages the use of bags not designed for the purpose or cheaply made bags that leak, tear or split easily and bags that are overfull and overweight. This creates considerable difficulty for the collectors and increases roadside litter. Allowing half stickers to be placed on bags also enables residents to put out larger bags (overweight bags) with half stickers on them. Graham Jones the Solid Waste Manager for the North Shore City Council where stickers are in use, considers that ... "Stickers are not worth the additional operational difficulties of over sized bags and inappropriate bags which lead to litter. I do not recommend providing stickers."

- **Identification and enforcement difficulties.** A sticker system places additional demands on the collection and enforcement staff. Stickers are harder to identify than official Council bags and may not be easily distinguished from bags containing recyclables (eg is a supermarket bag containing recycled paper or refuse?). Collectors must find the sticker on the bag then assess the authenticity, weight and size, of a wide range of bags (this is especially true if private collectors offer bags or stickers in competition with the Council, as they do in Waitakere). In the North Shore the use of stickers has slowed the collection because of the need to scrutinise each bag more closely and because of the greater number of bags collected. Likewise, the enforcement of a sticker system would be more complex because of the range of problems that may arise.
- **Stickers are not familiar to residents.** A sticker system would be new to residents. Enough change may be experienced by the move to the 26 bag waster pays system without complicating it further by introducing stickers. A sticker system could be introduced at a later stage if it was thought appropriate to avoid this potential confusion.
- **Limited space for information.** Currently instructions are placed on the side of the bags that detail what items can be placed in the bags, how to set them at the kerbside and how to reduce waste. This information would be difficult to incorporate onto a sticker, and a brochure accompanying the stickers is likely to be discarded.
- **Forgery.** Any sticker system is open to forgery especially given the very short time that would be taken to inspect the sticker at the time of collection.

COST TO THE RESIDENTS

Overall the move to stickers is likely to be cost neutral to the residents of Christchurch. A saving of \$215,000 to the Council would be made due to the lower manufacturing and distribution costs of the stickers, but this would be offset by increased collection, education, enforcement and litter costs (\$400,000). In addition to this, many households would still buy commercially available rubbish bags for convenience.

	26 bags	26 stickers
Manufacture and distribution	615,000	50,000
Extra refuse collection cost		150,000
Additional education/enforcement cost		80,000
Additional litter collection cost		120,000
COST TO COUNCIL	615,000	400,000
Additional cost to residents (30% of households buy 26 commercially available rubbish bags at 20 cents each)		198,000
TOTAL	615,000	598,000

CONCLUSION

The strong professional advice from staff is to continue to use black rubbish bags for the collection of household refuse. However, if the Council decides to pursue the sticker option, it can be implemented, but may have extra costs and could impact on the cleanliness of the city and so the well being of the residents.

SUMMARY

Staff recommend that the Council continue to provide black rubbish bags for household refuse disposal to maintain levels of service and the cleanliness of the city.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Council continue to use black bags to collect household rubbish.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.