

No to carbon debt collectors

The DEFRA Minister's statement on the prospect of levying charges for household waste recycling came under fire today from APSE, the leading organisation representing front line direct services within local government. APSE Chief Executive, Paul O'Brien, commenting on David Miliband's speech to the LGA said **"Local authorities are working hard to convince communities that recycling is the right thing to do. We cannot have local authorities portrayed as carbon debt collectors no matter how meritocratic the principle of making the 'polluters pay'. We need a comprehensive strategy that brings communities on board before we start sabre rattling about more charges. Councils are already facing pressure to suppress council tax rises. To suggest they charge 'polluters' will be akin to pouring petrol on a bonfire for many citizens."**

APSE further explained that the issues are far more complex than Mr Miliband acknowledged in Bournemouth this week:-

- APSE is concerned by charging proposals as local councils are likely to be tasked with collection and enforcement mechanisms which could portray councils as collecting a stealth tax from the community.
- APSE also fears that measures to rush through charging proposals could increase the incidence of fly tipping to avoid payments where waste may prove difficult to separate.
- In addition new powers under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act need to be bed down to allow councils the opportunity to tackle recycling as part of broader environmental initiatives.
- The take up of business improvement districts, which can allow for additional funds to be spent on environmental initiatives, are also a relatively new flexibility for councils to promote in encouraging recycling and care for the environment.

Mr O'Brien added **" Any mechanism for charging needs to be carefully thought through. We must not make policy on the hoof. We need to think of how charging strategies can be fairly dealt with for some of the most excluded and what criteria will be applied for waste minimisation, such as the impact on larger families. We equally cannot ignore the role of councils and government departments as purchasers from manufacturers and suppliers; If they themselves are not purchasing in an environmentally friendly manner it would be obtuse to impose charges on citizens."**

Warning against a rush to charge Paul O'Brien added **"Whilst it is entirely appropriate for the Minister to suggest charging we perhaps need to look at fines or fixed penalty notices for non compliance rather than a set of charges for honest citizens who are prepared to do their bit for the environment. Charging should be a last not a first resort."**

ENDS

Notes to Editor

1. APSE is The Association for Public Service Excellence

2. APSE is a not for profit organisation working with over 300 local authorities throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
3. APSE issues advice on a range of council services to its member authorities including the fields of employee relations, parks, leisure, refuse collection and grounds maintenance service areas
4. Media interviews by arrangements with Mark Roden or Mo Baines on 0161 772 1810 / 07971 843515