

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **'WE'VE WHEELIE BIN HELPING', COUNCIL TELLS MP**

25 August 2009

Henley MP, John Howell, today visited South Oxfordshire District Council to discuss how problems which residents had raised with him were being addressed and how the new waste contract was progressing.

The hour-long briefing was provided by Council officers and Cllr David Dodds, the Council's Cabinet Member responsible for waste.

John Howell said:

*"Now that the contract has been in operation for a while, this seemed the best time to follow up on how the council had dealt with those residents who had written to me with complaints and to find out how the contract was progressing."*

*"Waste collection is of course the responsibility of the District Council rather than national government. What I have been able to do make sure that all those who wrote to me received a proper response from the Council and had their problems addressed. I was pleased to see that this was being done."*

Officers repeated the apology given by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive last week that some residents had experienced problems with the new waste collection arrangements. Work is continuing with about 150 individuals who still have special problems with their collection.

The MP also learned that some 5,000 houses across the District had now been made exempt from the wheelie bin collection and were using sacks. This included a large number in the centre of the constituency's towns and reflected concerns about the difficulty of using wheelie bins in particular town centre locations.

John added:

*"I am very pleased that the Council is now also providing assisted collections to those such as some older people who simply can't manage the bins. This is a good step forward."*

*"I got a clear message that the Council is keen to work with residents to make this contract a success. This is the sort of project where you can't overdo communication. There is a number of reviews taking place over the next couple of months to assess how it's all going and I have asked to be kept briefed and up to speed on problems and how they are being tackled."*

Officers went on to outline the significant increases in recycling which had already occurred and which suggested that the district was on course to

achieve a sustainable recycling rate of around 65%. This would also help reduce the likelihood of the Government's Landfill Tax fines causing increases in Council Tax and would make the Council one of the best performers in England.