

Report of	Head of Operational Services	Author	Chris Dowsing ☎ 282752
Title	Colchester Waste Collection Strategy		
Wards affected	All Wards		

The Panel is invited to review the results of the recent waste consultation looking at residents' views of the current waste collection service and potential options for the service.

1. Action required

- 1.1 The panel is asked to note the results of the recent waste consultation. The full report is shown in Appendix One.
- 1.2 The Panel is asked to comment on the proposed changes to the waste and recycling service.

2. Reason for scrutiny

- 2.1 Following the adoption of the Council's Waste Vision at Full Council a consultation on the current and future options for the waste service took place between Monday 7 March and Friday 3 June 2016.
- 2.2 The Council is now proposing changes to the collection methods employed by the waste service.
- 2.3 The views of the Scrutiny Panel are sought on the proposed changes to the waste service.

3. Background information

- 3.1. Currently the service carries out over 16,000,000 individual collections per year from around 78,000 properties, a mixture of residual waste, food waste, garden waste, paper, glass, cans and textiles from households. It also provides a network of bring sites across the Borough for residents to place recyclable materials into.
- 3.2. The service that is currently provided has evolved over time. The collection of residual waste has been a constant service and the first material collected for recycling, many years ago, was paper. The separate collection of glass and cans followed in 1999 with the introduction of the still used green boxes along with a fleet of new collection vehicles. A garden waste collection service was introduced in 2004, following a successful bid for funding to DEFRA and the collection of plastics followed shortly thereafter.

- 3.3. In July 2011 the service moved from a five day to a four day week operation to improve the service to customers around Bank Holidays and in October 2013 food waste collections, following a successful funding bid to DCLG, were introduced to all households in the Borough. All of these additions bring us to where the service is today.
- 3.4. As a result of the service seeing different materials added over a period of time, there are a range of different containers which customers are asked to separate recycling into over a fortnightly schedule (blue and green weeks).
- 3.5. In order to assist with the collection of waste and recycling, the Council provides the following equipment to residents:
- 52 black sacks annually (for residual waste)
 - Unlimited numbers of clear sacks (for paper and plastic collections)
 - Unlimited green boxes (for glass and cans collections)
 - Unlimited Food waste internal and external caddies
 - 52 Food waste caddy liners - free with first kit then purchased
 - White hessian sacks (for garden waste) – at a cost of £3.70 per sack
- 3.6. The frequency of collections with these containers is shown in the diagram below:

Current Service



- 3.7. We know that there are high levels of satisfaction with our waste and recycling service, as is evidenced in the recent consultation. More details are contained below.
- 3.8. The introduction of food waste collections in October 2013 led to a significant increase in recycling and reduction in residual waste.
- 3.9. However, since that addition to the collections performance in recycling and waste has remained static, as shown in the last three years' key performance indicators attached at Appendix Two.

- 3.10 This report is the first stage of proposing a set of changes that are designed to decrease the amount of residual waste sent to landfill and increase recycling and, without some significant action, we will have to accept continued poor performance in these key indicators.

4. Waste Vision

- 4.1. A waste vision was adopted by the Colchester Council, supporting the Essex vision, which sets out how decisions relating to waste management will be reviewed:
- Waste is managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy, so that waste is prevented and minimised where possible
 - Reuse activity is encouraged in households and businesses
 - Recycling activity increases the quantity of recyclable material and produces high quality materials that are required by re-processors
 - The environmental impacts of the whole system of waste management are minimised
 - The recycling and waste collection service provided by the Council provides value for money for its customers
- 4.2. The Council must look at ways that can deliver improvements in line with its waste vision.
- 4.3. The Essex Waste Partnership has also been working on a set of principles and has adopted a vision that includes the provision of waste management that incentivises waste reduction and encourages higher levels of recycling

5. The Consultation

- 5.1. It was agreed that in order to decide on further changes a public consultation on the waste and recycling service should be undertaken. The Council commissioned Qa Research to undertake the consultation using a mix of qualitative and quantitative research. The research included a number of elements:
- 5.2. Initial qualitative stage
- Eight focus groups with residents across four separate locations in Colchester.
- 5.3. Quantitative stage
- Face-to-face surveys with a representative sample of 1,014 residents undertaken between 7 March and 4 June 2016.

- An open access online survey made available via the Council website between 7 March until Friday 3 June 2016 and 1,575 surveys were completed.
- 5.4. Over half of the residents that took part in the consultation indicated that they would like to see some change in the way their waste and recycling is collected
 - 5.5. It is important to note the face to face interviews ensured that a representative sample was interviewed.
 - 5.6. The survey was also available on-line for all residents. While the survey asked for a postcode to ensure that participants were residents of Colchester, the group responding were self-selecting and it is recognised amongst research experts that people are more likely to respond if they are against change.
 - 5.7. Help to complete the survey was available at free Online Skills events across the borough and residents were able to have assistance from a Customer Advisor at the Community Hub in the town centre where paper copies of the survey were available.
 - 5.8. The full results are available at Appendix One. Key outcomes from the report include:

Current service

- High levels of satisfaction with the current residual waste service (92%)
- High levels of satisfaction with the current recycling service (85%)
- High levels of satisfaction with the garden waste service (80%)

Residual Waste

- The overall responses to the use of wheeled bins for residual waste in the face to face responses are split equally (44% yes v 43% no)
- The overall responses to the use of wheeled bins for residual waste via the online survey were (29% yes v 65% no)

Recycling

- The overall responses to the use of wheeled bins for recycling in the face to face responses are (50% yes v 37% no)
- The overall responses to the use of wheeled bins for recycling via the online survey are (37% yes v 55% no)

Garden Waste

- The overall responses to the use of wheeled bins for garden waste in the face to face responses are split equally (43% yes v 43% no)
- The overall responses to the use of wheeled bins for garden waste via the online survey are (35% yes v 56% no)

Fortnightly Collections

- References to fortnightly collections feature significantly less often than wheelie bins

6. Proposals

6.1. The proposed changes to the current service are as follows:

- End the free provision of black sacks
- Change from weekly to fortnightly collections for residual waste
- Introduce a three sack limit per property for residual waste collections (the same capacity as a 180 litre wheeled bin)
- Introduce separate green boxes for the collection of glass and cans
- Introduce wheeled bin collections in areas that have indicated support for them in the consultation

This means that we will have two collection methods – one based on black sacks and one based around wheeled bins.

6.2. The aim of the proposals set out above are twofold:

- To improve our performance, in particular reducing residual waste and increasing recycling (both in terms of quantity and quality)
- To provide a waste and recycling collection service requested by residents

6.3. These two aims are conflicting and a degree of balance is therefore required.

6.4. A wide range of options have been considered with the focus on minimising the amount of waste we produce and increase the amounts recycled, in accordance with the waste hierarchy. The consultation confirmed there are communities that support the introduction of wheeled bins and the evidence from other councils in the UK clearly shows that wheeled bins are an effective method of reducing residual waste and increasing the amount of recycling.

6.5. There is a vast amount of evidence about the type of collection methods that deliver the best performance. Areas that use wheelie bins consistently achieve the lowest levels of residual waste and the highest levels of recycling as can be seen in the table attached as Appendix Three to this report.

6.6. However, we also know that we have communities in Colchester who do not want wheelie bins and we fully respect their views.

6.7. In order to achieve our aims and improve performance, the alternative option, for those communities who do not want wheelie bins, is to restrict the amount of residual waste that we will collect.

6.8. The experience of other Councils across Essex confirms that restricting the amount of residual waste collected can significantly reduce residual waste and increase rates of recycling. See the Recycling and Composting performance table for 2015/16 attached as Appendix Four to this report.

6.9. We are carefully considering how, in exceptional circumstances, we might be able to allow additional capacity or an alternative arrangement for those residents with significant amounts of medical waste and/or nappies, and the logistical challenges presented by those specific issues.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1. Clearly the first question that most residents will ask is, “which collection method will I be getting?” We are unable to fully answer that question at this stage. A major piece of work must be undertaken before this information will be available.
- 7.2. Now the consultation has been completed and assessed we can begin that necessary work, subject to the views of the Scrutiny Committee. The varied opinions from the wards, as outlined in the consultation, have made the task more complex and therefore more time consuming.
- 7.3. We must consider first where there is support for wheelie bins. This information is now available and we can move onto the next stage, which is consultation with the relevant ward councillors. Once that process has been completed we must then assess whether wheelie bins are appropriate at those locations, taking into account issues including (but not limited to) availability of storage, whether there are an excessive number of steps or particularly steep slopes at the property.
- 7.4. We will need to completely redraw the collection routes. Members will appreciate the complexity of this task, made more complex because the numbers involved will change on some routes. For example, under the current collection methods a single route collects from around 2,500 properties. With wheeled bins we anticipate that 1,800 properties will be the average size of a round.
- 7.5. There are some knowns that will affect how we implement:
 - Each round serviced by wheelie bins needs to consist of 1,800 properties in an area
 - We need to have at least 4 rounds, and multiples of 4 rounds to make the most efficient use of the vehicles (each vehicle undertakes 4 rounds per week)
 - It should also be noted that waste rounds are not co-terminus with ward boundaries
- 7.6. We intend to carry out that detailed work to look at which areas have indicated a preference for wheeled bins, consult with ward councillors to establish their views on specific areas and to bring a further set of detailed proposals back to Scrutiny, before a formal decision is taken to Cabinet.

8. Strategic Plan references

- 8.1 This report contributes to the strategic plan themes of:

‘Welcoming’ - improve sustainability, cleanliness and health to make the borough a place where people can grow and be proud to live.

‘Vibrant’ - work hard to shape our future, and develop a strong sense of community across the borough by enabling people and groups to take more ownership and responsibility for their quality of life.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 A very comprehensive consultation with residents has been carried out to inform these proposals
- 9.2 Ward members will be consulted as part of the process for deciding where wheeled bins will be introduced.

10. Publicity considerations

- 10.1 It is recognised that this is a fundamental change that will affect all residents in the Borough and is a major project. A comprehensive communications plan will be developed using the full range of communication tools to communicate changes both internally and externally. Officers will also speak to other Councils who have recently made similar changes to their collection service.

11. Financial implications

- 11.1 A detailed exercise to cost these proposals has not yet been carried out. This will be undertaken alongside establishing how many routes will be serviced through wheelie bins which will be the main factor that will affect the costings. It is clear that there will be new one-off costs, most of which would be capital, which will be required to implement any wheeled bin system. The impact on revenue budgets is less clear at this stage, however, the following are a number of areas that we do already know about:
 - 1. No longer providing and distribution black sacks – saving of c£100k pa
 - 2. There will be a number of one off and capital costs:
 - a. Purchase of wheelie bins @ approximately £20/bin. The total cost will depend on the number of properties that move to wheeled bin collections. The manufacturers say that a wheeled bin should last for at least 10 years (although many last much longer) and, therefore, we would not consider any requirement to set aside sums for future replacement, or bins for new properties.
 - b. Purchase of the equipment to convert the vehicles, an estimated cost of £18k/vehicle
 - c. Routing software – £15k
 - d. Green boxes – introduction of an extra green box to enable separation of glass and cans – capital cost of £5 per box.
 - e. Communication
 - f. Support for the first six months of implementation
 - 3. Recycling and composting credits – we currently receive £1.1m of recycling and composting credits. With the aim to increase recycling

levels we would expect this to increase. If the rate increased by 5% that would be a gain of £55k/year, 10% a gain of £110k/year

4. Income from sale of recycling. We currently receive an income of £350k/year for the sale of recyclables, however this can change according to current prices for sales of these goods.
 5. Number of routes – there is a possibility that we might be able to reduce the number of routes with the introduction of alternate weekly collections. However, until we have done the detailed work on routes and how many areas will have wheelie bins it is not possible to provide an estimate. What we do know is that each route, vehicle and crew, costs approximately £200k/per year
- 11.2. No provision has been made in the medium term financial forecast or capital programme for any changes to the waste service. As part of the next phase of work proposals will be made as to how any up-front costs can be funded.

12. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 12.1 An updated Equality Impact Assessment for the Recycling and Waste service is available here
<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=7734&p=0>

13. Community Safety implications

- 13.1 There are no community safety implications

14. Health and Safety implications

- 14.1 A full review of Health and Safety requirements as a result of any changes to the waste service will be undertaken to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation.

15. Risk Management implications

- 15.1 All risks relating to changes to the waste service will be identified and managed in accordance with the Council's risk management processes.

Appendices

Appendix One: Colchester Doorstep Collection Research Report 2016.

Appendix Two: Recycling and Waste Key Performance Indicators: 2013/14 to 2015/16 - these figures relate to doorstep collected waste and recycling only.

Appendix Three: Top 10 Performing Authorities in England & Wales

Appendix Four: Recycling and Composting Performance (Essex Waste Partnership) - April 2015 to March 2016 – These figures include waste from dog bins, litter bins and flytipping. Therefore the figures are different from those shown in Appendix 2.