

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Ann Hedges ☎ 282202
Title	Review of Waste Collection Strategy		
Wards affected	All		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The new Waste Collection Strategy went live in June 2017 and the intention was to review progress after six months and consider any changes to the service based on the learning from the first six months.
- 1.2 A paper was taken to Scrutiny Panel on 12 December 2017 which outlined how the changes were implemented and what the impact has been. This paper is attached at Appendix B. There was a full discussion at the Scrutiny Panel and the minutes are attached at Appendix C.
- 1.3 The aims of the changes were twofold:
 - i) To improve our performance, in particular reducing residual waste and increasing recycling
 - ii) To provide a waste and recycling collection service requested by residents
- 1.4 The performance has improved very significantly and a further 2 months data is available since the Scrutiny Panel which shows an improvement in all the individual items:
 - Overall recycling rate – up to 55%
 - Reduction in residual waste – 33% reduction
 - Individual items have all seen an increase in percentages since the first 3 months:
 - Plastic – up by 48%, tonnage up from 706 to 1048 (342 increase)
 - Paper – up by 18%, tonnage up from 2700 to 3191 (491 increase)
 - Cans – up by 37%, tonnage up from 262 to 361 (99 increase)
 - Green waste – up by 20%, tonnage up from 4271 to 5137 (866 increase)
 - Glass – up by 1%, tonnage up from 1543 to 1559 (16 increase)
 - Food waste – up by 87%, tonnage up from 1262 to 2367 (1105 increase)
- 1.5 In the large part implementation has been successful. This report sets out some further changes to continue the improvement to the service. Most of these changes are relatively minor.

2. Recommended Decisions

- 2.1 Amend the Exemption Policy to simplify the process and make renewal an annual process
- 2.2 A full review of the collections service from flats to begin in January 2018
- 2.3 Introduction for autumn 2018 of a “leaf champion” scheme similar to the current “litter warrior” scheme to allow residents who want to collect leaves outside their property to have these removed
- 2.4 Full analysis of the impact of wheelie bins on recycling and residual waste rates to be undertaken in June 2018 following a full year of operation

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 It was agreed that there would be a review of the changes to the waste collection strategy six months after implementation and a number of changes and additional actions are now felt to be required.

4. Alternative Options

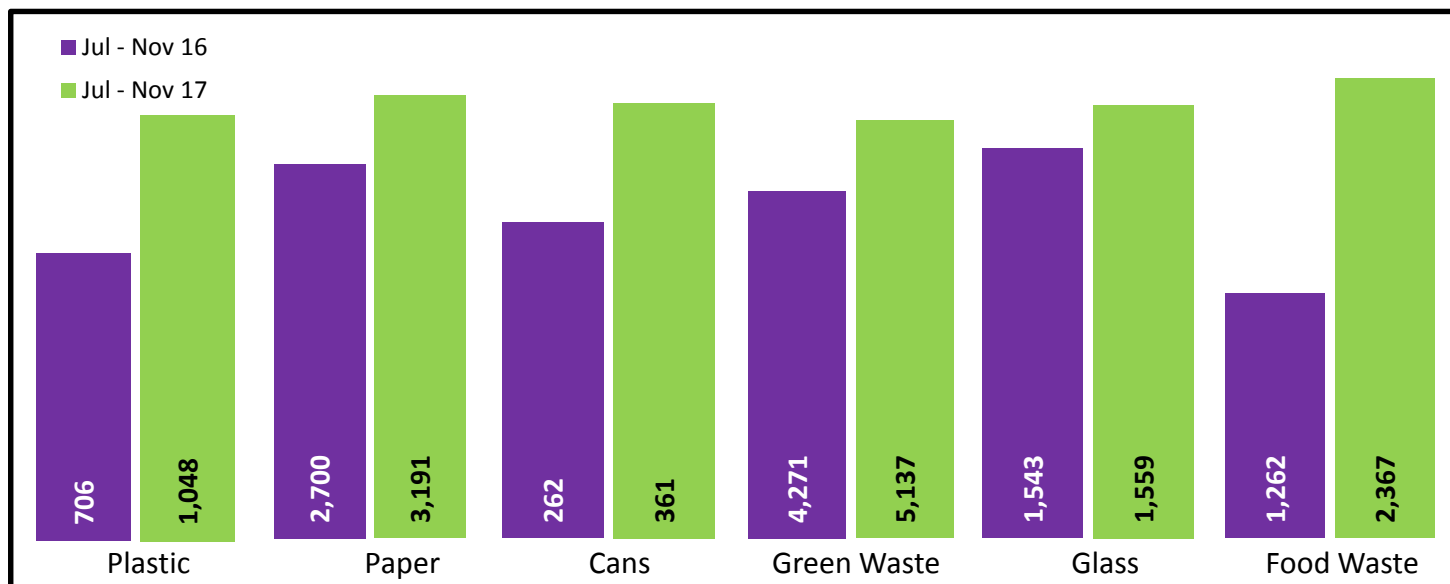
- 4.1 To not make any further changes to the Waste Collection Strategy.
- 4.2 There are a range of other changes that could be made. Two were specifically included in the Scrutiny report for discussion. Feedback from Scrutiny was that neither of the items below should be introduced at this point but they will be reviewed again after a full twelve months of implementation.
 - Introduction of Section 46 powers. These powers would enable us to issue fines for people that are putting the wrong items in their recycling and rubbish. For example if residents are putting recycling in their residual waste. It is not felt that this is necessary at this stage. We have powers around fly tipping that enable us to deal with most issues including residents that fail to take rubbish back onto their property. At the moment this feels sufficient but the opportunity to introduce Section 46 powers should be kept under review.
 - Introduction of a voucher system for other recycling items. This proposal was included in the paper that went to Scrutiny in December. We currently ask residents to obtain a voucher for white garden sacks (either by downloading for the internet or contacting our Customer Service Centre). This is because we know that they are useful for lots of purposes that there have been examples of residents using them for all sorts of things other than the disposal of garden waste. The voucher system provides an element of control. The extension of this process for other recycling containers was discussed at Scrutiny and was not felt to be useful as it could be a deterrent to people recycling. This does need to be kept under review to ensure that the costs of the service are managed.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 Major changes to the Waste Collection Strategy were agreed by Cabinet on 20 December 2016 and implemented in June 2017. Attached at appendix A
- 5.2 It was agreed in that paper that a review would be undertaken after six months. This review was started with a paper to the Scrutiny Panel on 12 December 2017. That paper outlined how the implementation was managed, the current challenges and the improvement of performance. The paper is attached at appendix B.
- 5.3 Since the Scrutiny Panel in December additional performance information is now available and overall shows further improvement. This data covers the period from July to November, a full five months and information is compared to the same period last year:
- Overall recycling rate – up to 55%
 - Reduction in residual waste – 33% reduction

Individual items have all seen an increase in percentages since the first 3 months:

Item	% increase	Tonnage 2016	Tonnage 2017	Increase in tonnage
Plastic	48%	706	1048	342
Paper	18%	2700	3191	491
Cans	37%	262	361	99
Green waste	20%	4271	5137	866
Glass	1%	1543	1559	16
Food waste	87%	1262	2367	1105



Reduction in residual waste has a financial benefit to Essex residents as there is a charge of £86 per tonne of waste sent to landfill.

Moving to alternate weekly residual waste collections restricted to three bags has had a major impact on our recycling rates. For example, the very large increase in food waste collected is a result of people removing this from their residual waste as food waste is

still collected weekly and both reduces the amount of residual waste and makes it less smelly.

- 5.4 The amendments being proposed are intended to support the changes in a variety of ways based on the learning from the first six months of operation. The amendments are shown below:

5.4.1 Amend the Exemption Policy to simplify the process and make renewal an annual process. As the Scrutiny Panel report highlights we have agreed just under 1,000 exemptions for households who are unable to reduce their residual waste to the new limits for a range of reasons. While it is important that if circumstances change then exemptions can be removed, we want to make it as simple as possible for the customer and to keep our processes straightforward. In the original policy we suggested that we would reserve the right to review every six months. The changes to policy propose that we undertake a simple check once a year, by email wherever possible, to check that the households circumstances have not changed. Exemptions will last for as long as the household needs them. The updated policy is attached at Appendix D

5.4.2 A full review of the collections service from flats is to begin in January 2018. Blocks of flats were not moved to fortnightly collections during the implementation of the new waste collection strategy last year. This was due to a number of challenges that are unique to collecting refuse and recycling from flats. This means that residents of flats generally receive a weekly refuse collection service but cannot currently recycle the range of material that residents living in other types of property can.

Moving flats to the same collection system as other properties will present challenges in terms of storage of recycling and refuse which means each block will need to be reviewed.

It was agreed at scrutiny that we would take an initial report in March that would outline the current situation, an analysis of the number and location of flat development to identify the scale of the challenge and the Scrutiny Panel would provide a view on what the priorities should be. Following this meeting options will be considered including full financial implications. We have begun discussions with Colchester Borough Homes who will be one of the key stakeholders in this work.

5.4.3 Introduction for autumn 2018 of a “leaf champion” scheme similar to the current “litter warriors” scheme to allow residents who want to collect leaves outside their property to have these collected. With the litter warrior scheme we give residents equipment to enable them to collect litter in their communities, agree when they will undertake collection and then arrange to pick up the litter they collect. A similar scheme would be put in place for next autumn to allow residents who wish to collect leaves in their neighbourhoods to do so.

5.4.4 Full analysis of the impact of wheelie bins on recycling rates to be undertaken in June 2018 to allow a full year of operation. We need to look at whether there is a difference in performance between wheelie bin and non-wheelie bin areas. This is not straightforward as the routes are not the same size and have completely changed since the implementation of the new service so comparisons will be difficult. The proposal is that we wait for a full year so that performance across the Borough has settled so that data is more reliable. There are no plans to extend the use of wheelie bins for waste collection.

5.5 In addition to the specific decisions proposed in this paper a number of actions continue:

- Work to reduce missed bins. How we are doing this is described in the Scrutiny paper. Numbers of missed bins continue to reduce. This is still slightly above the target figure of 95 a week but is continuing to reduce and work will continue to ensure as few missed bins as possible.
- Education and cautious enforcement. The Zones teams continue with education visits. This is a task they have always undertaken and continue to do so, prioritising household who put out residual waste over the limit. There is also some enforcement being undertaken where we identify households who for example do not take back into their property excess residual waste. This is done using existing powers.

5.6 One of the main concerns raised at Scrutiny was the garden waste service through the winter which is now restricted to 4 white sacks or one wheelie bin. This was to ensure equity of capacity across the borough whether residents have wheelie bins or retained the garden sacks. An additional service has been offered on a limited basis this year. Residents have the option to buy an additional 4 sacks or an additional wheelie bin to provide additional capacity. Only 98 (79 for garden sacks, 19 for wheelie bins) properties have taken up this offer.

Many authorities stop garden waste collection completely in the winter months as few residents have a requirement once the growing season has finished.

The new service was scoped on the assumption that we would only collect quantities as described above and capacity of the routes was planned on that basis. Reintroducing free additional capacity would now incur additional cost. This would include:

- The cost of bags and wheelie bins
- Potentially the cost of additional vehicles and crews if analysis showed there was not sufficient capacity in the service as it has been established. The re-introduction could potentially mean an additional vehicle and crew – each vehicle, crew and fuel has an annual revenue cost of approximately £100k

The other issue raised by Scrutiny in relation to garden waste was the inability of residents to dispose of leaves they collect outside their property on pavements etc without subscribing to the additional garden waste collection. In order to overcome this it is proposed that a “leaf champion” scheme is introduced from next autumn as described at 5.4.3 above

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken for the implementation of the changes and it is not considered that any of the amendments being proposed significantly change that assessment. The Equality Impact Assessment can be found [here](#) or by following the pathway www.colchester.gov.uk / Your Council / How the Council Works / Equality and Diversity / Equality Impact Assessments / Environment / Recycling and Fleet.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 The proposals specifically support the Strategic Plan

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

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

8. Consultation

8.1 Full consultation was undertaken prior to the changes. A meeting of the Scrutiny Panel discussed the implementation process, the impact of the waste collection strategy and the next steps. Minutes of the meeting are included at Appendix C.

8.2 Recent consultation for the development of the new Strategic Plan has provided some feedback from residents on the waste and recycling service. Questions were not specifically asked about the service so this feedback was unprompted:

- There was general support for encouraging greater recycling.
- Generally, most residents were very positive about the recycling scheme managed by the council.

“But to be fair when I lived in London I didn’t used to recycle, so it was a big change coming to Colchester, ‘Oh I’ve got to wash up yoghurt pots!’ But I’m proud to do it now, I’m really pleased, and I think that by reducing everybody’s allowance so harshly it has made people like me wash up their yoghurt pots because you’ve got no other choice.” (ABC1 Parents NW)

“I think it forced us into recycling – we had no choice and we’ve got used to it.” (ABC1 Parents NW)

“It [recycling] did drive us insane, but I’m glad they [council] forced us to do it because I’m probably naturally lazy especially with having children” (ABC1 Parents NW)

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 There continues to be interest in the impact of the changes in the waste collection strategy.

10. Financial implications

10.1 A charge for replacement wheelie bins would be designed to cover the cost of the wheelie bin.

10.2 The capital and revenue costs of changes to the collection service for flats will be worked up as part of the review and brought back to Cabinet for further decisions.

11. Community Safety Implications

11.1 N/A

12. Health and Safety Implications

12.1 N/A

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 N/A

Appendices

Appendix A – Cabinet paper 20 December 2016 Colchester Waste Collection Strategy

Appendix B – Scrutiny Panel paper 12 December 2017 Review of Waste Collection Strategy

Appendix C – Minutes of Scrutiny Panel meeting 12 December 2017

Appendix D – Exemptions Policy version 2