

Report to: **Hub Committee**
Date: **4 June 2019**
Title: **Waste Collection Frequency Trial**
Portfolio Area: **Environment**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: After call-in

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Cllr Caroline Mott - Lead Member for Environment

Recommendations:

1. That the Hub Committee approve the addition of plastic pots, tubs, trays and printer cartridges, cardboard drinks containers and foil to the kerbside recycling collections with effect from October 2019 and that the cost of the collection containers is met through the Strategic Waste Earmarked Reserve.
2. That the Hub Committee approve the establishment of a trial of three weekly residual (black sack) collections to around 1,000 households in the Borough starting in November 2019 and that the costs are met through the Strategic Waste Earmarked Reserve.
3. That the results of the trial will inform an outcome report to the Hub Committee that will include an officer appraisal over whether or not the Committee should recommend to Council that a three weekly refuse collection should be implemented for all households in the Borough from March/April 2021.

1. Executive summary

1.1 In December 2018, Council requested that a three weekly residual (black sack) trial be carried out as soon as possible subject to a report to Hub detailing potential benefits and timescales.

1.2 In recent years the Council has seen a gradual decline in its recycling rate and continues to face budgetary pressures. Three weekly residual collections have been shown in other authorities to deliver savings and increase recycling rates.

1.3 It is difficult to calculate these benefits without a trial as there is currently insufficient evidence available upon which to base projections.

1.4 A small controlled trial over a long period will give sufficient data to calculate the benefits from a Borough-wide scheme, whilst minimising any financial and reputation risk to the Council. It will also allow time for any potential legislative changes, which may come about as a result of current waste strategy consultations, to be taken into account before any final decision is made.

1.5 This report recommends that the current recycling service is improved in October 2019 to include plastic pots, tubs, trays and printer cartridges, cardboard drinks containers and foil. It further recommends that this is followed by a three weekly residual collection trial starting in November 2019 with a report being submitted to the Hub Committee in June 2020, detailing the results of the trial and future recommendations for the service.

2. Background

2.1 Three weekly residual collections have proved successful in other local authority areas in both improving recycling rates and reducing costs. Council Minute CM42 (8) of the Council Report of 4 December 2018, resolved that the Council:

“instruct officers to work with the successful bidder on the implementation of a three-weekly residual waste collection trial as soon as is practicable, subject to a report detailing potential savings and timescales being approved by the Hub Committee. (NB. the report will be presented within three months of the contract start date).”

2.2 Since 2010, West Devon’s recycling rate has declined year on year. A major service change in that year, which included a move from weekly to fortnightly black sack collections, boosted the recycling rate to 60% of domestic waste and put the Borough amongst the top ten recycling authorities in the country. The recycling rate for 2017-18 was 51%.

2.3 There is evidence to show that our residents want to recycle a greater range of recyclables on the kerbside and the specification for the current

waste and cleansing contract, was designed with this in mind. There is provision within the contract for enhanced recycling collections to include plastic pots, tubs and trays, printer cartridges, card drinks containers and foil.

2.4 Currently 16-20 local authorities operate a three or four weekly residual collection service. The majority of these have experienced an increase in recycling rates and a reduction in costs after introduction of the system. Some of those that introduced a three weekly collection, have found the scheme so successful that they have subsequently reduced, or are currently planning to reduce, the frequency of collections further to four weekly. East Devon District Council is one example of this success as the dry recycling and food recycling rate increased by over 11% after the change from a fortnightly to a three weekly residual collection.

2.5 The Association for Public Service Excellence State of the Market Report for 2018, found that 63% of councils intend to introduce a three weekly residual collection over the next two years.

2.6 As evidence shows that reduced frequency residual collections will divert waste from black sacks to recycling, it is unlikely that West Devon would realise savings from operation costs as the reduction in residual crews and vehicles required would be matched by an increase in recycling crews and vehicles. However, income can potentially be increased from two areas: an increase in recycling credit income and annual payments through the Shared Savings Scheme.

2.7 Recycling credits are paid by the Disposal Authority (Devon County Council) to the Collection Authority (any of the Devon Districts) and are based on the amount saved on disposal costs by diverting waste from disposal to recycling.

2.8 In addition, to incentivise the District Authorities to make major changes to collection services which result in benefits for Devon County Council, the parties have agreed to operate a Shared Savings Scheme (SSS). Through this Devon County Council shares disposal cost savings associated with the service changes, with the District Council. The SSS is a ten year agreement to 2026 and any savings will be shared on an annual basis until that date. This is in addition to recycling credit payments and is intended to support collection authorities to make changes which financially benefit the disposal authority.

2.9 The annual net savings expected from a three weekly scheme across the whole Borough is estimated at between £100,000 and £150,000 per year. The bulk of this saving would come from the Shared Saving Scheme but it should be noted that this is an indicative figure only and payments are based on actual tonnages. The remainder of the saving would be made up of additional recycling credit income. It should be noted that these figures are impossible to quantify accurately as there is not enough evidence available currently from other Authorities with similar demographics and starting points. For the same reason, it is difficult to

predict the additional recycling resource that may be required for collections and operating costs may rise, fall or remain constant.

2.10 It is also of note that the Government is currently consulting with the waste industry in order to form future national strategy. One of the areas being considered is the frequency of residual waste collections with a proposed minimum of fortnightly collections. Whilst it is unlikely that councils that have already introduced three or four weekly collections will be expected to revert back to fortnightly, there is a possibility that legislation may be changed to prevent other Councils from reducing frequencies in the future.

2.11 It is therefore strongly recommended that a controlled trial is carried out to gather the data needed to assess the environmental and financial benefits and to consider the development of the English Waste Strategy.

2.12 This fits with the Council themes of:
Environment
Council
Communities

3. Outcomes/outputs

3.1 In order to gain environmental benefit as soon as possible, it is proposed that the enhanced recycling service is introduced to all households in October 2019, subject to container procurement. This includes expanding the kerbside collection to include plastic pots, tubs and trays, printer cartridges, cardboard drinks containers and foil. These materials are bulky but light; so whilst the new service will be well received by residents, the weight of the materials is likely to have only a modest effect on the recycling rate and any income from weight-based recycling credits.

3.2 The set up costs in the first year are expected to be around £24,000 for container deliveries and communications including additional customer services support. The additional income expected from recycling credits for 2019-20 is around £5,000 which will offset against this cost. The residual £19,000 will be funded from the Strategic Waste Earmarked Reserve.

3.3 It is anticipated that the current recycling fleet will have the capacity to deliver this change of service. However, as the additional materials are bulky, reusable sacks will be issued for the convenience of residents to supplement the current box system. The sacks will also reduce additional loading time needed by the extra materials.

3.4 Closely following the delivery of the enhanced recycling service, it is proposed that a 3 weekly black sack collection frequency trial is carried out from November 2019. The trial will include around 1000 households (4% of the Borough). As this will be a bespoke collection round, it will enable the flexibility to select specific demographics / areas and generate

useful base data. The recycling and food waste collections would remain weekly and the garden waste service would continue as current arrangements.

3.5 As part of the partnership contract agreement, the contractor has agreed to run the trial until March/April 2021 and will to share the operational costs 50/50. Taking expenses for communications and additional customer services into account, the net cost to the Council would be around £17,000 in 2019-20 and £7,500 in 2020-21 which includes provision for external verification of modelling to inform the following Hub Committee report.

3.6 A report will be presented to the Hub Committee after 6 months detailing any environmental and financial impacts and determining the effects of a Borough-wide scheme. The report will also take into consideration the outcome of the English Waste Strategy consultations. Subject to Member approval, a Borough-wide roll out could take place in March/April 2021.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

4.1 The size and period of the proposed trial reduces the risk posed by any future legislation brought about by current English Waste Strategy consultations and may allow the possibility of funding opportunities. It also minimises any risk to Council reputation.

4.2 West Devon will be one of the first authorities in the country to introduce a 3 weekly residual collection using sacks as opposed to wheeled bins. However the following should be noted:

- a The amount of residual waste collected in the Borough is relatively low compared with other authorities. In 2017-18, West Devon was 17th in the country for the lowest amount of residual (black sack) waste collected per household;
- b About 46% of our black sack waste is recyclable under the improved recycling collections;
- c About 23% of our black sack waste is food waste which is currently recycled weekly and this will continue; and
- d A reduction in black sack collection frequency would improve all the above.

4.3 A comprehensive communications strategy is planned which emphasises that fully utilising the recycling service, will leave only a small proportion of waste in the black sacks. It is anticipated that community champions will be identified to promote the scheme. At the heart of the campaign, the message will be that the service will continue to provide weekly collections of waste as is illustrated in the table below:

	Dry Recycling	Food Recycling	Garden Waste (if subscribed)	Residual (black sack)
Week 1	Yes	Yes		
Week 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Week 3	Yes	Yes		Yes

4.4 A solution for dealing with 'offensive' waste, such as nappies, and properties with limited storage has been included in the proposals and the trial will enable any issues/effects to be monitored. Assisted collections will continue to be offered to those unable to carry their waste to the kerbside.

4.5 There is currently no evidence to suggest that littering and fly-tipping is increased when residual frequencies are reduced. However, this would continue to be monitored and will be included in the following Hub Committee report.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1 It is proposed that the recommendations are approved to increase recycling rates and assess the feasibility of the introduction of three weekly collections across the whole Borough in March/April 2021.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		The Authority has a duty to arrange for collection and disposal of household waste and has the discretion to determine the frequency of collections. The legislative framework is to be found in the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Waste Framework Directive 2008, and Controlled Waste Regulations 2012.
Financial		<p>The financial implications are detailed in section 3.</p> <p>Regarding the enhanced recycling scheme (Recommendation 1), the set up costs in the first year are expected to be around £24,000 for sack deliveries and communications. The additional income expected from recycling credits for 2019-20 is around £5,000 which will offset against this cost. The residual £19,000 will be funded from the Strategic Waste Earmarked Reserve.</p> <p>The net cost of the trial (Recommendation 2) is expected to be £17,000 in 2019-20 and £7,500 in 2020-21. These will be met through the Strategic Waste Earmarked Reserve.</p> <p>The trial will be reviewed after 6 months with a report to the Hub Committee in June 2020, which will assess the environmental and financial impacts of the trial and determine the effects of a Borough-</p>

		<p>wide scheme. Subject to Member approval and assuming the trial results are positive, a Borough-wide roll out of three weekly collections could take place in March/April 2021.</p> <p>The annual savings expected from a three weekly scheme across the whole Borough is estimated at between £100,000 and £150,000 per year. However, these figures cannot be verified until the trial is complete.</p>
Risk		The risks are set out in section 4 of this report.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		N/A
Safeguarding		N/A
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		N/A
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		N/A
Other implications		N/A

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Background Papers:

Process checklist	Completed
Portfolio Holder briefed/sign off	Yes
SLT Rep briefed/sign off	Yes
Relevant Heads of Practice sign off (draft)	Yes
Data protection issues considered	Yes
Accessibility checked	Yes