Report of the Waste Collections Post 2017 Sub Group

June 2016

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This is the report of the Waste Collections Post 2017 Sub-group following the review of the options available to the Authority when the funding provided under the Weekly Collection Support Scheme expired.

The Sub-group was appointed in June 2015 and tasked with examining the key issues facing the Authority in relation to its refuse collection and recycling service, with a view to recommending options for consideration by Cabinet.

At the start of the review the Sub-group noted that there were several issues facing the Authority including a reduction in the availability of resources, the need to increase recycling levels and the need to provide services for a growing borough

The Sub-group was informed that the introduction of an alternate weekly collection of household waste and recycling would reduce costs and encourage increased levels of recycling. Key to the successful introduction of such a change would be the engagement of residents and it was recognised that residents' concerns would need to be addressed before any roll out of the scheme occurred.

As part of the review the Sub-group also noted that a significant amount of the waste which had to be disposed of by the Authority was as a result of excessive packaging on manufactured goods.

The Sub-group has therefore made 6 recommendations which if implemented would address those issues outlined above.

These recommendations are set out in the body of this report and summarised in Appendix 1. The Sub-group commend these recommendations to the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and the Cabinet.

2. Reason for the Study

2.1 The Sub-group was established by the Environment Sub-committee in June 2015 with the aim of examining the options for the collection and disposal of household waste and recyclables after the Weekly Collection Support Scheme ended in 2017.

3. Method and Remit

3.1 The Environment Sub-committee agreed that establishing a Sub-group would be the most appropriate means of undertaking this piece of work.

3.2 The following members of the Environment Sub-committee volunteered to serve on the Sub-group:

Councillor Brian Burdis (Chair)
Councillor Davey Drummond
Councillor Ed Hodson
Councillor Matthew B Thirlaway

3.3 The Sub-group met on 6 occasions to complete its work.

3.4 At its first meeting the Sub-group agreed a scope for the study and identified the following objectives:

- To consider the various options in relation to waste collection within the borough;
- To identify how waste collection can improve recycling in the borough; and
- To consider the implications of new developments in the borough.

3.5 As part of its deliberations the Sub-group also identified a number of key questions to which it required answers:

- What are the various options for waste collections (including from new developments) from 2017 onwards?
- What are the views of the public on the various options?
- What can be done to increase recycling/reuse within the borough?
- What do we need to do to further engage the public in recycling and waste minimisation?

3.6 In order to obtain the relevant evidence to complete the study, the Sub-group has received presentations and interviewed a national expert. The Sub-group has also interviewed the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment.

4. Findings and Evidence

4.1 The Current Situation

4.2 North Tyneside Council operates an in-house collection service for residual household waste and recyclables. In addition the Authority has the following contracts for the treatment of waste and recyclables:

- A contract with SITA UK Ltd, which runs until 2022, for the treatment and disposal of residual household waste. The contract also covers the management of the Household Waste Recycling Centre at North Shields;

- A contract, in partnership with Newcastle City Council, for G O'Brien and Sons to process recyclables until 2020;

- A contract, with Palm Recycling, for the operation of the communal bring facilities.

4.3 In North Tyneside residual household waste is collected on a weekly basis with recyclables collected on a fortnightly basis via a two stream process with glass and batteries collected in an in-bin caddy and paper, cardboard plastic bottles and metals collected in the main body of the bin. The Authority also collects garden waste, but only between the months of March and November.

4.4 The 2014/15 budget for the delivery of the waste collection service was £3138 049. This was made up of £2,000,723 for refuse collection and £1,137,326 for the collection of recyclables.

4.5 Waste Collections Efficiencies

4.6 In November 2010, the Authority participated in a regional project which aimed to optimise the efficiency of collection rounds through the use of a software tool, 'RouteSmart', which was used across the authorities in the North East to make efficiency savings through reduced vehicle and fuel usage and the reshaping of collection routes.

4.7 In April 2011 the Authority implemented a new system of working by operating the service on a four-day working week, Tuesday to Friday, for the collection of household waste and recyclables. This change generated the following benefits:

- Improved service reliability with zone-based collections which allowed those crews who had completed their scheduled work to support crews with collections still outstanding;
- No disruption to collections in those weeks affected by a Bank Holiday;
- Improved utilisation of vehicles by allocating vehicles that collect residual waste during the core working week (Tuesday to Friday) to collect garden waste on Monday and Saturday;

- All collection vehicles have vehicle trackers fitted which allowed supervisors to both monitor collections and to ensure that the workloads were balanced.
- Supported the integrated collection of trade waste with domestic household waste, which ensured that tonnages collected per round were maximised and balanced across each of the 14 rounds.

4.8 This work resulted in the Authority identifying total operational efficiencies of around £250,000 per annum due to the reduction of two collection rounds and the improved utilisation of collection vehicles.

4.9 As a result of the above service improvements there had been a significant improvement in rates of customer satisfaction. Following the implementation of the changes the approval rating had increased from 70% in 2008 to 90% in 2011.

4.10 Weekly Collection Support Scheme

4.11 In 2012 the Authority took advantage of an offer of funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government to support the retention of a weekly refuse collection service for a 5 year period. This funding, known as the Weekly Collection Support Scheme (WCSS), had been allocated following a bidding process. North Tyneside Council had been awarded a total of £3.36m funding, made up of £2.473m of revenue costs and £0.883m capital funding.

4.12 Apart from maintaining weekly refuse collections this funding had been used for a number of improvements to the waste collection service including the standardisation of waste bins across the borough so that the existing refuse collection vehicles operationally could cover the whole borough. Previously one area of the borough had a different type of bin which required the use of a separate dedicated collection vehicle. The funding also ensured that each ward in the borough would have an on-street recycling point. The on-street recycling capacity had also more than doubled, from around 20,000 litres to 54,000 litres capacity. Litter bins across the borough had also been updated and standardised.

4.13 Some of the funding had also been used to purchase two additional split bodied recycling collection vehicles which could be used to collect from households, communal facilities and on-street bins. The remaining capital had been used to purchase new larger on-street recycling and waste bins.

4.14 Increasing Recycling

4.15 The Sub-group noted that whilst recycling levels of around 38% in North Tyneside were quite low when compared with other local authorities there was an ambition to increase recycling rates to 45% by 2017. This required a 20% improvement over the time period. By 2013/14 the recycling rate had increased to 39% but this had mainly been as a result of the removal of metals from the residual waste from the energy from waste treatment carried out at the Energy from Waste Plant on Teesside.

4.16 The Sub-group was informed that those authorities which had seen a significant increase in recycling rates had done so due to either a significant investment or a move to an alternate weekly or other less frequent collection or the separate collection of food waste.

4.17 Data obtained from the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) indicated that around 80% of local authorities had already moved away from the weekly collection of household refuse. They had done so for two reasons, firstly to increase recycling rates and secondly to reduce costs. Some local authorities had even moved to the collection of household waste on a three weekly cycle and whilst a number of practical difficulties had been identified significant levels of public opposition had not been encountered.

4.18 Nearly all of the authorities which had moved away from a weekly collection service had reported an increase in the levels of recycling. The average increase in recycling had been approximately 21%.

4.19 It was acknowledged that increasing levels of recycling in North Tyneside was a priority both to meet Government targets and to reduce costs associated with the disposal of waste. Reference was made to the collection of food waste which could be processed through anaerobic digestion. Whilst it was feasible to collect and process food waste as a separate waste stream there were a number of difficulties which would need to be resolved before such a scheme could be rolled out. It was suggested that attention should be given to increasing the levels of paper recycling followed by card and then metals and glass in that order. The separate collection of food waste could be considered at a later date when the benefits of the other recycling initiatives had been realised.

4.20 The Weekly Collection Support Scheme Grant had also been used to commission and carry out a comprehensive waste awareness and recycling incentives campaign. An environmental charity, Groundwork North East and Cumbria, had been engaged to deliver the campaign. The aim had been to reduce the waste produced per household by 1%, increase recycling in areas of low participation by 5% and increase plastic bottle recycling by 2% each year. A recent survey as part of the waste awareness campaign had shown that after 6 months resident

awareness of the “Wash, Squash and Recycle” and “Love food Hate Waste” messages had doubled.

4.21 The views of residents on the waste collection and recycling service had been obtained at a number of events over recent years. Over 65% of those residents who attended Area Forum events held in November and December 2012 had been in favour of the Authority collecting waste one week and recyclables the following week. A similar percentage also considered that the Authority should provide education/information for residents on waste minimisation.

4.22 Members of the Residents Panel had been consulted in 2010 and 2012 and it was noted that the majority of those present had been in favour of the introduction of alternate weekly collections for household waste. Indeed many had indicated that they only put out their household rubbish bin fortnightly.

4.23 **Recommended** that Cabinet be requested to increase education and engagement activities around residents’ awareness of waste minimisation, reuse and recycling;

4.24 Alternate Weekly Collections (AWC)

4.25 Under a system of alternate weekly collections recyclables were collected one week and household refuse the next.

4.26 Alternate weekly collections had been successfully implemented in more than half of the authorities across the country and this had led to an increase in recycling rates. It had also led to an overall decrease in the amount of waste collected, with the associated financial and environmental benefits. Most of the authorities in the region already operated this way including Northumberland, Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Durham.

4.27 The introduction of an alternate weekly collection service would result in a reduction in crews and transport costs and would generate savings of £370,000. Once fully implemented this would have the effect of reducing the need for three refuse collection vehicles and crews, but there would be a need for an additional recycling vehicle and crew.

4.28 AWC had been demonstrated to lead to reduced amounts of rubbish collected and an increase in the amount recycled. Newcastle City Council had increased its recycling levels by 2,000 tonnes a year as a direct result of moving to alternate weekly collections. It had also benefitted from reducing waste volumes.

4.29 Where alternate weekly collections had been successfully introduced authorities had engaged and communicated with the residents well in advance of the introduction of the changes, usually around two years. Some authorities had introduced a pilot scheme in limited areas of the

borough or city. The experience of neighbouring authorities had been that there had been very little public objection to the introduction of an AWC service provided that the benefits had been clearly explained to them.

4.30 Evidence provided by colleagues in Newcastle and South Tyneside who had moved to an alternate weekly collection had indicated that there was a need to fully engage with residents before any changes were made to the collection frequency.

4.31 In South Tyneside a trial of alternate weekly collections had been introduced in one area of the borough which involved around 1600 properties. Prior to the introduction of the trial Ward Councillors and residents groups had been consulted. In the run up to the launch of the trial the authority had written to all of the residents in the area to advise them of the scheme and giving contact details for any issues. The authority also had staff available in the area to respond immediately to residents' concerns and issues. After 3 months it had been noted that recycling in the area had increased by 14% and the collection of general household waste had reduced by 69%. There had also been very few complaints received.

4.32 Newcastle Council had adopted a different approach and had undertaken a three month consultation as part of the budget presentation which also included proposals to move to weekly alternate collections. There had been a substantial communications programme with residents to encourage them to reduce the amount of general waste and increase the amount of recycling.

4.33 A positive effect of the introduction of AWC was an increase in residents' awareness of waste that they disposed of and the interaction of waste and recycling. This had led to a reduction in the amount of waste and the greater capture of recyclable waste.

4.34 Three weekly collections

4.35 The introduction of a three weekly collection service for household refuse and a fortnightly recycling collection service would result in an annual saving of around £458, 435 in collection and disposal costs. It is anticipated that a three weekly collection frequency for household waste would result in 2,000 tonnes of waste being diverted to recycling.

4.36 The benefits of moving to a three weekly cycle would be a reduction of the number of vehicles needed for collection and the generation of savings associated with collection and disposal costs. It might also increase recycling rates, which were in line with Government targets and have environmental benefits due to reduced emissions from the use of fewer collection journeys.

4.37 There may be a number of disadvantages of moving to a three weekly collection cycle including opposition from residents and the perception

that they were receiving a reduced level of service. There was also the possibility that the change in collection frequency might result in an increase in flytipping.

4.38 Monthly collections

4.39 Moving to a four weekly collection service for household waste and a fortnightly collection for recyclables would result in annual savings of around £640,189 in collection and disposal costs. It was also anticipated that it would result in around 2,000 tonnes of waste being diverted to recycling.

4.40 A small number of local authorities in the UK had moved to or trialled a four weekly collection service including Fife Council in Scotland and Conwy Council in Wales.

4.41 The benefits of moving to this frequency of collection would result in a further reduction in the number of vehicles and crews needed, with the associated reduction in costs of collection and disposal along with reduced vehicle emissions. It might also lead to increased recycling, again in line with Government targets.

4.42 As for a three weekly collection, the disadvantages of moving to a monthly waste collection service would be opposition from the public, who would perceive the change as a reduction in the level of service provided by the Authority. There was also the possibility of an increase in flytipping.

4.43 The Sub-group was advised that moving to an alternate weekly collection service would have significant benefits in relation to a reduction in costs and an increase in recycling. It had also been noted that those authorities that had successfully introduced such a service change had taken positive action to ensure that a suitable engagement and communication process had taken place both before the introduction of the changed service and whilst it was ongoing.

4.44 The Sub-group concluded that to increase levels of recycling in the borough and to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill the Cabinet be **recommended** to engage/consult with residents on a proposal to introduce alternate weekly collections for residual waste and recyclables in the borough.

4.45 The Sub-group was advised that undertaking work to raise awareness of waste minimisation would have significant benefits in relation to the amount of waste generated. The Sub-group therefore r**ecommend** that Cabinet be requested to increase education and engagement activities around residents' awareness of waste minimisation, reuse and recycling;

4.46 New Developments

4.47 North Tyneside is a growing borough and it is expected that there would be an additional 12,500 properties by 2030. All of these properties would need to be provided with storage facilities for household waste and recycling containers. There would also be a need to arrange for the waste and recycling to be taken away and processed and this would have cost implications for the waste collection budget

4.48 At the moment there is a requirement for developers to provide space for the storage of refuse and recycling containers in all new developments. Particularly in high density housing areas the storage of the waste bins can prove problematic due to the lack of space and this can prove unsightly if the containers are stored on the street or at the front of houses. The provision of communal underground storage facilities in these areas might improve the street scene due to the removal of wheelie bins and the provision of communal facilities would eliminate the need for a multitude of different containers.

4.49 The installation of underground communal facilities done at the development stage might be more cost effective for developers who could then provide more open space and/or garden space for the residents. Alternatively it may provide additional space which could be utilised for the development of additional properties.

4.50 Aberdeen City Council had introduced such a requirement for new developments in the city. As part of the planning guidance it had set out guidance for developers on Waste management in New Developments where there was high density housing.

"One issue which developers may wish to explore with our Waste Team (wasteawareaberdeen@aberdeencity.gov.uk) is that of underground storage and/or design of above ground storage for communal properties. We will look at this in more detail in respect of its costs, possible take up in future and practical issues of how to service underground bins effectively. Such an approach may be more practical for larger developments of over 50 flats to provide for the installation of underground bins. It would free up more space for the development compared to bin compounds as compensation."

4.51 There are many examples of different types of underground storage facilities from across the world, some more high tech than others. The Sub-group was shown a number of different systems including a pneumatic system which transported the waste offsite, to less advanced solutions, such as the provision of high capacity communal bins located either above or below ground.

4.52 The Sub-group concluded that the consideration of refuse collection and storage at an early stage in the development of a site could have

significant benefits for the residents, the developer and the local authority.

4.53 The Sub-group therefore **Recommended** that the Cabinet be requested to produce planning guidance to encourage developers to engage with Officers of the Authority and other relevant agencies to identify sustainable solutions for waste and recycling storage facilities within new developments.

4.54 Collection of waste from streets

4.55 The Authority collected a significant amount of refuse from the waste bins provided in streets, parks and other open spaces in the borough. These bins were emptied on a regular basis, some in high traffic areas, such as town centres and the Links at Whitley Bay, were emptied on a daily basis. It was noted that as part of the WCSS funding many of the high traffic areas had had additional high capacity recycling facilities installed.

4.56 The Sub-group had examined a number of high capacity waste storage systems which could be installed in high traffic areas. Many of these systems made use of an underground storage system with a small litter bin on the ground. Waste was then put into the bin and gravity carried it down to the underground storage facility. Such a system could accommodate a significant amount of waste and would reduce the need for the container to be emptied as often. Many of the systems available had the facility to inform the service that they needed to be emptied. Such a system could also enable the Authority to make cost savings as the bins would not need to be emptied so frequently, there was however the issue of the cost of installing the bins in the first place and the system to transfer waste to the waste disposal centre.

4.57 Communal Facilities

4.58 Whilst households in the majority of the borough have a number of wheelie bins in which to keep household waste and recyclables awaiting collection there are several areas of the borough where this was not practicable due to the density of the properties or the layout of the property. In many areas of high density households, such as blocks of flats, a communal storage system could be provided rather than individual bins. It was noted that some authorities also provided communal facilities in high density areas, such as terraced housing, an example given was in Jesmond.

4.59 In the right location the introduction of a communal underground storage system might possibly remove the need for individual Wheelie bins, tidy up the area and free up space.

4.60 The Sub-group therefore **Recommend** that Cabinet be requested to give consideration to the examination of the benefits of the introduction of high capacity refuse storage facilities in high density/high traffic areas of the borough such as the Fish Quay.

4.61 Packaging

4.62 Whilst acknowledging that there was work to be done to encourage more recycling generally it was noted that a lot of the materials which were recycled or transferred to the waste stream were as a result of excess packaging. A reduction in the amount of packaging would reduce the amount of waste and recycling which would have to be collected and disposed of.

4.63 The issues with packaging generally fell into two different camps, the first being packaging which was excessive such as that used on Easter Eggs and the second being packaging which was difficult or unable to be recycled, perhaps because it was made of a mixture of materials such as card and plastic film.

4.64 It was suggested that a way to reduce the amount of packaging which went to landfill because it could not easily be recycled would be to engage with producers/manufacturers and retailers to encourage them to reduce the amount of packaging on their goods. It was acknowledged that this was an issue wider than just North Tyneside and that in addition to lobbying local producers it was suggested that the Authority should lobby the appropriate politicians to encourage a reduction in the amount of packaging and that it should be easily recyclable.

4.65 **Recommended** that Cabinet be requested to lobby the Local Government Minister, the Local Government Association, local Members of Parliament and local Members of the European Parliament to encourage manufacturers to examine how they can reduce the amount of unnecessary packaging on their products and where packaging is required that it should be easily recyclable.

4.66 **Recommended** that Cabinet be requested to lobby the major manufacturers, supermarkets and chain stores in the borough to examine how they can reduce the amount of packaging and where it is required that it should be easily recyclable.

5. Background Information

- Waste: A brave new world – Association of Public Service Excellence (apse) publication - http://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/research/current-research-programme/waste-a-brave-new-world/

- Changing our thinking away from rubbish and towards a resource - North Tyneside Waste Management Strategy 2013 - 2030
http://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/88/waste-management-strategy

- Supplementary Planning Guidance - Waste Management Guidance in New Developments - Aberdeen City Council
http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?lID=31834&sID=14394

6. Acknowledgements

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Colin MacDonald - Senior Manager Regulatory and Technical Services
Samantha Dand - Senior Manager Local Environmental Services
Jeanette Hedley - Senior Manager, Communications and Engagement
Vicki Nixon - Participation and Advocacy Manager
Dave Parkin – Democratic Support Officer

Appendix 1

Summary of Recommendations

1. That to increase levels of recycling in the borough and to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill the Cabinet be recommended to engage/consult with residents on a proposal to introduce alternate weekly collections of residual waste and recyclables;

2. That Cabinet be requested to increase education and engagement activities around residents awareness of waste minimisation, reuse and recycling;

3. That the Cabinet be requested to produce planning guidance to encourage developers to engage with Officers of the Authority and other relevant agencies to identify sustainable solutions for waste and recycling storage facilities within new developments.

4. That Cabinet be requested to give consideration to the examination of the benefits of the introduction of high capacity refuse storage facilities in high density/high traffic areas of the borough such as the Fish Quay.

5. That Cabinet be requested to lobby the Local Government Minister, the Local Government Association, local Members of Parliament and local Members of the European Parliament to encourage manufacturers to examine how they can reduce the amount of unnecessary packaging on their products and where packaging is required that it should be easily recyclable.

6. That Cabinet be requested to lobby the major manufacturers, supermarkets and chain stores in the borough to examine how they can reduce the amount of packaging and where it is required that it should be easily recyclable