

Meeting: Environment Sub-committee

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Title: Waste Collection Options post 2017

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Service:	Environment and Leisure	
Wards affected:	All	

1.0 Purpose of briefing

The purpose of this briefing is to examine the benefits and issues of the options for different collection frequencies including:

- The legal position regarding collections
- The costs of collections for weekly/fortnightly or other frequency of collection
- The impact that the various frequencies have on recycling and reuse.

2.0 Background

North Tyneside operates an in-house collection service for residual waste and for recycle. Residual waste is collected weekly and recycle is collected fortnightly via a two-stream collection (separate glass and batteries in a caddy plus commingled recycle). Green waste is collected fortnightly on a seasonal basis (excluding December to February) and treatment is part of the waste disposal contract with SITA. SITA also manages the Borough's single Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC).

In terms of treatment and disposal of the residual waste, there is a 25 year contract in place with SITA that was reviewed in 2011 and runs to 2022.

In terms of processing the collected recycle North Tyneside partnered with Newcastle on the procurement and has a current contract with a local company, G. O'Brien and Sons. The first contract ran from the start of the wheeled bin recycling scheme in 2009 until January 2014. Following a further procurement exercise O'Brien's were again successful in being awarded the contract which runs to 2020. The Council has a contract with Palm Recycling for the communal bring site facilities.

3.0 Legislation regarding separate collections

The EU Waste Framework Directive provides the legislative framework for the collection, transport, recovery and disposal of waste, and includes a common definition of waste. The directive requires all member states to take the necessary measures to ensure waste is recovered or disposed of without endangering human health or causing harm to the environment and includes permitting, registration and inspection requirements.

Other legislation includes:

- Articles 10 and 11 of the revised Waste Framework Directive
- The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 (part 5)

- The Waste (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2012

Article 10

1. Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that waste undergoes recovery operations, in accordance with Articles 4 [waste hierarchy] and 13 [protect human health and the environment].

2. Where necessary to comply with paragraph 1 (above) and to facilitate or improve recovery, waste shall be collected separately if technically, environmentally and economically practicable and shall not be mixed with other waste or other material with different properties.

Subject to Article 10(2), by 2015 separate collection shall be set up for at least the following: paper, metal, plastic and glass. Local Authorities need to consider the implications of the Regulations before 1st January 2015.

The original legislative driver for separate collections was the Household Waste Recycling Act 2003 which provided that, “where English waste collection authorities have a general duty to collect waste they shall ensure that by 31 December 2010 they collect at least two types of recyclable waste together or individually separated from the rest of the household waste”.

4.0 Waste Collections Efficiencies

The Council worked with Rotate and Newcastle University through a Knowledge Transfer Partnership to identify efficiencies across the collection service.

In November 2010, North Tyneside Council participated in a regional project which aimed to optimise the efficiency of collection routes through the use of a standard software tool. The tool procured ‘RouteSmart’ was used across the North East to realise efficiency savings through reduced vehicle and fuel usage and to shape collection routes.

Following the round optimisation exercise the Council implemented a new four-day working week operating Tuesday to Friday from April 2011. The change has seen the following benefits:

- Improved service reliability with zone-based collections allowing crews that had completed their scheduled work to support crews with collections still outstanding
- No disruption to collections in those weeks affected by a Bank Holiday (exceptions in some years around Christmas and New Year but residents are informed well in advance through an annual calendar of all collection dates)
- Improved vehicle utilisation by allocating vehicles that collect residual waste during the core working week (Tuesday to Friday) to garden waste collections on Monday and Saturday
- All collection vehicles have vehicle trackers fitted which enables supervisors to both monitor collections and to ensure workload is balanced. The trackers have the added benefit when residents call in that they can be provided with real time information on collections or detailed information if there has been a problem

- Supported the integrated collection of trade waste with domestic household waste, ensuring that tonnages collected per round were maximised and balanced across each of the 14 rounds.

This optimisation work resulted in the Council identifying total operational efficiencies of around £250,000 per annum as a result of the reduction of two collection rounds and improved vehicle utilisation.

Due to the service improvements the Council has seen a significant improvement in customer satisfaction with an approval rating of 90% in 2011, following the implementation of the changes, compared to just 70% in 2008.

4.1 Staff

Changing the culture of our staff has been one of our main priorities and through negotiation with them and their Trades Unions we have made changes to roles to better reflect their unique position as the eyes and ears of the Council:

- All collectors are now environmental champions, giving advice and guidance to residents on how and what to recycle and all other waste related issues
- All collection staff have enforcement responsibilities, however these are to be used as a last resort and their training emphasises the advice and guidance elements over the enforcement role
- All staff have a safeguarding responsibility and have proven very effective in identifying vulnerable people and or situations
- Waste collection, street cleaning and grounds maintenance staff are a fully integrated Environmental Services team, giving flexibility to match workloads
- Waste collection crews collect litter bins on their routes.

5.0 Collection options

The current (2014/15) net costs of waste collection are:

• Refuse collection	£2,000,723
• Recycling collection	£1,137,326
• Total	£3,138,049

There are a number of options that can be considered with regard to waste collection. Although there are potential savings from these the biggest efficiencies come from savings in waste disposal.

5.1 Weekly collections

5.1.1 Weekly Collection Support Scheme (WCSS)

The Weekly Collection Support Scheme (WCSS) is a grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government. The total funding is £3.36m (£2.472m revenue and £0.883m capital). The bid process started May 2012, award of funding was made in November 2012 and accepted by Cabinet December 2012.

The WCSS funding is to support the retention of weekly refuse collections and was split over three years 2012/13-2014/15, but the commitment to weekly collection is for five years to 2017.

The revenue expenditure has therefore been profiled over 2012/13 to 2016/17 as £547,000 per annum and £397,000 removed from the base budget.

Actions and outcomes to date include:

- Harmonised waste collections through standardising bins across the borough, which has released some collection capacity used to relieve pressures from the increase in new properties
- All wards will have an on-street recycling point
- The on-street recycling capacity has been more than doubled (from 20,000 litres to over 54,000 litres)
- Two additional split bodied recycling collection vehicles have been purchased all capable of collecting from kerbside, communal or on-street bins
- Capacity to review recycling rounds to include communal bins and on street bins within regular rounds making them more efficient
- Updated and standardised litter bins.

The remaining capital will be used to purchase a small recycling collection vehicle to enable twin stream collections across the Borough.

From 2017 when the grant support runs out, there will be a gap in the collection budget, and no budget to support an education or behaviour change programme.

5.1.2 Behaviour Change

To limit the impact of the additional costs of weekly collection the Grant is also being used for comprehensive waste awareness and recycling incentives campaign. An environmental charity, Groundwork North East and Cumbria, has been engaged to deliver the campaign. The aim is 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% a year. A recent survey as part of the waste awareness campaign has shown that after 6 months activity resident awareness of the Wash, Squash and Recycle and Love food Hate Waste messages has already doubled.

Our ambition is to increase the recycling rate from 37.6% in 2012/13 to 45% by 2017, but this would require improving our performance by a fifth. The 2013/14 overall recycling rate was 39% but the increase was in the main delivered through removing metals following Energy from Waste treatment, which is beneficial environmentally, but does not provide any disposal savings. An actual increase in the amount of dry recyclables collected and diverted from the residual bin, would by 2017, provide treatment savings of around £500,000 per annum. Where other authorities have seen this level of rise with a campaign, however, it has been associated with some other investment or major change in the collection service such as Alternate Weekly Collection and food waste collections.

If the amount of waste arising can be reduced year on year, then by 2017 a 3% reduction in waste would save a further £300,000 per annum. However there is limited evidence that this can be delivered through behaviour change alone.

5.2 Alternate Weekly Collections

5.2.1 Cost of operating an alternate weekly collection service

Cost of operating the refuse and recycling service - £2,998,049.

5.2.2 Saving

Therefore there would be an overall collection and disposal saving of circa £368,000 moving to alternate weekly collections.

5.2.3 Overview of Alternate Weekly Collection Service

Alternate weekly collections have been successfully implemented in more than half of authorities across the country and have led to an increase in recycling rates and a decrease in waste overall, with associated financial and environmental benefits. Most of the authorities in the region already operate this way including Northumberland, Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Durham. Recyclables are collected one week and refuse the next, waste is still collected weekly and improvements to the recycling service means residents do not get a reduced service. This would allow for a reduction in crews and transport.

Once fully implemented this would have the effect of reducing the need for three refuse collection vehicles (RCVs) and crews, but we would need an additional recycling vehicle.

AWC has been demonstrated to lead to reduced rubbish collected and increases in recycling. We are in a joint contract with Newcastle for recycling processing and they are enjoying the benefits of an increased 2,000 tonnes of recycling, as a direct result of moving to alternate weekly collections, and falling waste volumes. Where alternate weekly collections have been introduced and work well communications have taken place with the public well in advance of the changes, usually around two years. They have often included pilot operations in limited areas. There is no evidence of a significant increase in fly tipping or health risk from AWC, particularly not where all the rubbish is in wheeled bins. Experience from our neighbouring authorities is that if the benefits are clearly explained there is little public objection. It would be ideal to use the waste awareness campaign resources to deliver this.

Alternate weekly collections work positively by increasing householder's awareness of the waste they throw away and different ways to deal with waste. This not only leads to a reduction in waste arisings but also greater capture of recyclable waste. This would ensure that the changes delivered by the WCSS projects would be sustained beyond March 2017 when the funding for the incentive and awareness campaign ends.

To ensure maximum savings are achieved any changes should be aligned with the fleet replacement programme so the savings from vehicles can be achieved from the fleet reduction.

5.3 Three weekly collections

5.3.1 Cost of operating a three weekly refuse and fortnightly recycling service

Cost of operating the refuse and recycling service - £2,915,614.

5.3.2 Saving

- Therefore there would be an overall collection and disposal saving of circa £458,435 moving to three weekly collections.

5.3.3 Issues/risks

- Moving to three weekly collections would result in a reduction of 4 refuse collection vehicles and associated teams, however the change would require an increase in one recycling vehicle and the retention of a team.
- It is anticipated 2000 tonnes of waste would be diverted to recycling.

Advantages

- Savings associated with collection and disposal
- Increased recycling in line with Government targets
- Environmental benefits – less vehicles and reduced emissions.

Disadvantages

- Opposition from the Public
- Opposition from Department of Communities and Local Government
- Perceived reduction in service
- Potential for increase in fly tipping.

5.4 Monthly collections

5.4.1 Cost of operating a monthly refuse and fortnightly recycling service

Cost of operating the refuse and recycling service -£2,733,860.

5.4.2 Saving

- Therefore there would be an overall collection and disposal saving of circa £640,189 moving to monthly collections.

5.4.3 Issues/risks

- Moving to monthly collections would result in a reduction of 6 refuse collection vehicles and associated teams, however the change would require an increase in one recycling vehicle and retain one team.
- It is anticipated 2000 tonne of waste would be diverted to recycling.

Advantages

- Savings associated with collection and disposal
- Increased recycling in line with Government targets
- Environmental benefits – less vehicles and reduced emissions.

Disadvantages

- Opposition from the Public
- Opposition from Department of Communities and Local Government
- Perceived reduction in service
- Potential for increase in fly tipping.