

Report to the Economy Environment & Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13th December 2018.

Recycling & Waste Service



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Introduction

This report has been prepared for members to consider following requests from the Chair for updates and statements on the following issues:-

- Progress on the introduction of Chargeable Garden Waste
- Progress on the planning for changes to the dry recycling and separate food waste service.
- Briefing on how the department copes with bad weather, and contingency plans for this year
- Staff absence issues affecting the service this year, how the department copes and contingency plans.
- Quarter 2 performance – for information

Background

Following Cabinets decision to introduce a new recycling service to residents, along with the introduction of chargeable garden waste, the decision was called in, and subsequently reviewed by the Economy Environment & Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 11th October 2018. The Committee requested additional scrutiny of the proposed recycling system including the costings, implementation and any risks of both a new kerbside system and an affordable garden waste collection service

At its meeting on 17th October 2018, Cabinet resolved that the Economy, Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee receive regular updates from the Cabinet Member on the detailed planning and modelling of the new recycling service

including timescales and costs in the run up to its implementation to help shape its design and direction and report back into the Cabinets decision making process.

In addition to these updates this report details some of the continuing challenges faced by the Recycling and waste service, and measures put in place to manage them effectively

The report finishes with an update on quarter two performance for recycling and waste, together with missed bin collections.

Questions to be Addressed

Progress on the introduction of Chargeable Garden Waste

Progress is currently all going to plan with no real issues so far. Highlights so far as follows

- Member briefing held on 1st November 2018, fairly well attended with some useful questions and comments from members. Frequently asked Questions document have been slightly amended following the session to reflect members wishes / comments and copies were subsequently sent to all Members.
- Bin hangers placed on all garden bins presented for collection w/c 5th November for that and the following week advising residents they would only have one more free collection, and advising they could register their interest in the chargeable service. 6,200 residents registered their interest to the end of November.
- Web page for chargeable garden waste went live from the 5th November, with link to form for registering interest. Frequently asked questions and answers are available on the same web page.
- Social media has been used throughout November to notify residents that the current free collection service is ending and signposting them to register interest in the new service.
- Integration of the Councils new customer interface system, 'Jadu' has been integrated into the departments back office and in-cab operations system, 'Bartec'.
- Temporary additional staff recruited to contact centre to help with increased volume of transactions. Additional staff will be available until April.
- Online payments live from 10th December 2018, allowing residents to subscribe.

- Christmas arrangements for recycling and waste collections and a flyer promoting the new chargeable garden waste service posted to all residents w/c 10th December.
- Social media and webpage updated to advise residents payment system is now live.
- Monitoring of residents comments and any complaints being undertaken, and responded to accordingly. So far there have been ?? comments and ? complaints which have been handled through the Councils Corporate Complaints system. Issues raised by residents mainly relate to access to the internet, taxation through the back door, and concerns over potential increased fly-tipping.

Progress on the planning for changes to the dry recycling and separate food waste service.

A high level timeline for projects has been produced to bring the new recycling service into operation on a phased approach over the next 18 to 24 months. The main project areas are detailed below together with anticipated time lines for delivery.

- Collection vehicle routing for new dry recycling service, as it changes from a weekly collection service to fortnightly.
This piece of work is vitally important and will begin in January 2019. The outcomes will confirm in detail the number and type of vehicles required for the new service. It will also establish if any day changes are required for residents, although it is hoped this can be kept to a minimum as day changes only add to confusion for residents in any change of service.
- Establishing the most efficient and cost effective way to collect food waste on a weekly basis.
As above, high level modelling suggested separate vehicles, rather than front line vehicles with food pod. More detailed modelling will confirm.
- Procurement and distribution of wheelie bins for dry recycling.
A major piece of procurement, which will be undertaken in 2019. Procurement process will take around three months. Production of around 50,000 bins will take a number of months, and distribution will take another couple of months. Before the procurement process begins a decision is needed as to whether wheelie bins are the right sort of receptacles for certain properties, such as terraced houses, and whether unused garden waste bins could be utilised.
- Procurement of Vehicles / disposal of existing recycling vehicles.
Once the route modelling exercises are complete, and tested via trials, procurement of the new fleet will need to commence. Procurement, order confirmation, vehicle build and delivery will take approximately 12 months.

- Procurement of processing for dry recyclable materials / sale of paper and card.
A vital and major piece of work, which will be challenging in the current poor and volatile market conditions. It is planned to hold a bidders day event early in 2019 for providers of sorting facilities to come along and tell the Council what they are able to offer and a view on Risk sharing with market values for materials. We will be looking at joint procurement options with other authorities in Staffordshire and beyond, to try and achieve greater economies of scale though higher tonnages of materials.
- Changes necessary to the Council Transfer Station at Knutton Lane.
The current transfer and processing facility at Knutton lane will require work to reconfigure it to handle comingled materials rather than source separated material as it does at the moment. Reconfiguration proposals will require agreement with the Environment Agency, and possibly the Planning Authority. Changes will need to link into the procurement process processing dry recycling materials mentioned above.
- Communications plan.
Communications plans are to be developed to inform residents of the proposed changes through a variety of measures.

Briefing on how the department copes with bad weather, and contingency plans for this year

Bad weather, especially snow will have an adverse effect on collection operations for recycling and general waste collections. Last winter was particularly bad, and the first time such bad weather had tested the resilience of the recycling service, which did not cope well at all.

Lessons have been learnt and a protocol for dealing with extreme weather and snow has been reviewed and amended. A copy of the amended protocol is attached for information.

When snow is forecast the Council puts into place its protocol so decisions and communications can be made quickly. If snow does fall, a risk assessment is made by a member of management of the service, together with the relevant trade Union Representative as to whether it is safe to operate, or whether to suspend the service. It may be the case that collection services are suspended in certain areas which are worse than others. Typical roads which have been adequately gritted will be safe for a vehicle and collections, but side roads which haven't probably won't be. If the service is able to operate even in a limited form it must be recognised that productivity will fall by as much as 60% simply because it is harder to walk and move bins on snow. Recycling is even worse, given operatives need to sort materials as well as decanting them into the collection vehicle.

Operations utilising wheeled bins are able to recover more effectively following disruption, with options for overtime and additional vehicles being utilised to catch up.

Recycling utilising boxes is far more difficult, and high winds can make the situation worse if collections are outstanding by a number of days. The contingency / recovery arrangements for recycling are effectively to utilise 'normal' refuse collection vehicles (RCV's) and slave wheelie bins which the boxes can be emptied into, and then into the vehicle. The material will then be bulked up either at our own depot, or Stoke-on-Trent City Councils facility, from where it will then be sent to a material recovery facility (MRF) for recycling. Recovery will be a little slower than just collecting bins, but should get material off the streets in a timelier manor. Communications to residents is important in these instances, as the Council could face criticism over the fact that people have spent time ensuring the right materials go into the right box, only for us then to mix it all up. We need to acknowledge this, and be open and honest as to the reasons why this process is being utilised to recover operations, and reinforce the fact that all material collected for recycling still will be recycled.

Staff absence issues affecting the service this year, how the department copes and contingency plans.

Staff absence has been a major issue with the recycling and waste service operation this year. At certain times up to 20% of the workforce have been absent through sickness. The recycling and waste collection service requires a core number of drivers and operatives to operate. Resources for day to day operations include a pool of staff to cover holidays and sickness to a certain level. Beyond that the department has to make use of agency staff to cover the shortfalls.

The table below shows the numbers and impact, together with the financial cost to the Council to cover daily collection operations.

Long Term Absence				
Month	Number of staff	Number of working days lost	Number of Hours lost	Agency / backfill cost £
April	4	65	487.5	8,317
May	6	115	862.5	11,592
June	5	97	727.5	16,365
July	6	135	1,012.5	13,910
August	7	153	1,147.5	20,404
September	9	178	1,335	16,884
October	7	169	1,267.5	20,235
November -part	6	62	465	5,852
Totals	N/A	974	N/A	113,559

Short Term Absence			
Month	Number of working days lost	Number of Hours lost	Agency / backfill cost £
April	41	307.5	3,931
May	24	180	2,103
June	47	352.5	16,045
July	31	232.5	2,103
August	26	195	2,560
September	39	292.5	4,037
October	68	510	8,212
November -part	25	187.5	2,346
Totals	301	N/A	41,337

The Council manages sickness and absence through its 'Attendance Management Policy and Procedure' process, which utilises a tool called the 'Bradford Factor' to monitor sickness levels of all its employees and determine what action may need to be taken. This method of measuring absenteeism levels was first established by the Bradford School of Management back in the 1980's and is now a widely established measurement used across all sectors of industry and commerce in the UK.

Bradford takes into account the occurrences of sickness absence and the duration of the absence to ensure a fair and consistent approach is adopted across the organisation and has a greater emphasis on the number of occasions of absence than on the total number of days. This is to provide a level of protection for staff with long term absence issues.

Triggers in the Bradford Factor are designed to encourage and help employees to develop appropriate patterns of attendance and all employees are monitored against them by managers informally through Return to Work Discussions and, where necessary, through the formal stages of the policy.

The Bradford formula is based on the following:

Number of absences X number of absences X total number of days = Bradford score' for example: 4 absences; 1 of 4 days and 3 of 2 days = 10 days provides a Bradford score of (4x4x10) = 160 points.

Triger points are –

- A score of at least 150 leads to a stage one consideration by the appropriate manager
- A score of at least 500 leads to a review following a Stage 1 warning being issued, the Manager / head of Service formally reviews the employee's sickness absence record with regards to issuing a final written warning.
- A score of at least 875, the Head of Service formally considers the employee's sickness absence record, with regards to dismissal.

The trigger points are not be used in isolation and other factors are be considered to help support a more comprehensive approach to manage and monitor sickness absence procedures.

By using the Bradford scoring matrix employees are aware of the trigger points and its aim is to ensure that all employees are treated consistently by applying a fair and consistent approach.

It is clear that sickness absence is a major problem for the department, and one which needs to be understood and tackled appropriately. Staff within recycling and waste services are working with the Councils Human Resources Department to manage sickness and look to bring the numbers down. This will also be a factor in development of the new recycling collection service.

Use of the Bradford Factor since its introduction has highlighted a number of issues that could be considered as part of a review of the Councils Attendance Management Policy. How long term sickness is factored in, the respective trigger points, as well as clarification over the method of calculation are three particular aspects that would benefit from review in order to support managers managing absence management within their respective teams.

Quarter 2 performance – for information

The following table details the performance for recycling and composting, together with missed bin statistics for quarter 2 of this financial year.

Recycling Performance

	Qtr 1 – April to July 18	Qtr 2 – July to October 18
Overall Recycling Rate	52.3%	51.2%
Dry Recycling Rate	15.65%	19.39%
Garden Composting	31.88%	26.57%
Food Waste AD Composting	4.73%	5.59%
Residual Waste Kg's per household (low figure is good)	112.31 kg's	103.66 kg's

Missed Bins

	July 18	August 18	September 18
Recycling	247	198	146
Residual	136	105	67
Garden	91	48	63
Total	474	351	276
% of successful collections	99.905%	99.933%	99.939%

Outcomes

That the report be noted and performance moving forward is monitored together with progress in developing the new recycling service.

Supporting Information

- Bad Weather Protocol.
- Windy weather protocol.

Invited Partners/Stakeholders/Residents

None invited as part of this report.

Constraints

N/A.

Conclusions

The Recycling and waste service has had a challenging year so far with sickness and absence being well above what would normally be expected. However performance in terms of recycling and the reducing number of missed bins continues on target.

Development and implementation of Chargeable Garden Waste is on schedule.

Development of the Councils new Recycling Service has commenced and will build over the coming months, to ensure a smooth transition for residents within the next two years.

Relevant Portfolio Holder(s)

Portfolio Holder for Environment & Recycling – Councillor Trevor Johnson.

Local Ward Member (if applicable)

All Wards are affected by this service.

Background Materials

There are no background papers to this report.

Appendices

None