

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S  
REPORT TO SCRUTINY**

**01 September 2022**

**Report Title:** Update on the Council's new Recycling Collection Service.

**Submitted by:** Head of Sustainable Environment.

**Portfolios:** Environment and Recycling

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Purpose of the Report**

To update on the operation and performance of the new recycling service introduced in 2020.

**Recommendation**

That the report be noted, and the Committee be invited to Scrutinise the new service, now bedded in, and its general performance/feedback from residents.

**Reasons**

At its last meeting in June 2022 the Environment Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee, as it was at the time, requested an update on the operation and performance of the new recycling collection service implemented two years ago during the first lockdown period. Although responsibility for environmental matters has now moved to Health Wellbeing and environment Scrutiny Committee, it was agreed between the two Chairs of these committee's that this report should go to this committee on this occasion.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 In September 2018 Cabinet approved a cross-party working group recommendation to replace the source separated recycling collection service with a twin stream, (paper and card separate) collection system utilising a wheeled bin and bag to replace the boxes.
- 1.2 Plans for the new recycling collection service were at an advanced stage, with a projected implementation date of September 2020, when the COVID Pandemic hit the Country, which had a significant impact on recycling and waste collection services, not just within the Council, but also throughout the Country. Faced early on with a 25% reduction in operational staff, from mid-March 2020, through COVID related sickness, self-isolation, and shielding, EMT and Informal Cabinet agreed a range of options which could be deployed if staff shortages continued to grow, and that some early planning on services such as how to maintain recycling refuse and garden waste collections was a practical way forward.
- 1.3 As part of these discussions, a decision was also taken to bring forward the rollout and implementation of the new recycling collection service, with the roll out starting in May 2020.
- 1.4 The new 'twin stream' recycling collection service was fully operational by August 2020.

## **2. Issues**

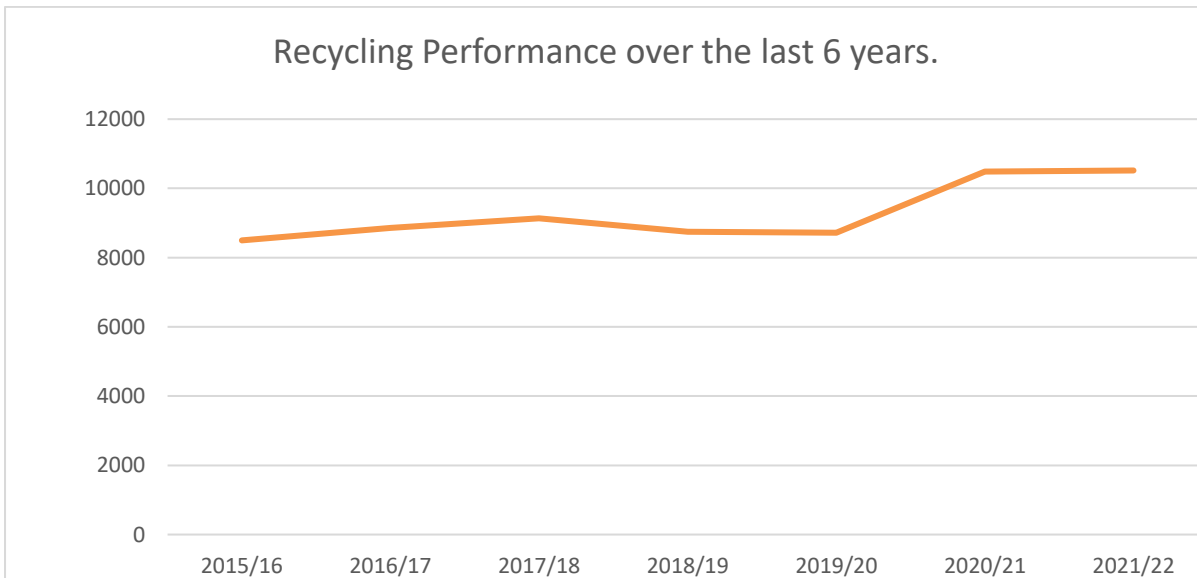
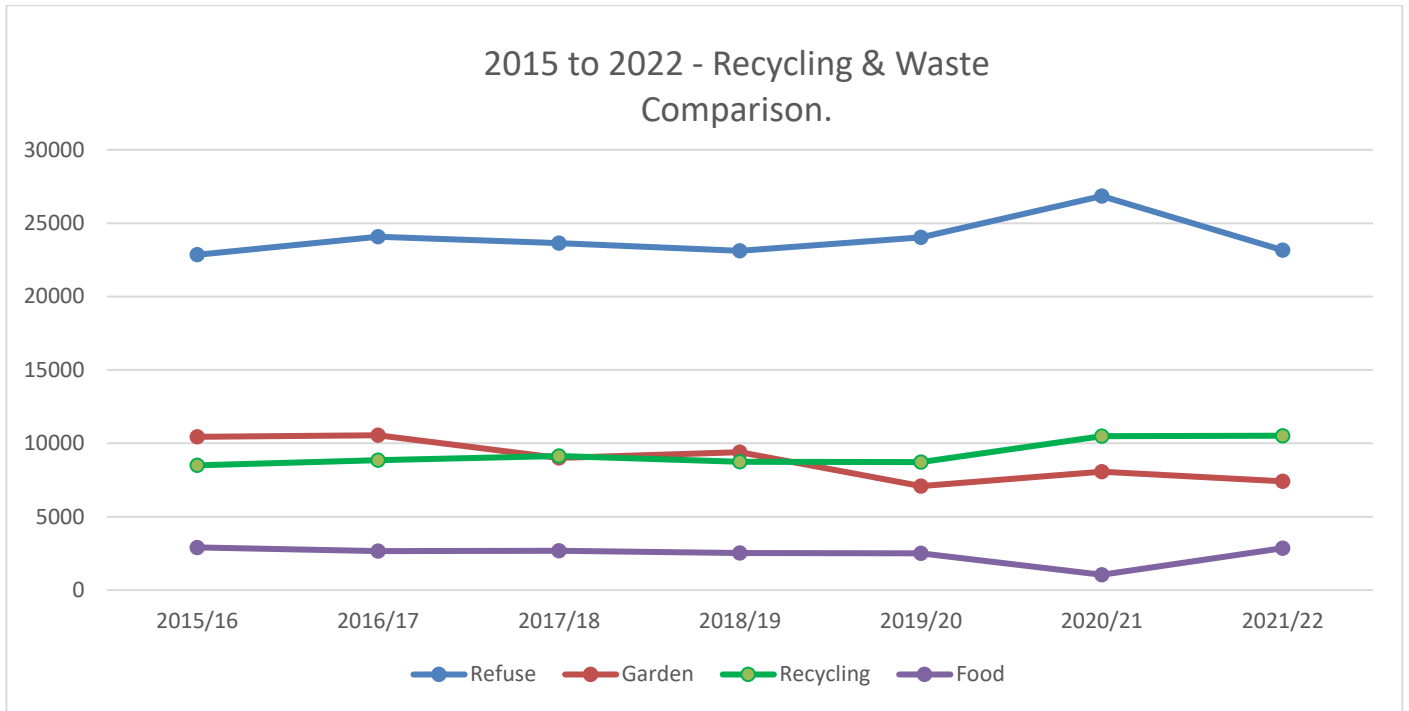
- 2.1** As well as resourcing issues, the COVID pandemic saw total waste arising's increase by over 25%, a result of people being at home, clearing things out, gardening, and buying more food and drink. This put substantial added pressure onto the collection service; however, the aim was to maintain all collection services as far as reasonably practical.
- 2.2** Ceasing operating the source separated recycling service early on in the pandemic, meant that food waste collections had to be suspended until the new twin stream recycling service was fully implemented. This put additional pressure on the residual waste collection service, however separate food waste collections were able to start again by the end of August 2020, following the delivery of the new fleet of food waste collection vehicles.

## **3. The Service Two Years On**

The new recycling and separate food waste collection services settled in quickly, with feedback from residents being very positive, and the Council receiving a high number of compliments made officially through the Councils corporate complaints and compliments system. Compliments included several for the sterling job done over lockdown, happy to be recycling more plastic, new recycling system is easier; leaflet is great, really like the new bins and bags. Additionally, feedback from collection crews is that they have been told by numerous of residents just how much they prefer the new recycling system as it's easy to use, and looks tidier on the streets both before and after collections.

### **3.1 Performance**

- 3.1.1** Performance has been very positive, with recycling tonnage increasing by 22% over the previous service, and this has been sustained. The addition of pots tubs and trays (PTT) to the mix of plastic has also had a positive benefit. Food waste collections have increased and following a major communications, initiative undertaken in summer 2021 now stands at 2% higher than the previous service.
- 3.1.2** Importantly the volume of residual waste has decreased significantly to below COVID pandemic levels, with a 13.7 % fall in tonnage.
- 3.1.3** The Council is now the second highest performer across Staffordshire in recycling and composting performance, with only Staffordshire Moorlands DC being slightly ahead.
- 3.1.4** The table and graphs below demonstrate the improvements in performance, modelling data for the last six years.



### 3.2 Collection Operations

3.2.1 Operationally the new service is far more efficient and reliable than the previous source separated system. With the four separate waste streams, now collected, Recycling, Food Waste, Garden Waste and Residual Waste, the Council undertakes on average 544,000 collections every month from households. The last quarter recorded the lowest number of missed bin collections ever recorded at 46.46 missed per 100,000 collections, meaning 99.95% collection success.

### 3.3 Material Re-processing

3.3.1 Maximising the amount of material collected being actually recycled, and ensuring high value in the materials collected means quality of the materials collected is of paramount importance.

- 3.3.2 The collection system was designed as a twin stream system, which made recycling easy for residents, while maximising quality of materials. For example, card and paper mixed with glass, renders the paper and card virtually worthless, as glass fragments in the paper and card mill process causes excessive damage. The first rule therefore is to keep paper and card completely separate from glass, either at the source of collection, or through very expensive and sophisticated sorting at a material recovery facility (MRF), of which there are fewer and fewer of these types of facility available.
- 3.3.3 Feedback from the Councils re-processing contractors has been very positive. Paper and card, because it is collected separately, in the blue bag, can be sold directly to paper and card production mills, therefore maximising its value, and ensuring it has a sustainable market and use within the UK.
- 3.3.4 The glass cans and plastics collected in the blue bins, known as Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR) is separated at a MRF designed to accept and deal with this mix of material. From April this year, and following a joint procurement process involving all the waste collection authorities in Staffordshire, the councils DMR goes to a facility in Four Ashes, in the south of the county, operated by Veolia. Once separated materials are then sold to re-processors specialising in particular material streams. The market for recycled material is a global one, but high quality material will generally find a home in the UK. As part of the contract the Council receives monthly reports detailing the end destinations of all the materials it sends to Veolia for processing. These reports show that over 95% of the materials collected by the Council are re-processed in the UK.

### **3.4 Digital Transformation**

- 3.4.1 As part of the project work in designing the new recycling and separate food waste collection service, the Recycling and waste service was the first in the Council to fully embrace and utilise digital processes to reengineer its policies and processes.
- 3.4.2 A back office and in-cab IT system called BARTEC is utilised and underpins the operation and delivery of the recycling and waste collection service. The system is integrated into JADU the Councils front end customer system, and for example, allows residents to subscribe to the garden waste collection service on line, which will then put their garden waste bin into service automatically on the collection schedule for their address. This system, and the improvements in efficiency and reliability over the previous service has resulted in a 90% drop in telephone and other enquiries to the Council.
- 3.4.3 Following the recent restructure of services within the council, the same transformation process, utilising BARTEC will be applied to the Councils Streetscene division.

## **4. Future Development – Short Term – Long Term Government RAWs**

### **4.1 Short Term**

- 4.1.1 With the service now operational for two full years, officers managing the service are undertaking a review of current collection rounds in order to re-optimize the collection routes. This needs undertaking periodically to take account of new homes being built, but also the tonnage collected on each round and the individual crew timings in completing rounds, which will settle over time. The optimisation process ensures all rounds are balanced against one another, and vehicles and crews operate in the most safe and efficient way, while ensuring reliability of the collections undertaken. In addition, work is ongoing to -

- Increasing separate food waste collection participation.
- Refreshing and enhancing recycling provision and collections for flats, ensuring they have the same level of service as other householders.
- Developing options for the introduction of commercial waste recycling and separate food waste collection services to businesses within the borough.

## **4.2 Long Term – Changes in National Policy – The Environment Act**

4.2.1 The Environment Act sees the biggest change in legislation for the waste industry and product supply chain since the introduction of Environmental Protection Act 1990.

4.2.2 It was granted Royal Assent on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021, and is now an Act of Parliament – ‘The Environment Act 2021’ the Act deals with issues including water, air pollution, biodiversity and conservation as well as resource and waste management.

4.2.3 Chapter three, Part three, sections 47 to 68 contain the parts of the Act covering Waste and Resource Efficiency. The main areas relating to local authorities are outlined below.

## **4.3 Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)**

4.3.1 The Bill outlines the formation of an OEP that will advise government on environmental issues and hold the government to account on its progress on plans and targets relating to the environment. It will be given powers to take enforcement action where applicable, against the UK government or in certain circumstance devolved governments. DEFRA have announced the OEP will be based in Bristol, which is where the headquarters of the Environment Agency are.

## **4.4 Extended Producer Responsibility for Collection Processing and Disposal Costs (section 48 of the Bill and Schedule 5)**

4.4.1 This section outlines the requirement of producers to cover the full net costs of their products after they have been used for their primary purpose. So for us as Local Authorities, these costs include —

- Collecting and transporting products or materials from households, for recycling or disposal
- Sorting and treating products or materials, for recycling or disposal
- Packaging litter placed in litterbins, collection and disposal.
- Providing public information (communications) about the recycling and disposal of products or materials.

4.4.2 How these costs are calculated in detail is still awaiting confirmation, but is likely to be modelled costs for LA’s based on demographics rurality and family groups. Consultations were undertaken in 2021, but the outcome is still awaited. First full net cost payments for our collections are expected in 2024.

4.4.3 It is likely that the current system of payment of recycling credits will cease at the same time.

## **4.5 Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) (section 51 and schedule 8)**

4.5.1 This section gives the powers to implement a DRS. It is now confirmed that Single-use drinks containers containing between 50ml and 3l of liquid will be in scope of the DRS for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. These will include PET bottles, steel and aluminium cans, but not glass in England and Northern Ireland. Glass will be included in Wales and Scotland!

4.5.2 Dates for implementation are yet to be confirmed for England, likely to be post 2026. Scotland is due to go live next year, but details are still somewhat sketchy, and producers are not happy.

## **4.6 Charges for single use plastics (section 52 and schedule 9)**

4.6.1 The section gives the Secretary of State, and devolved ministers powers to implement charges on single use plastic items. The Bill outlines that charges can be made on items that: are single use items, are made wholly or partly of plastic, and are supplied in connection with goods or services. This could be likened to the current carrier bag charge.

## **4.7 Separation of Waste (section 54) – Consistency in collections**

- 4.7.1 This requirement is applicable to England only and will enable the Government to bring forward their plans outlined in the consistency consultation in 2021. The Bill states that food waste must be collected separately and at least weekly and also outlines the following recycling streams for separate collection: glass metal plastic paper and card food waste garden waste The Bill states that each recycling stream must be collected separately from other household waste and separately from each other. It does say that the 'TEEP' test still applies and so materials can be collected together where: (a) it is not technically or economically practicable to collect recyclable household waste in those recyclable waste streams separately, or (b) collecting recyclable household waste in those recyclable waste streams separately has no significant environmental benefit (having regard to the overall environmental impact of collecting it separately and of collecting it together).
- 4.7.2 This section also places similar requirements for separate collections to be undertaken for business and commercial waste as well. This will have significant implications for businesses.
- 4.7.3 Although we are still awaiting the full outcome of the consultations and statutory guidance for DRS and Consistency in collections, the Councils current recycling and separate food waste collection service will meet the requirements set out in the Act, placing the Council in a fortunate position. We will be required to add additional materials in our collection system for recycling, such as Tetrapacks (2024) and plastic film (2026), but the system now operating has been designed to be flexible and will be easily able to accommodate these additional materials. The quest which is difficult to calculate is how much material could be removed from the kerbside collection system by DRS?

## **5. Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 5.1 The Council has a legal duty, to provide collection services for none recyclable waste, and to collect separately four streams of recycling, namely, paper/card (fibre), metal, plastic, and glass all free of charge. The Council has no statutory responsibility to provide garden waste collection services, and can make a charge for doing so if it so wishes.
- 5.2 Currently the Council does not have any statutory recycling targets imposed by Central Government; however there is a service level agreement with the County Council to deliver recycling levels above 50% as part of their PFI arrangements for their Energy from Waste Plant in the South of the County.
- 5.3 The new Recycling and food waste collection service will meet the forthcoming government legislation and guidance, in achieving consistency in recycling collections across England, and mandatory separate food waste collections as outlined in section 4.2 above.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed for the new recycling and food waste collection service.
- 6.2 The nature of the new recycling service designs out many of the manual handling issues raised by residents with the previous box-based service, and resident accessibility for service use was a key part of the planning process. Issues raised included those around residents without English as a first language (which we address through clear, simple language and image-based messages), disability (we raised this on the leaflet delivered with the new containers to reassure existing assisted collection customers and raise the availability of help for other residents who may find the help useful – and noted a rise in applications for help during the container roll-outs), and rurality (properties accessed down un-adopted tracks receive visits to identify collection points which work for residents and the collection operation, especially where an assisted collection is subsequently requested)
- 6.3 A review of the EIA will be undertaken this year to ensure that we captured any negative impacts so we can look to mitigate them.

## 7. **Financial and Resource Implications**

7.1 There are no financial and resource issues resulting from this report. The budget for the new recycling and food waste collection service has been built up from base between officers from the recycling and waste service and financial services departments. The new waste budget was approved as part of the ongoing Revenue Budget.

## 8. **Major Risks**

8.1 A comprehensive Risk Register was developed, and remains live, for the development and introduction of the new recycling and separate food waste collection service. The Covid pandemic, and its effects became an integral part of the risk register and was used to help shape the control measures to ensure an effective and reliable service was maintained, and to take account of the new service rollout.

8.2 High level risks remaining are those to do with managing the COVID pandemic and implications of any further waves or local lockdowns, particularly with regard to staffing levels, safe service operation, and maintaining full service provision. Additionally contamination needs to be continually monitored and managed to ensure the Council minimises the risk of rejected loads from the MRF, and the associated financial consequences.

## 9. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

9.1 The new recycling and separate food waste collection service supports the following global goals for sustainable development.



9.2 The new recycling and separate food waste collection service uses less vehicles than the previous collection service. The processing contract looks towards focused re-processing of materials in the UK and this will be further enhanced as part of the SWP procurement process which will also advocate closed loop recycling achieved within the UK.

9.3 This direction of travel will support national government targets in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and will help deliver the UK's circular economy strategy, and ensuring 65% of packaging waste is recycled.

9.4 The Council also has plans to use green fuel as an alternative to white diesel in its fleet of HGV vehicles employed in the Recycling and waste Service. This switch could see the Council's carbon emissions reduce significantly by over 25%, and being a major contributor to the Council reducing its carbon emissions to net zero by 2030.

## 10. **List of Appendices**

None

## 11. **Background Papers**

None