



NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET

13 January 2026

Report Title: **Recycling & Waste Services Operational Staff Structure Development.**

Submitted by: **Service Director - Sustainable Environment.**

Portfolios: **Sustainable Environment**

Ward(s) affected: **All**

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
For Cabinet to approve the proposals for changes to the management structure within the Recycling & Waste Team with the creation of 4 supervisor posts within the management team offering career progression opportunities forming part of the services workforce development plan.			
<u>Recommendation</u>			
That Cabinet: Approves the use of pEPR funding for the creation of 4 supervisor positions within the Recycling & Waste Service as part of the service expansion to cater for increased housing and to fulfil the requirements of HM Government's Resources and waste Strategy.			
<u>Reasons</u>			
The Council needs to ensure it has a positive and effective workforce in delivering its statutory duties and needs to build resilience to the pressures of a quickly and vastly changing industry that can deal adequately with the development needs for the service moving forwards.			

1. **Background**

- 1.1 It is now over 5 years since the Council introduced its current Recycling and Waste Collection service, which has resulted in significant improvements in service delivery and health and safety culture within the service and directorate.
- 1.2 Initiatives to improve the service further, centred around, workforce development, and improving the Health & Safety culture within the service. This has been achieved through investment in workforce development by providing opportunities for driver team leaders and supervisors to progress into permanent management positions (2 of them successfully undertook level 3 apprenticeships) and the introduction and use of 3rd party monitoring and auditing of collection vehicles utilising the in-cab and vehicle CCTV systems (currently out for procurement).
- 1.3 The waste industry remains among the HSE's most dangerous industry sectors with significant levels of injuries, and unfortunately fatalities occurring each year. Although great strides have been made over the years, and the sector has improved, more work still needs to be done, and the sector remains a major focus for the HSE,

and local authority collections. There is now the added risk of fires in collection vehicles and transfer stations / material recovery facilities caused by lithium batteries used in many rechargeable products, and nitrous gas cannisters.

- 1.4 Last year the government announced the implementation of its 'simpler Recycling' legislation which looks to standardise recycling and waste collection services across England including the mandatory separate collection of Food Waste.
- 1.5 Fortunately, the Council's current Recycling and waste collection service is fully compliant with the Simpler Recycling legislation following the introduction of plastic film and cartons into the dry recycling stream two years ahead of time.
- 1.6 Additionally, through the government's implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging materials (pEPR) producers of packaging must pay for the collection and processing of packaging materials they place onto the market. This has resulted in the Council receiving circa £1.2 million for this current financial year, with a similar sum expected for 2026/27.
- 1.7 Over the last couple of years there has been success in offering Driver Team Leaders the opportunity to gain experience working in the operational office, with six individuals undertaking the opportunity. This resulted in 2 Driver Team Leaders undertaking a level 3 apprenticeship and gaining a management role within the service. This is something we now want to repeat, by creating supervisory posts supporting workforce development and succession planning.

2. **Issues**

2.1 The Council is in a positive position with regard to complying with new legislation, however significant challenges need to be addressed over the coming years as follows –

- Property growth, there has been an increase of over 2,000 new properties since the introduction of the current collection service in 2020, and the rounds are now at capacity. Further growth is planned through the forthcoming local plan. Work is underway in reworking collection routes, through use of route optimisation systems, utilising collection data from the department's Bartec in cab and back-office system. This is a significant piece of work currently being absorbed by the operational team and will lead to collection day changes for many residents in 2026, which again is a significant piece of work. Looking at the forthcoming Local Plan, the housing trajectory prepared for the Local Plan indicates that an estimated 2,919 dwellings will come forward over the next five years. This will be unlikely to be absorbed in the existing fleet and resources; therefore, additional vehicles and staff will be required.
- Recycling collection & food waste collection fleet. The current fleet providing collections for dry recycling and food waste require replacement in the next 18 months. With vehicle lead-in times being in excess of 12 months approval has been given by Cabinet to commence the procurement process now, including

looking at contract hire with maintenance for vehicle provision moving forward. Again, this is a significant piece of work both for a procurement view but more importantly implementation if contract hire is the preferred route for provision and maintenance of the fleet moving forwards.

- Simpler Recycling- although the councils current service is compliant, there is a need to rollout the same service to all flat and apartment locations throughout the borough, around 7,000 properties. This work is in progress but again is taking significant resource to move quickly
- pEPR – The Council has received confirmation of its pEPR payments for this financial year, improved from what was first expected to circa £1.2 million. It is likely next year's figure will be around the same amount. However, these payments come with conditions which still need to be fully worked through. As part of the payment process, and linked to Simpler Recycling, the Council must demonstrate it operates an Efficient and Effective service, and one of continual improvement by maximising the volume of packaging material for recycling. Failure to do so could result in 20% of future payments being withheld, a significant amount of money.
- Current recycling collection service needs to be reviewed in conjunction with the procurement exercise for the recycling and food waste fleet mentioned above. The current twin pack RCV's used for recycling collections have proved somewhat unreliable, each requiring 2 body refurbishments in 5 years. It is hoped no further work is required on the bodies in the final 2 years of their operational life with the Council. Again, this is a major piece of work, which will also require extensive communication and consultation with members, starting with Informal cabinet.
- Local Government Reorganisation, which ever solution is taken forward for Staffordshire, there will be a need to consider and model joint working opportunities, and there will be a greater need to integrate services in with the disposal authorities. The forthcoming new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) will help shape the opportunities, but significant work will be required which links to all of the points raised above.

2.2 Like many similar waste services, there is an aging workforce. As an industry, it is being recognised as a significant risk, which includes the Streetscene service. The industry requires further work, at pace, to secure new, competent staff moving forward. Although some positive progress has been made, there remains therefore a significant piece of work around workforce planning.

2.3 There is a capacity issue in being able to work on day-to-day operations, with frontline Collection Support Managers each managing 25 employees. This is compared to Streetscene, where there are 4 Neighbourhood Managers, on a higher grade, with supervisors below them, and each with a much smaller number of direct reports. The operational workforce is unique within the Council and has

challenges not least in managing Health & Safety, absence, and a significant amount of time in managing training.

- 2.4 There is a need and an opportunity to enhance employee engagement and provide development opportunities for staff who wish to further their knowledge and or career. This has built some resilience, but more is required in management of the service to further improve management and workforce relationships, i.e. breaking down the 'them and us' stereotypical culture which exists in many organisations.
- 2.5 With the current structure it is impossible to deliver positive outcomes from the service pressures described above.
- 2.6 One of the 4 Collection Support Managers has now left, and this provides an opportunity to look at the structure in the Recycling and Waste Service.

3. Recommendation.

- 3.1 That Cabinet approves the use of pEPR funding for the creation of 4 supervisor positions within the Recycling & Waste Service as part of the service expansion to cater for increased housing and to fulfil the requirement of the governments Resources and Waste Strategy.
- 3.2 This is to further develop this opportunity and provide more robust employee engagement and training thoughts have turned to looking at the current structure within the recycling and waste management team. Additionally, with Streetscene falling under the Sustainable Environment Directorate, there is a need to better align the supervision and management structures within both service departments (i.e. redesignation of grade 9 manager roles to grade 10).
- 3.3 It is proposed to create four supervisor posts within the Driver Team Leader roles, one for each collection service, Recycling, Food Waste, and so on. These posts would be 'hands on' but add further supervisory criteria and ongoing regular refresher training requirements, such as toolbox talks, reverse assistant training and so on. These posts would be a grade 7 to 8 progression post. There would then be a need to backfill the Driver Team Leader positions.
- 3.4 Existing and proposed structures are shown in appendix 1.

4. Reasons.

- 4.1 The Council needs to ensure it has a positive and effective workforce delivering statutory duties and needs to build resilience to the pressures of a quickly and vastly changing industry that can deal adequately with the development needs for the service moving forwards. To facilitate this there is a need to build development opportunities and more robust management structure which can deal with day-to-day operations, allowing the Business Manager Recycling & Waste to focus more on strategic aims and associated projects to deliver efficient and effective services, and contribute more to the Councils corporate priorities.
- 4.2 There is a need to better align structures and working methods with Streetscene services, which again build greater resilience and consistency in staff engagement.

5. Options Considered

5.1 Discussion has taken place to see how we can move forward with the resources currently available. However, the gap between day-to-day operations and strategic challenges is growing and needs to be addressed particularly when LGR is factored in moving forward, there is therefore no credible alternative.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

6.1 The Environmental Protection Act 1990, and the Environment Act 2021 places many statutory duties within the Sustainable Environment Directorate which must be complied with.

6.2 The Council has a duty under Health and safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all his employees.

6.3 It also has a duty of care towards staff and residents of the borough to ensure service delivery is undertaken in such a way to ensure anyone who may be affected are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

7.1 There are no equality impacts resulting from this report

8. Financial and Resource Implications

8.1 There are both financial and resource implications from this report.

8.2 Creation of the four supervisor roles would cost £169,824 based on the bottom of grade 7 and including NI and pension contributions. This is subject to final confirmation through the Job Evaluation process. In addition, there are minor changes to 4 existing posts.

8.3 The Council has received £1.2 million in pEPR payments, of which £200,000 has been earmarked for continuous investment into the recycling and waste service, to enable it to be confirmed as an Efficient and Effective Service. This restructure fully supports the principles of improved performance in recycling and waste collections as required under Simpler recycling and EPR legislation.

8.4 Costs of existing posts and costs of posts per the proposed structure totals £179,008.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation.

9.1 Failure to adopt, operate and develop the recycling and waste collection services places a major corporate risk to the Council, both financially and reputationally.

9.2 Under pEPR if the Council fails to deliver Efficient and Effective services it could face significant financial penalties

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



11. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council *We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.*

The Recycling & Waste Service operates a commercial waste service, which is transitioning to having recycling collections as its focus of business moving away from disposal to help meet circular economy principles. The proposals set out in this report will support the transition and development of this service.

One Digital Council

We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.

The Recycling & Waste service have invested heavily in digital services to help deliver an effective and efficient service. The proposals set out in this report will help generate more focus time to develop digital opportunities which will support improvements in service delivery moving forward.

One Green Council

We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle

The Recycling & Waste Service plays a significant role in the Council's Sustainability programme, and actions on service design and delivery form an important part of the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy (SES) and Delivery Plan.

12. Key Decision Information

12.1 The report is a key decision due to the financial value of the proposal.

13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

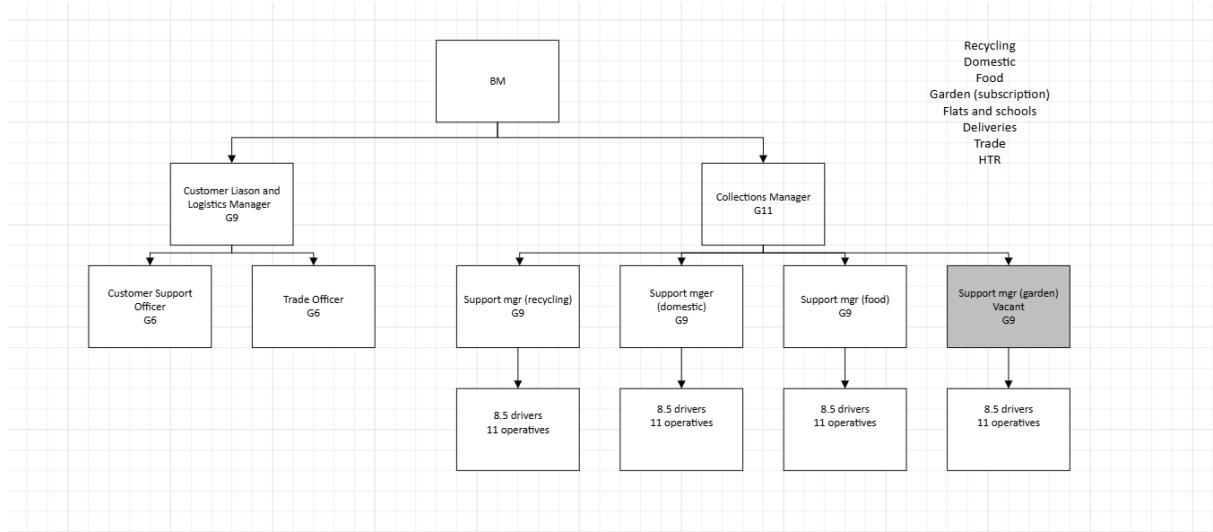
13.1 None

14. List of Appendices

14.1 Appendix 1 – existing and proposed structures

Appendix 1

Current Structure



Proposed Structure

Classification: NULBC PROTECT Organisational

