

Report to Cabinet

15 September 2026



Recycling & Waste Re-Routing

Lead Member:

Cllr Ben Simpson – Cabinet Member for Waste Recycling & Greenspaces

Lead Officer:

Andrew Bird – Service Director Sustainable Environment

Key Decision: Yes

Ward(s): Cross Heath, Knutton, Silverdale, Town, Maer & Whitmore, Loggerheads, Westbury Park & Northwood, Westlands, Maybank, Thistleberry, Wolstanton, Keele, Seabridge, Madeley & Betley, Clayton.

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Communications plan
Appendix 2 - Risk

Report Assurance:

	Name	Date
Lead Officer	Andrew Bird	4/9/26
Monitoring Officer	Olwen Brown	7/9/26
Section 151	Craig Turner	7/9/26
Chief Executive	Gordon Mole	7/9/26
Cabinet Member	Ben Simpson	

Report Summary

This report seeks Cabinet approval to implement changes to recycling, domestic waste, garden waste and food waste collection days for approximately 22,000 households in the southern area of the borough. The proposed re-routing exercise is necessary to address significant housing growth since the introduction of the current twin-stream recycling service in 2020. Around 4,000 additional homes have been added since that time. Alongside increased recycling participation and higher collection volumes, this has placed growing pressure on existing collection capacity and created imbalances across collection rounds.

The service has successfully absorbed this growth to date, but remaining capacity is now becoming constrained. The proposed changes will rebalance workloads across the week, improve route efficiency, reduce operational risks associated with servicing areas furthest from the depot at the end of the week, and help prevent missed collections or deterioration in service standards. The re-routing addresses the immediate imbalance in existing rounds, while the proposed additional recycling collection vehicle and crew will provide the capacity required to support further housing growth and increasing recycling volumes from 2027.

Subject to approval, the changes will be implemented in October 2026 and will be supported by a comprehensive communications programme to ensure affected residents are informed of their new collection days. The proposals will help maintain high service standards, support future growth, and ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory waste collection responsibilities efficiently and effectively.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the recycling and waste collection day changes for approximately 22,000 households in the south of the borough to rebalance operations providing greater efficiency and operational resilience.
2. Approves the addition of 1 operational vehicle and crew for recycling collections to come into operational service mid-2027 to future proof operations to cater for further housing expansion.

1. Background

- 1.1. In 2020, during the COVID pandemic, the Council changed from its former source-separated recycling collection service to its current 'twin stream' recycling and food waste collection service, with paper and card collected separately from glass, cans and plastic. Dry recycling is collected fortnightly, alongside fortnightly residual waste and chargeable garden waste collections, with separate food waste collected weekly.
- 1.2. Route modelling was undertaken as part of the service change project, as the collection operation and vehicle type changed completely. Where possible residents remained on the same day for collections to reduce confusion, although garden waste collections were swapped to be undertaken on the same day as residual waste to reduce the number of bins presented for collection on the street.
- 1.3. Recycling performance in the new service increased by 20% in the first year while the number of vehicles used for collection of recycling and food waste fell from 17 to 14 as the service was far more efficient in operation.

- 1.4. In 2020 there were 53,000 households in the borough of Newcastle under Lyme, in the 6 years since this has risen by 4,000 properties. This represents growth of approximately 7.5% since the introduction of the current service model. While the service has successfully absorbed this increase through operational efficiencies, further growth has now significantly reduced available capacity within the collection operation.
- 1.5. This together with the locations where most of the housebuilding has taken place means the collection rounds have become unbalanced and inefficient which if not corrected will ultimately result in service failures on certain collection days
- 1.6. Moving forward it is predicted that housebuilding will continue at a similar pace as it has over the last 6 years or so. With the adoption of the local plan it is anticipated that 400 homes per annum are planned. This will mean additional resources in the recycling and waste service will be required beyond these changes in the years to come, and it is proposed that an additional recycling vehicle and crew will be procured to come into operation in mid 2027.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. Collection operations are divided into 2 distinct areas within the borough, north and south, meaning recycling collections take place in one area, while residual and garden waste collections take place in the other, they then swap over for the following week. Separate food waste collections take place weekly across the 2 areas.
- 2.2. There are 6 front line vehicles allocated to dry recycling, food waste and residual waste collections from kerbside rounds. Garden waste vehicle resources vary throughout the year as the collections are seasonal. However, operation of the twin-pack vehicles which collect the dry recycling is typically slower as they have 2 material streams to deal with rather than 1. This was not necessarily an issue in the past due to participation in recycling collections being a little lower than that of residual waste. However, over time and with the additional houses, participation has increased, putting additional strain on dry recycling collections.
- 2.3. Flats and apartments are serviced by dedicated vehicles and do not form part of the proposals for these changes.
- 2.4. It is the southern area collections where issues need addressing. As well as the larger increase in housing developments in this area, the way collections are scheduled can prove difficult. In the north area collections start on a Monday furthest away from the depot and day by day move towards the centre and therefore close to the depot. This means that if there are any issues with collections as they move through the week, they are easier to rectify as vehicles are closer to the depot and disposal points. In the south it is the opposite with collections on a Friday being in the loggerheads area, furthest away from the depot, meaning long travel distances at the end of the week, and therefore problematic if issues arise and need to be rectified.
- 2.5. As part of the rerouting exercise, it is proposed that the southern area collections are switched to match those in the north, i.e. the southernmost collections, Loggerheads and surrounding area, will take place on a Monday rather than Friday, and Silverdale on a Friday rather than Monday.
- 2.6. There will be additional day changes within the weekly schedule for southern area collections to balance out collections across the 5 days. The table below details the changes by area and round showing 'as is' and proposed new collection day. Collection rounds in the north will remain unchanged for the time being but might

need some minor adjustments to take account of new house building in that area of the borough.

- 2.7. It should be noted that the collection rounds themselves, will by and large remain the same, therefore the crews are very familiar with the rounds and wont need to get used to completely new rounds, which always needs some bedding in.
- 2.8. It is proposed the changes, subject to Cabinet approval are made week commencing 5th October 2026.
- 2.9. Table showing changes to collection rounds / days.

It should be noted that not all properties within each ward will be affected by the proposed changes.

No of Wards	Wards	Collection Day	
		From	To
4	Cross Heath, Knutton, Silverdale, Town	Monday	Friday
2	Maer & Whitmore, Loggerheads,	Friday	Monday
5	Cross Heath, Maybank, Thistleberry, Town, Westlands	Tuesday	Thursday
6	Keele, Madeley & Betley, Maer & Whitmore, Silverdale, Thistleberry, Audley (12 properties)	Thursday	Tuesday
2	Westlands, Westbury Park and Northwood	Friday	Wednesday
2	Maer & Whitmore, Madeley & Betley	Thursday	Monday
1	Westlands	Wednesday	Tuesday

- 2.10. Failure to rebalance collection rounds would increase the likelihood of service disruption, missed collections, increased overtime costs and reduced resilience when responding to vehicle breakdowns, adverse weather events, staff absences or other operational pressures. The proposed changes seek to address these challenges before service standards are adversely affected
- 2.11. A communications plan has been developed to inform residents of the changes and support changed behaviours. Given the scale of the change and the short period between Cabinet consideration and go-live, every affected household will receive a

direct physical letter or postcard advising them of the change and directing them to the collection date calendar on the Newcastle Borough Council web page. This will be supported by briefings for Customer Services staff and Members.

- 2.12. The Council will utilise all available resident contact data held within its systems to maximise direct engagement with affected households, including emails, text messages, incoming caller messages, Facebook, the website and press releases. The physical letter or postcard will ensure that all affected households receive a notification that their day is going to change, including those for whom the Council does not hold reliable digital contact details.
- 2.13. The communications will start with awareness-raising 16th September, allowing just over 2 weeks to communicate the changes, and vary with more detail and intensity as go-live approaches to prevent message-fatigue, continuing during the first 2-week cycle of the changed dates. Awareness raising, action to find out the new date, and action to get the right containers out on the right days will be the key objectives. There'll be simple messages focussed on 'same service, new day,' and 'same service, new day– check your collection day today'.
- 2.14. The project will contact residents for whom we have contact details directly using the methodologies developed for chargeable garden waste service, and well tested generic communications using other channels.
- 2.15. Residents receiving assisted collections will automatically transfer to their new collection arrangements. They will not be required to re-register or take any additional action because of the re-routing changes.
- 2.16. Officers will monitor the first collection cycle closely and apply a short transition period where appropriate, particularly for households whose collection day has been brought forward. This will allow operational discretion to support residents during the changeover while maintaining clear expectations about future presentation days.
- 2.17. Members in the wards affected will be made aware of the changes in their areas through bespoke dedicated communications directly with them. Officers will be available to help with any queries members might have.

3. Strategic Approach

- 3.1. The proposals contribute directly to the Council's Corporate Plan objectives by:
 - Maintaining reliable and efficient frontline services.
 - Improving operational efficiency and value for money.
 - Ensuring the waste collection service remains resilient and capable of supporting future housing growth.
- 3.2 A short performance update will be brought back to Cabinet/Members approximately six to eight weeks after implementation. This will cover missed collections, Customer Services contacts, overtime, round completion, operational resilience and any adjustments made following go live.
- 3.3 These proposals support compliance with current and future statutory waste collection requirements, and future proof the service for new house building to be undertaken as set out in the Council's New Local Plan.

4. Finance & Resources

- 4.1. Modelling options for provision of the new operational collection routes has been undertaken using existing routing software which the Council has procured and its

existing back office and in-cab management system. There have been and will continue to be resource implications in officer time to manage and fully deliver the re-routing project.

- 4.2. Communications for the changes outlined in section 2.8 above will cost £9k via Royal Mail delivery met from existing budgets. This will be designed by the service development and communications team.
- 4.3. The additional vehicle for recycling collections is already included in the Council's fleet replacement capital programme for 2027 at a cost of £330,000 for Diesel powered twin-pack vehicle. The annual revenue cost of the additional crew is estimated at £160,000. The annual revenue cost of the additional crew is estimated at £160,000. Provision for the revenue costs can initially be made via the Waste Service Improvement reserve, accumulated from Extended Producer Responsibility payments for this purpose.
- 4.4. Although the vehicle expenditure is planned for 2027, this requirement relates to an operational frontline service and would continue to be required under any successor arrangements arising from Local Government Reorganisation. The investment is therefore presented as necessary operational capacity rather than discretionary growth.

5. Legal & Governance

- 5.1. The Environmental Protection Act 1990, and the Environment Act 2021 places many statutory duties for the Council which must be complied with.
- 5.2. Of note, under the Environment Act 2021 the Council must comply with the requirements of the Simpler Recycling legislation, which places requirements for additional materials to be collected as part of the Council's kerbside recycling collections.
- 5.3. The Council is fully compliant with all requirements of the Simpler Recycling Legislation requirements, having been collecting separate food waste for over 16 years, and introducing film and flexible plastics into its dry recycling collections in 2025. The statutory implementation dates, for film and flexible plastics has now pushed back from April 2027 to April 2030.

6. Supporting Information

6.1. Appendix 1 – Communications Plan

We will deliver a communications plan over the 19 days prior to go-live and the collection day change period. This will start on 16 September and increase in intensity in the run up to go-live, continuing during the first fortnightly collection cycle. Every affected household will receive a physical letter or postcard highlighting a change and signposting to the Collection Date Calendar on the corporate web page. This will ensure residents receive information relating to collections from all services – recycling, food waste, refuse and garden waste where subscribed. The focus will be on raising awareness and a call to action: finding out the new collection day. We'll make sure that the message stays fresh and doesn't cause fatigue, and drives home the message that only the day changes, whilst the service stays the same: 'new day, same service' and 'new day, same service – check your collection day today'.

Facebook and the website will be used for generic awareness-raising. Emails and text messages will be sent to affected properties, drawn from existing contact databases. The website and phone line will also support the changes.

All communications will point to [Bin collection day finder – Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council](#).

The approach combines a universal physical letter or postcard with direct digital notifications where contact details are available. Social media touchpoints will go out over the 19 days, reaching out widely. The focus is on a clear progression from awareness to action, which should significantly reduce missed collection reports when the new rounds go live and support the success of the collection day change.

Themes:

Week	Dates	Campaign Theme
Week 1	16 Sept 2026	"Changes are coming – same service, new day"
Week 2	w/c 21 Sept 2026	"Check your new collection day – same service, new day"
Week 3	w/c 28 Sept 2026	"Starts next week – same service, new day"
Go-live Weeks	w/c 5 Oct 2026 and w/c 12 Oct 2026	"same service, new day"

Timetable and actions

Week till Go-live	Objective	Main Activity
16 Sept	Awareness and understanding	Launch campaign Website homepage banner goes live. Council website press release. Initial Facebook announcement. Explain collection day changes: refuse and recycling remain on alternating weeks. Food waste remains weekly. Brief Members and Customer Services team. Press releases.
Week 2 w/c 21 Sept	Action Drive residents to check their new collection day	Release new collection information collection day finder updated with new collection days. Residents encouraged to check their new collection day and first collection under the new arrangements. Add prominent website call-to-action. Community and parish page engagement begins.
Week 1 w/c 28 Sept	Action and reinforcement	High-visibility reminders Changes begin in two weeks. Check which bin goes out first. Food waste remains weekly. Increase visibility across digital channels. Customer Services refresher briefing. Corporate press release.
Week 1w/c 28 Sept	Countdown and reinforcement	Daily reminders and service readiness Your new collection day starts next week. Check refuse, recycling and food waste collection dates. Friday website banner update. Update telephone message. Reminder to CS.
Go-live Week 1 w/c 5 Oct	Transition support and reassurance	Live updates and support Homepage banner highlights live changes. Customer Services and operational monitoring. Reactive communications where required. Reminder to CS.
Go-live Week 2 w/c 12 Oct	Transition support and reassurance	Live updates and support Homepage banner highlights live changes. Customer Services and operational monitoring. Reactive communications where required.

6.2. Appendix 2 - Risk

Risk	Mitigation
Residents are unaware of collection day changes (particularly those where the collection has been brought forward where the impact would be greater).	Comprehensive communications campaign (Appendix 1). During the first collection cycle, officers will apply a short transition arrangement where appropriate, particularly where a household's collection day has been brought forward. This will allow operational discretion to support residents who may reasonably have been affected by the change, while maintaining clear communication that future collections must be presented on the new scheduled day. The short period (Friday to Monday) between weekly food waste collections will mean low presentation and tonnages. These resources can be diverted to support the transition. Additionally, collections that have been moved earlier in the week, and are more at risk of non-presentation, will be positioned closer to the Depot and therefore will be easier to recover.
Increased contact to Customer Services during implementation.	Staff briefings and prepared customer information, proactive telephone messaging.
Missed collections during transition period	Additional operational monitoring and supervisory resource during implementation – particularly towards the later part of the week when collections have been pushed back so tonnage is higher. Whilst days are changing, route changes are limited so crews are already familiar with the work packs.
The maximum period that a resident goes between collections is 18 days for recycling / domestic / garden waste	The first collections to change (as this only affects the South) is recycling. This is less

collections and 12 days for a food waste collection.	contentious as there is no real limit on capacity. For domestic collections residents whose collection is pushed out will be able to present an additional sack of refuse (w/c 12th October only).
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