

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	<b>HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2020</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>FOOD WASTE AND 140L BIN PROJECT - EARLY ADOPTERS AND PROJECT UPDATE.</b>		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>ADELE BARNETT-WARD</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES</b>
<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES</b>	<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>BOROUGHWIDE</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>ANDY EDWARDS</b>	<b>TEL:</b>	<b>0118 937 3458</b>
<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	<b>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES</b>	<b>E-MAIL:</b>	<b>Andrew.edwards@reading.gov.uk</b>

#### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report updates on the progress of the kerbside food waste collections in the 5 early adopter areas and on the main Phase 1 roll-out planned for February 1<sup>st</sup> 2021.
- 1.2 The original roll-out timetable was adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The original and revised timetables are shown below:

##### Original timetable

- Early adopter areas service (3,300) properties begins 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020.
- Phase 1 service to 59,000 properties to begin 1st October 2020.
- Phase 2 service to 14,000 high level flats to begin later in 2021 - once Phase 1 has been successfully implemented.

##### Revised timetable

- Early adopter areas service (3,300) properties began on the 5<sup>th</sup> October
- Phase 1 service to 59,000 properties due to begin 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.
- Phase 2 service to 14,000 high level flats due to begin later in 2021 - once Phase 1 has been successfully implemented.

- 1.3 A total of 3300 early adopter properties received the new service from the 5th October. The early adopters project is critical to the success of the full roll out. The areas were chosen because they are operationally challenging, including property types such as low-level flats, student accommodation and houses of multiple occupancy (HMO's), as well as a control area. The experience gained and lessons learnt from the early adopters as well as the feedback from residents will be used to help shape and adapt our approach for the main roll out both operationally and in the communication messages which are used.
- 1.4 The second nationwide Covid 19 lockdown which ended on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December did not adversely affect the preparations for the main roll-out in February 2021 or the early adopters scheme. It did however mean that the Recycling and Enforcement team were not able to door knock or conduct face to face meetings with residents during this period but inspections, early adopter monitoring and enforcement continued.

## **2. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- 2.1 That HNL Committee notes the progress made on the food waste project and the timetable for the full roll out of the service in 2021.

## **3 POLICY CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The EU Waste Framework Directive sets a recycling and re-use target of 50% for waste materials from households to be achieved by 2020. This target has become UK law and Government has suggested it will remain so post-Brexit. In addition to this, in 2018 the EU adopted new targets for recycling. The requirement is to recycle or reuse 55% in 2025, 60% in 2030 and 65% in 2035. The Council considers the best way to achieve its ambitions is to put further increased effort in to achieve greater recycling, and being ambitious in the process. This project signals the Council's clear intent to do just that.
- 3.2 The re3 Strategy was adopted by the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee, on behalf of Reading Borough Council, on 2nd July 2018. The re3 Strategy focuses on two principal themes of: (i) reducing the net cost of waste, and (ii) recycling 50% by 2020. The first theme recognises the need for waste, as for all services, to contribute to the delivery of savings. The second theme principally recognises the fundamental need to recycle more and quantifies it as per the relevant statutory target. The re3 Strategy prioritises the treatment of food waste because it is a waste management issue which has both direct and indirect financial outcomes for residents.
- 3.2 Policy Committee (26<sup>th</sup> September 2019) received a report setting out a way forward for the Household Waste service to achieve the ambition to increase recycling to 50% and to reduce the cost of waste. The Committee resolved to introduce a combined new waste service of alternate weekly collections with 140l residual bins and weekly food waste collection. The original timetable, agreed by Policy Committee, set out a go live date for a full roll out in October

2020 following an early adopter phase in June 2020. This timetable was revised as shown in section 1.2, due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

- 3.3 The predicted 11.5% increase in recycling from the current rate of 35% secures an estimated annual saving of £342k based on a successful early adopters' pilot in October 2020 and the full roll out of the service from February 2020. This saving includes the up-front capital costs of £1.5m to purchase new smaller 140 litre bins and the additional revenue costs of the new drivers and loading staff required to support the programme.

#### 4. THE PROPOSAL

##### 4.1 Project Overview

A project overview is shown in **Appendix 1** to this report.

##### 4.2 Early Adopter Overview

The Early adopter areas are shown in **Appendix 1**.

**Appendix 2** shows data collected before and since the early adopter (EA) roll-out including the number of customer contacts and complaints received.

In general, the roll-out of the early adopters has been a success with the tonnage of food waste far exceeding the predicted weight of 1kg/household/week. There have also been a number of learning outcomes which will be taken forward into the main roll out. There were some minor issues with bin deliveries being missed or delayed but considering an operation of this scale was new to the staff involved the number of complaints has been low.

The Council's call centre reported that call volumes were low and any contacts were generally positive about food waste recycling, but some concern has been expressed about the reduction in size of the grey bins to 140l and whether residents will cope. The logistics of the food waste collections will continue to be refined as will the numbers and sizes of food waste bins at certain properties.

80 residents have requested to date additional waste capacity because of the size of their family and have been issued with white waste sacks of which 59 applications have been approved.

Domestic waste collections from the 140l bins began in Northcote and Minster/Southcote in the week commencing 12th October, with Abbey, Caversham and Redlands the following week and data such as the amount of side waste left and over-flowing and contaminated recycling bins will be monitored and recorded as the new service beds in.

The on-line early adopter support request form is available on the website and a residents' feedback form was available from the 2nd November. All responses have been analysed and changes made to the main roll out communications to address the issues raised.

The Recycling and Enforcement team have been supporting the early adopter scheme and are currently focussing on:

- Monitoring the presentation of food waste bins and 140l bins in the 5 EA areas
- Data capture for the main roll-out
- Environmental enforcement.

The team accompanied the delivery crews in all the EA areas to answer questions, deal with any issues and to distribute information to residents. Each member of the team has been allocated an early adopter area and have been checking bin presentation and speaking to residents who are struggling to put the right material in the right bin as well as liaising with managing agents and landlords about excess waste and capacity issues.

#### 4.2.1 Early Adopter food tonnages

Table 1 below shows the tonnages collected in each of the 5 early adopter areas in the first 6 weeks of the service. The target weight of food waste to be collected from each property per week was 1kg/household/week, this has been exceeded in every week to date. However, it is common for food waste tonnage to drop back as the service beds in as residents become aware of the volume of food they are recycling. Tonnages for weeks 1 to 6 are also contained in Table 1 in **Appendix 2**.

EA area	Target (tonnes)	Week 1 (5.10.20) Actual (tonnes)	Week 2 (12.10.20) Actual (tonnes)	Week 3 (19.10.20) Actual tonnes	Week 4 (26.10.20) Actual tonnes	Week 5 (02.11.20) Actual Tonnes	Week 6 (09.11.20) Actual Tonnes
Abbey	0.86	0.68	0.96	0.98	0.90	1.12	1.12
Caversham	0.64	2.40	1.96	1.84	1.82	2.00	2.30
Minster/Southcote	0.60	0.96	1.38	1.24	1.22	1.30	1.40
Norcot	0.58	1.74	1.76	1.66	1.82	1.82	1.84
Redlands	0.62	1.26	1.36	1.44	1.30	1.46	1.58
Total	3.30	7.04	7.42	7.16	7.06	7.70	8.24
Food waste yield (kg/hh/wk)	1.00	2.13	2.25	2.17	2.13	2.33	2.50

Table 1

#### 4.3 Main Project update

The round scheduling and optimisation work for the main roll-out in February 2021 is on schedule and it is confirmed that all properties will receive their food waste collections on the same day as either their waste or recycling collections, but as expected most properties will see a change in collection day. The new recycling, waste and food rounds are currently being finalised

and the collection calendars for 2021/22 produced ready for posting out to all properties by Royal Mail in the w/c 7th December.

Our bin delivery contractor has confirmed that the delivery of food waste bins and caddies to properties will begin on the 4th January 2021, and the delivery of 140l bins will begin on the 1<sup>st</sup> February taking 8 weeks to complete. The food waste collection trucks have been delivered and the food waste bins and caddies and 140l bins will start to arrive in early December. Staff recruitment for the main roll-out is ongoing.

The project is supported by a communications plan which includes the following elements:

Printed information leaflets for all property types on delivery of the new bins.  
Articles in the residents' newsletter in November.  
Printed waste collection calendars posted with information to every property.  
Updated livery for food waste collection and waste vehicles.  
Digital screen content and use of bus interior screens.  
Short 'how to' films on web and social media.  
Direct resident e mails and social media promotion.  
Use of apps such as Nextdoor.  
Council buildings and notice boards.  
Communication activity will increase ahead of the main roll-out launch in February.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

5.1 The Council's has adopted a Strategic Framework (March 2020) which sets out the Council's key priorities including:

- To keep social care services running for the children and adults who need them;
- To support vulnerable and isolated people during the crisis;
- To support business and the economy, which will secure the long-term recovery of Reading.

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

6.1 Full communication plans have been developed for both the early adopter and main roll out phases. Consultation advice has been sought from the appropriate stakeholders. This included liaison with the University, resident's groups, community groups, landlords and managing agents. Any lessons learnt regarding communication in the early adopter phase will be taken into account and the communication plan amended accordingly.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Council has duties under various UK and EU legislation to deliver waste collection and disposal services, principally the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the revised EU waste framework directive 2008.

Consultation advice has also been sought from the Corporate Legal team, and they have advised that there is no Statutory Duty to consult regarding the proposals.

- 7.2 Detailed work has been undertaken regarding enforcement powers and legislation to ensure that where needed, the Council is enforcing and taking action when regulations are not adhered to.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149 the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 8.2 The Council has reviewed the scope of the proposals as outlined within this report and considers that the proposals have no direct impact on any groups with protected characteristics. However, the service will meet with representatives to determine whether they have any concerns or issues regarding the proposals.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The proposal agreed at Policy Committee in September 2019 introduces a new food waste collection service, at the same time as replacing the current 240l residual wheeled bins with smaller 140l ones. It will achieve an increase in recycling estimated from the current 32% to 43%. In addition, it will reduce the amount of waste to landfill, and achieve a revenue saving estimated at £233k p.a. (this takes into account the cost of borrowing at corporate level - excluding cost of borrowing savings are £171k pa first part year and then £342k full year)

- 9.2 As part of the council capital programme for 2020/21 which was agreed by Full council at the end of February £1.489m of capital expenditure budget was agreed. Despite the delaying of the project, the majority of the planned capital expenditure will still be incurred in financial year 2020/21 as orders have already being placed with the suppliers and production has started.

- 9.3 The Medium-term Financial Strategy had £171k of savings expected in 2020/21 and a further £171k in 2021/22. The later than planned roll out will not achieve the 20/21 saving. It is anticipated that in 2021/22 the full saving of £342k will be fully delivered.
- 9.4 The net savings arising from this project is dependent on a reduction of waste to landfill, planned to be circa 1,300 tonnes per annum. The overall savings from the diversion of waste from landfill is circa £981k pa. Should a reduction in the scale of waste to land fill not be fully achieved there would be a consequence on the forecast savings budget. There is a risk that the fixed costs of the new service may not be fully covered by the savings achieved by diverting waste away from landfill if the take up isn't as predicted; for example, if only half of the predicted food waste tonnage was achieved the net cost of the service would move from a saving of £342k per annum to a potential cost of £148k.
- 9.6 The Council has negotiated no gate fees ( for receipt of waste by our disposal contractor) for a time limited period (up to the end of March 2022) and if we do not roll out as early as planned the window to take advantage of this is reduced. Gate fees are however considered to be a minimal charge of circa £7k per annum.

## **10. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The separate collection of food waste at the kerbside and its treatment by anaerobic digestion will benefit the climate by reducing the amount of methane gas (a powerful greenhouse gas) emitted from landfill sites.
- 10.2 Food waste is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the and globally. Significant investment in sustainable collection and disposal is therefore vital in order to respond to the Climate Crisis declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Household Waste -The Way Forward - Policy Committee report (September 2019)  
Policy Committee - MTFs reports - February 2018 and February 2019.  
Household Waste - Implications Of Covid-19 Outbreak On The Food Waste And 140l Bins Project Timetable (July 2020)