

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

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TO:	HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	4th JANUARY 2023		
TITLE:	HOUSEHOLD WASTE: UPDATE ON PHASE 2 FOOD WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE FOR HIGH- AND LOW-RISE FLATS		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR ROWLAND	PORTFOLIO:	ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update on Phase 2 of the roll out of the food waste collection service to high- and low-rise flats in the Borough. This follows on from the previous report to the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee (HNL) on 6th July 2021 which provided information on the Early Adopter phase and the main roll out (Phase 1) of the project.

- 1.1 Phase 2 of the rollout is for approximately 14,000 communal and high- and low-rise flats and commenced in June 2022 and continues to be implemented on a block by basis to achieve greater buy in of residents and maximise participation.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

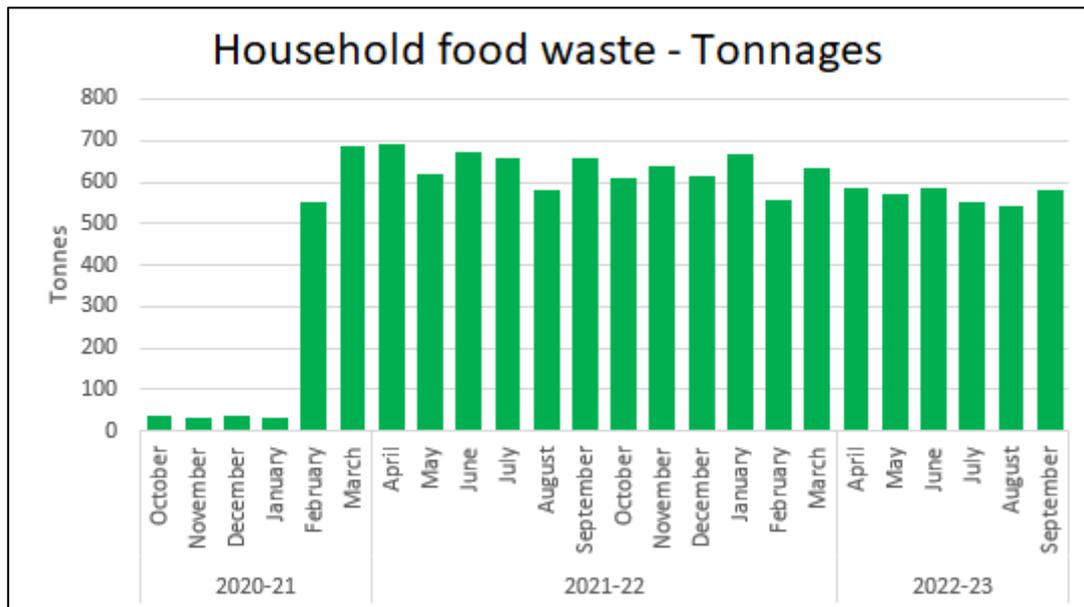
- 2.1 That the Committee note the update on Phase 2 of the food waste collection rollout contained in the report.

3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 Headline achievements of the introduction of a food waste collection service (Phase 1):

- An increased and sustained recycling rate of 50.5% from 34% pre food waste collection.
- 2.5kg's of food waste per participating household, per week, against a target of 1.4kg (2.7kg at peak)
- Carbon saving of 4,700 tonnes per annum against historic operations
- Efficiency achieved through revised round scheduling and reduced residual waste treatment costs
- A net revenue cost saving of £500k

A reduction from 41% to 23% (2022) of food waste being deposited in the household residual waste bin, detailed in the 2019 and 2022 infographics laid out below.



2019 Binfographic



2022 Binfographic



The Binfographic 2019 and 2022 illustrations are a representation of the type of waste materials experienced when conducting a composition analysis of a sample of Reading households. Waste composition analysis is used to inform the Council of where to concentrate its focus to improve future recycling of materials collected.

4 POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1 The EU Waste Framework Directive set 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 it is anticipated that it will continue to remain in place. The Government has committed to achieving 65% recycling and re-use of municipal waste by 2035.
- 4.2 Policy Committee (26th September 2019) received a report setting out a way forward for the Household Waste service to achieve the ambition to increase recycling and reduce the cost of waste. The Committee resolved to introduce a combined new waste service of alternate weekly collections with 140l residual bins and a weekly food waste

collection. The original timetable, agreed by Policy Committee, set a full roll out in October 2020 following an early adopter phase in June 2020.

- 4.3 The Covid 19 outbreak in March 2020 and the first lockdown resulted in staff absences of up to 20%, the redeployment of staff to other essential operations such as food parcel delivery and the temporary suspension of some waste services in line with the waste service continuity plan and Government guidance: Guidance on prioritising waste collection services during coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic - GOV.UK
- 4.4 This uncertainty about staffing levels, the availability of waste bin delivery contractors and raw materials resulted in a review of the practicality of delivering the project as originally planned, which concluded that a delay was necessary to make the roll out a success. This review was presented to Policy Committee in July 2020, and it was resolved that the early adopter phase of the project should go ahead from October 1st, 2020, with the main roll out in February 2021 rather than being delayed for up to 12 months.
- 4.5 The 11.5% increase in recycling rate from the then prevailing 34% to 45% was predicted to achieve an estimated annual saving of £342k originally profiled, £171k in 2020/21 and the remainder in 2021/22. This was based on a successful early adopters' pilot in June and the full roll out of the service from October 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. The delay to the roll out caused by the Covid 19 pandemic resulted in the reprofiling of this saving with £142k being achieved in 20/21 and the remainder of £342k in 21/22. This reprofiled saving was factored into the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy 21/22.

5 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 5.1 Following the postponement of the initial rollout due to the pandemic, the timetable for the introduction of food waste roll out was as follows:
 - Early adopter areas service (3,000 properties) began October 2020
 - Phase 1 food collection service to approximately 56,000 kerbside properties began February 2021. The rollout of the replacement 140 litre bins programme took place once the food waste service was operational and was completed by June 2021.
 - Phase 2 service to the remaining properties (majority are high-rise flats) to 14,000 properties ran in December 2021 for 1 month, stopped due to lockdown, and then re-established as a direct and more detailed intervention with residents from June 2022.
- 5.2 The Early Adopters project October 2020 until February 2021 allowed officers to assess the rollout and make amendments to any communication, service delivery etc.
- 5.3 To enable residents to participate, bins were replaced from a 240 litre to a 140 litre on the day of collection, together with the supply of 23 litre food waste bins, 7 litre caddies and liners. This was undertaken by a third party with the changeover for Phase 1 of the rollout taking approximately 3 months.
- 5.4 As planned, 56,000 food waste bins, caddies, liners and leaflets were delivered between 4th and 29th January and a mop-up service was provided to deliver any bins which had been inadvertently missed. The five new food waste collection rounds began on Monday 1st February 2021 as planned and since then the rounds have continued to be successfully delivered as crews and residents became familiar with the new service.

5.5 In April 2022, a Waste Compositional Analysis took place which showed that 23% of the residual waste bins remains food waste (in comparison to 41% pre roll out). This shows that further work still needs to be done to engage residents, who have had the service for over one year to encourage greater participation.

6. PHASE 2 ROLLOUT - Communal and High- and Low-Rise Flats

6.1 Phase 2 of the food waste rollout began in June 2022, delivering in a systematic manner to the 14,000 larger blocks of high- and low-rise flats and communal properties that have shared bin facilities as these are recognised as requiring a greater level of support to adapt to the required change.

6.2 Although the service currently operates with 5 food waste rounds, with food collected on the same day as recycling or general waste, for on-coming Phase 2 communal properties, there is sufficient capacity built into the existing round schedules to accommodate these additional locations.

6.3 The introduction of the food waste collections has already made a positive impact on our overall recycling rate going from 34% to 50.5%. The effect of the introduction of food collections has far surpassed the expectations by an additional 7% increase in terms of recycling performance. The additional resources and time being taking in the Phase 2 introduction will potentially offer further increase in the overall recycling rate.

6.4 Prior to the food waste collections starting at these Phase 2 properties, an assessment is made to determine the capacity needed per block for food waste, recycling and residual communal bins. Residents are provided with copies of our recycling guides; reusable recycling bags and bins are stickered to improve awareness of the existing recycling collections. In line with the changes to residual waste bins for houses in Phase 1, the residual waste capacity is also adjusted for residents in flats for Phase 2.

6.5 Managing agents and ward councillors are notified in advance by email prior to any changes being made and food waste collections starting. Residents are notified by information leaflet at least 2 weeks prior to the food waste bins being delivered. This information leaflet informs residents that a food waste collection is starting soon, includes a guide on how to use the new service and also references potential changes to their residual waste collections. This information leaflet also includes information on the existing kerbside recycling scheme.

6.6 To date, the food waste caddies have been delivered by the recycling team to 34 additional blocks of flats within the borough, totalling 800 new households that now have access to a food waste collection service. Officers knock on doors to engage with residents and explain how they can use the new bins. The full food waste set for residents in flats includes an indoor kitchen caddy, a roll of liners and an information leaflet. A communal food waste bins is delivered to the bin store area at the same time. The second information leaflet informs residents that they can start recycling food waste straight away. On most occasions we have been able to speak to approximately 50% of residents within the blocks and generally the feedback on the doorstep has been positive. Knocking on the doors has enabled Officers to identify any potential barriers to using the service that residents may as experience, such as language. Where possible a translated copy of the information leaflet would then be delivered. Managing agents for a further 37 blocks have been contacted to inform them that a food waste collection is coming to one of their blocks in the near future.

6.7 Questions asked by residents and answered by officers include:

- Where can replacement food waste liners be collected from? Food waste liners are available to collect from libraries, leisure centres and some community centres.
 - Are the food waste liner replacements free? Replacement liners are available for residents to collect free of charge. We ask that residents take one roll at a time.
 - What types of food can be collected in the new bins? You can put all forms of cooked and uncooked food in your food waste bin including fruit and vegetables, meat and fish, rice, pasta, bread, dairy, eggs and eggshells, plate and bowl scrapings and tea and coffee bags and grounds. Used cooking oil in a sealed plastic bottle can be placed inside your food waste bin.
 - Where is the food taken and what happens to it? We will collect the food waste from your food waste bin on a weekly basis. The waste will be taken to the re3 recycling centre and then on to the Severn Trent recycling plant where it is turned into fertiliser for farming and energy. So, the new service will turn food waste from a problem into a resource.
- 6.8 Two specific leaflets have been produced to support the Recycling Officers 'your food waste is coming soon' and 'start recycling food straight away' the latter being delivered with the caddies.
- 6.9 Managing agents have mostly been supportive of the scheme so far, but some have expressed concern relating to changes in residual waste collections, and where their blocks are supported living accommodation or designated for elderly residents only and have asked for more information on how this could be managed by them going forward. In these cases, we would suggest an on-site meeting with the managing agent with the option for residents to be invited as well. We have been able to address most concerns from managing agents and residents in this way. Additional support sessions have been offered for residents at support living accommodation blocks, but no sessions have been arranged to date. Officers attended the Older Persons Working Group at start of the main roll-out to address any concerns with elderly residents at an early stage.
- 6.10 Each block of flats has been assigned a dedicated Recycling Officer to oversee and monitor the collections and food waste usage for a 4-week period following the delivery of the new bins. This is to ensure that any issues with collections or resident participation can be addressed at an early stage. Recycling Officers work closely with waste operations supervisors before, during and after the implementation of a food waste collection.
- 6.11 After the capacity assessment, the adjustment of residual waste capacity is managed on a case-by-case basis and would be completed in-line with the delivery of new food waste bins. For larger blocks of flats, it is carried out on a two-phase programme to facilitate potentially larger adjustments to capacities. The first phase is undertaken at the time of the food waste roll out and the second phase is implemented after an 8-week period. At this point, the residual waste capacities, recycling provisions and food waste bin usage would be reviewed again and managing agents informed of any further changes. An assessment would be made on the impact of further residual waste adjustment and managing agents would be informed of further interventions required. This may be through implementation of trade waste collections which would be chargeable. Managing agents would be referred to Reading's trade waste service.
- 6.12 The kerbside (Phase 1) methodology of collection is for the crews to use a secondary collection bin, where food collected from household is emptied into a trailed 240 litre wheeled bin facilitating the servicing of 10 - 20 properties before returning to collection vehicle to unload. This enables a much higher pass rate than the "normal" collection services. For High- and Low-Rise flats, communal food waste will be facilitated using 240 litre bins and therefore will need no special adaption of service or vehicle for collection purposes.

6.13 It is still too early in the rollout of Phase 2 to communal and high- and low-rise flats/properties to measure any changes in the Council’s overall recycling rate or food waste tonnages, however the communications and additional support being applied, will give every opportunity to ensure a positive result. The rollout of food waste collections remains a priority for the recycling team, and where possible it will continue at a rate of one new block of flats per week to ensure resident engagement and monitoring can be maintained.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 It was agreed at Policy Committee in September 2019, to introduce a food waste collection service, at the same time as replacing the 240-litre residual wheeled bins with smaller 140-litre bins. The intention was to achieve an increase in recycling from the current 32% to 43%, in addition, diverting the amount of general waste and gate fees, achieving an estimated revenue saving of £233k per annum. Due to the delay of the commencement of the rollout as consequence of the pandemic, full savings were not realised until the full service was delivered from June 2021.

7.2 As part of the council capital programme for 2020/21, £1.489m of capital expenditure budget was agreed.

7.3 It was anticipated that in 2021/22 the full saving of £342k would be fully delivered.

7.4 The net savings arising from the project was dependent on a reduction of general waste, planned to be circa 1,300 tonnes per annum. The overall savings from the diversion from general waste was circa £981k per annum.

7.5 Initially there was a perceived risk that the fixed costs of the service may not be fully covered by the savings achieved by diverting waste if the take up wasn’t as originally calculated. However, participation has been in line with the higher predictions, mitigating the risk.

7.6 The specialist vehicles required to deliver the food collection service were procured arriving well ahead of the revised timetable.

7.7 Financial saving achieved by the diversion of food waste from general waste are as below. The figures below are disposal costs and do not account for the cost of collection:

	Food Waste Tonnage	Cost of disposal Food Waste	Cost of disposal EfW	Differential in cost	Calculated Saving
FY 20/21	1,377	£22.66	£105.33	£82.67	£113,812.62
FY 21/22	7,606	£20.69	£106.63	£86.34	£656,681.32
FY 22/23 Qtr 1 & 2	3,431	£21.78	£113.74	£91.96	£315,514.76
Total	12,413				£1,086,008.69

8 CONTRIBUTIONS TO STRATEGIC AIMS

8.1 The Council’s Corporate Plan 2022 - 2025 sets out the following strategic priorities, which this initiative contributes towards the delivery of:

- **Healthy Environment** - Making it easy for people to play their part through the choices they make about their home, transport and waste.

9 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 9.1 For Phase 1 of the food waste rollout, a full communications plan was developed alongside implementation. Consultation was sought including liaison with the University, residents' groups, community groups, landlords and street champions. An early adopter scheme was rolled out in advance of phase 1 involving approximately 3000 households. A monitoring period was implemented, and a survey of participants undertaken afterwards.
- 9.2 For Phase 2 of the food waste rollout, the information on the [website](#) and resident leaflets have been updated and tailored for residents in flats. An updated Waste Composition Analysis diagram has also been produced and shared with residents.

Introducing weekly food waste collections for flats

During the next few months we will be introducing **weekly food waste collections** to your block of flats. You will receive all the information you need to take part nearer the time.

We will supply free of charge:

- A silver 5 litre indoor food waste caddy
- Liners
- A communal food waste bin or bins with a blue lid.

What can I put in my caddy?

You can recycle all your food waste, including the following:

- ✓ All uneaten food and plate scrapings
- ✓ Dairy products
- ✓ Cheese
- ✓ Eggs and egg shells
- ✓ Bread
- ✓ Cakes
- ✓ Pastries

Remember to recycle your mouldy and out of date food, including ready meals removed from their packaging

5 litre indoor food waste caddy

Liners

Communal food waste bin

You can start to recycle your food waste as soon as you receive your indoor kitchen food waste caddy and communal food waste bin.

For more information visit: www.reading.gov.uk/foodwaste

meat & bones

- ✓ Raw meat
- ✓ Cooked meat
- ✓ Bones

tea & coffee grounds

- ✓ Tea bags
- ✓ Coffee bags
- ✓ Coffee grounds

fruit & vegetables

- ✓ Raw vegetables
- ✓ Cooked vegetables
- ✓ Whole fruit
- ✓ Peelings

fish

- ✓ Fish
- ✓ Cooked fish
- ✓ Bones

rice, pasta & beans

- ✓ Rice
- ✓ Pasta
- ✓ Beans

cooking oils

- ✓ Pour your oil into a plastic bottle, seal it and place inside your outdoor food waste bin

- 9.3. Recycling Officers continue to engage with residents relating to recycling matters, and food waste recycling has been incorporated into this. Community engagement is undertaken in the form of residential door-knocking programmes, attending community events and school engagement. In July, a competition was launched for the public and school children to name the food waste vehicles to raise awareness of food waste recycling. The competition attracted widespread social media engagement and a total of 393 entries.
- 9.4. A weekly social media post has been introduced on all platforms for the Council to share recycling tips and advice more widely to residents.
- 9.5 The food waste information leaflets have been translated into Nepalese, Polish and Romanian.

10 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 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.

- 10.2 The Council reviewed the scope of food waste collection introduction and considered there was no direct impact on any groups with protected characteristics. Within Phase 2 of the rollout, some managing agents have expressed concern over the system inclusion especially where there is supported living accommodation or designated for elderly residents only. To address these concerns additional support sessions have been offered for residents at support living accommodation blocks.
- 10.3 Where existing assisted waste collections are in place for residents, this is extended to include food waste collections. However, assisted collections do not apply to communal bin facilities.

11 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Council has duties under various UK and EU legislation to deliver waste collection and disposal services, principally the Environment Act 2021, 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.

- 11.2 Detailed work confirmed enforcement powers and legislation are available to ensure that where needed, the Council may enforce and act when regulations are not adhered to.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The separate collection of food waste at the kerbside and its treatment by anaerobic digestion benefits the climate by reducing the amount of overall waste not being treated or recycled. Although most of the collected domestic waste from Reading residents is disposed of by burning it in the Energy from Waste (EfW) plant, however, a small amount may end up in landfill, resulting in the contribution of methane gas emissions (a powerful greenhouse gas).
- 12.2 Food waste remaining as an element of general waste and not anaerobically processed has the potential of being a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the UK and globally.
- 12.3 Although the introduction of additional separate food collections with the deployment of 5 additional vehicles to service the collections, the holistic importance of significant investment in sustainable collection and disposal is 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.
- 12.4 The introduction of separate food collections has the additional effect of focusing residents on the potential amount of wasted food in their homes.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 Household Waste -The Way Forward - Policy Committee report (September 2019)
- 13.2 Household Waste - Update on the introduction of the kerbside food waste collection service and the change to 140l residual waste bins - Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee - 6th July 2021.