

Title: Changes to Waste Collection Service - Project Update

Committee: Operational Services

Date: 23 June 2025

Author: Waste and Environmental Services Manager

Report number: AA12

Contact officer:

Nick Baker, Waste and Environmental Services Manager

nick.baker@eastcambs.gov.uk , 01353 616313, The Grange, Ely

1.0 Issue

- 1.1 This report provides an update for Members on the progress being made towards implementing the necessary changes to the Council's waste and recycling collection service, as approved by Full Council in September 2024.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. That Members note the content of the report, and the progress made towards the implementation of the new waste and recycling collection service.

3.0 Background/Options

Original Approval

- 3.1 Changes to the Council's waste and recycling collection service were agreed by the Operational Services Committee and ratified by Full Council in October 2024. This followed implementation of the Environment Act 2021 and related secondary legislation, along with a complete review of the service to ascertain the best service delivery option for the future.
- 3.2 The main changes agreed were the provision of a new weekly collection of food waste and the replacement of black bags with a wheeled bin for residual waste (i.e. rubbish not for recycling). This required a wide range of supporting work, such as project management, a communications plan and a waste collection service policy to reflect the service changes.
- 3.3 The policy is in the process of now being designed as a more customer friendly document and is attached at Appendix 1. This will also form part of the Service Specification, which is being drawn up as a part of the new contract between the Council and ECSS, as its operational service provider.
- 3.4 There were significant financial implications for the changes proposed to the service and government has provided new burdens funding to cover most of the capital cost associated with separated food waste collection, such as food collection vehicles and containers. The additional revenue requirements of the food waste service will be primarily funded by government. Whilst transitional funding of

£280k has been confirmed, at the time of writing of this report, the level of any longer term revenue support is still to be agreed by government.

- 3.5 However, the change from black bags to wheeled bins for rubbish collections was a Council decision, so would not benefit from new burdens funding and the cost of new collection vehicles and bins would therefore be entirely funded from the Council's financial reserves.

Project Management

- 3.6 With the new service being rolled out to every household in the district, it was considered essential to take a project management approach to this very significant change in service; this to ensure a smooth transition, with as little disruption as possible to our residents.
- 3.7 A Project Board has been formed with all key officers involved, from both the Council and ECSS. A detailed project plan has been developed, with a number of key workstreams and themes identified as critical to success of the implementation. The Board's work to date, is as follows:

Procurement

- 3.8 With the majority of Councils across England also needing to procure vehicles and containers for their new food waste service, and with a limited number of manufacturers, it was deemed necessary to place orders as early as possible to minimise the risk of late delivery.
- 3.9 Officers had therefore already drawn up specifications and had been working with potential suppliers on public sector procurement framework contracts, ahead of the Council's decision. This meant, that as soon as possible after gaining Full Council's Approval, orders were secured for the following key items:
- 5 x collection vehicles for food waste, cost £500,000
 - 6 x collection vehicles for rubbish, cost £1.42m
 - c47,000 pairs of food waste caddies (one each for internal and external use and including spares), cost £386,000
 - c45,000 black wheeled bins (to replace black sacks), including the distribution of bins and caddies to every household, cost £1.12m
 - External support for collection round optimisation, to ensure the most efficient waste collection rounds were achieved for the future service, cost £22,500.

Communication

- 3.10 The Communication Plan has now been significantly updated, as the overall project plan has developed and some certainty around key dates has been achieved.
- 3.11 Officers have identified around 80 different communication pieces, across all media channels and all areas of the project. These are now being worked up in terms of content and style, along with a chronological order of release. Undertaking this work

very early will allow us to be well prepared for delivering the key messages to residents as required.

- 3.12 Information on likely issues arising from food waste services is freely available, but from many different sources. A specific branding style is therefore being used for this project, which fits with the corporate style guide as well as giving a very clear, positive emphasis on what the Council is seeking to achieve.
- 3.13 As well as communicating directly with all residents as to what the changes will be and what we need them to do, support is also being offered from very early in the campaign to those who may have difficulties with using the changed service. This decision was taken so that we can resolve as many issues as possible before the new service goes live next year.
- 3.14 It is likely therefore, that our initial letter to all residents will be released in Autumn of this year.
- 3.15 As we get closer to key communications being released, Members will also be provided supporting information to help them with constituent queries. In addition, officers are currently considering what additional resources will be required in terms of customer service, and also for officer visits to those who may have difficulties with the new service.

Risk management

- 3.16 With the number of customers involved and the complexity of making changes on this scale, it is essential that we identify and consider the wide range of risks to delivering the project as planned. A risk register has therefore been established as part of the Project Plan and officers are already developing controls and mitigation to reduce risks to an acceptable level of impact should they become a reality.
- 3.17 Whilst not an exhaustive list, some of the key risks already under consideration are identified for information below:
- timely delivery of vehicles and bins to the Council and, for bins, onward delivery to residents, complete with correct information regarding the new service
 - completion of collection round optimisation, to ensure efficient working for the Council
 - completion of a full programme of communication to all residents, to ensure they are all sufficiently informed to participate positively within the new service arrangements
 - provision of enough additional temporary staff to help deliver the project and minimise impacts on other service delivery across the council
 - successful recruitment of additional permanent staff at ECSS, which will be required to crew the new food waste collection rounds
- 3.18 Whilst there is mitigation available for most of the above risks, there will be some issues which are very unlikely but would have significant impacts and wherever

possible, contingency arrangements are being made for these. These will also cross into normal business continuity planning.

4.0 Arguments/Conclusions

- 4.1. The significant cost and complexity of these service changes requires a rigorous project management approach to be taken and this is ongoing. This will help to ensure the change is completed successfully and with the least negative impact on the Council and residents.

This work is enabling officers to identify the resources needed to deliver the project, such as improved back office systems and additional staffing. In addition, it is giving the project team a better understanding of the potential impacts on the Council and residents and how these might be mitigated.

- 4.2. To date, the key areas of work have been around procurement, communication and risk management.

The first major decision arising from the risk management work was to change the go live date from the original 1st April, as this would have meant four bank holidays and four weeks of additional changes during the first eight weeks of the new service.

Officers considered this posed too much additional risk to implementing the new service and getting the required buy-in from residents. It has therefore been agreed to go live on 1st June 2026, thus avoiding any public holidays in the first two months of the new service.

- 4.3. Overall, the waste service change project is currently on track for a successful launch of the new service in 2026.

5.0 Additional Implications Assessment

5.1

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Human Resources (HR) Implications
Yes	No	Yes
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA)	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)
No	No	No

5.2. Financial Implications

- 5.3. The broad financial position of the new services arrangements was described in detail in the previous reports and has not changed significantly since that time. However, the overall project costs are not yet fully known and this is expected to be much clearer by the time of the next project update to the Committee.
- 5.4. As described earlier in this report, government New Burdens funding was provided for the capital budget items required for the new food waste collections; i.e. new vehicles and caddies, and these have been ordered. Similarly, the Council's financial

reserves have been utilised as approved, for the new vehicles and bins required in order to do away with black bags for rubbish and again, these have been ordered.

- 5.5.** For the period leading up to and immediately following the launch of the new food waste service, some £280k transition funding has also been provided by government for additional revenue costs, which the Council is expected to incur on that part of the overall project.

At this stage, officers are still working through the potential costs, so that the project can be fully funded as required, and any additional costs will be brought forward as part of the relevant budget setting processes.

5.6. Human Resource Implications

The report recognises there will be a need for additional temporary staff to support the waste service change project but at this stage, this has not yet been detailed or therefore costed. It is anticipated that this will be made clearer in the next project update report to the Committee.

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Waste and Recycling Collection Service Standards

7.0 Background documents

None