

TITLE: New Waste Collection Service - Project Update

Committee: Operational Services

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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 previously approved by Full Council.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the progress made on this project to date and that the project remains on budget and on track.

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 proposed changes had significant financial implications, both for capital expenditure on waste collection vehicles and containers, as well as future revenue costs for delivering the food waste collection service. Government New Burdens funding covered the capital costs associated with separate food waste collection, and a capital allocation has been used to purchase the new bins to replace black sacks and new vehicles with bin lifts.
- 3.4 Government has provided transitional revenue funding to set up the food waste service but, at the time of writing of this report, the level of any longer term revenue support for new burdens is still to be agreed by government.

Project Management

- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 A Project Board has been formed with all key officers involved and a detailed project plan developed, with a number of key workstreams and themes identified as critical to a successful delivery of the service changes, whilst minimising service disruption. The Project Board's work to date, has concentrated on the following:

Risk management

- 3.7 As discussed in previous reports, the management of risks associated with the project is critical to its successful delivery
- 3.8 Every household will be affected by the changes around additional waste containers and collection of different waste types. In addition, new collection rounds will mean that many residents (approximately 18,000 households) will also see a change in their collection day. With changes of this scale, detailed planning and management of the operations, communications, and response to operational issues has been undertaken.
- 3.9 As well as the direct risks to the project, any issues that arise from service disruption may lead to wider corporate risks, such as customer dissatisfaction and reputational damage, financial impact and health and safety issues. Risk management has therefore been central to everything the project team has done so far.
- 3.10 A risk register has been established as part of the Project Plan, so that all of the workstreams involved and decisions made are considered and scored in terms of what might go wrong, and the impact that may have on the project. In turn, officers have been able to develop controls to reduce the likelihood of risks becoming a reality, along with mitigation measures, to reduce risks to an acceptable level of impact, should they become a reality.

The four highest scoring risks are discussed further below.

Risk 1 - Recruitment

- 3.11 Risks around staff recruitment are highly significant to the project, especially around the additional permanent staffing at ECCS for crew and drivers of refuse collection vehicles. Additional "guide" drivers will be required to assist our bin delivery contractor, whilst at the same time, maintaining a normal service for residents. These drivers will then move onto driving the additional vehicles required for the new service.
- 3.12 The risk around recruitment has been recognised early in the project, especially with a wider shortage in HGV drivers. ECSS colleagues are already working with

agencies to supply these key workers, as well as through the usual recruitment channels. In addition, some current crew members have expressed an interest in training to become HGV drivers and the first of these has now qualified.

- 3.13 In addition, recruitment of two temporary Environmental Services Officers within the Council's Waste Client team will be required to deal with escalated customer queries and issues arising from the new service. This work will commence in October 2025 following the first communication to all households. Two further temporary staff will be provided in the Customer Services team to manage residents' calls for at least a six month period across the run up to and launch of, the new services and all of these staff are funded from New Burdens government transition funding.
- 3.14 Again, officers believe that the key issue here is to commence recruitment early, in order to train new staff to help deliver the project on time and minimise impacts on other service delivery across the Council.

Risk 2 - Collection Round Restructure

- 3.15 With a comprehensive review of the waste collection service being completed over a year ago, the Council has been able to plan well in advance for the changes that will now follow. The most important part of this has been the early completion of waste collection round optimisation, by experienced outside consultants, to ensure efficient working for the Council. This activity commenced in early 2025 and the resulting initial data has been reviewed and "sense checked" with existing operational staff, including drivers, loaders and supervisors. This not only gave a first hand view of potential routing issues, but also provided immediate engagement and buy-in changes by the collection crews
- 3.16 The work has now been further refined and will go through a series of checks both with desktop and "live" drive through exercises, with the new rounds soon to be uploaded onto the service management software.
- 3.17 Crews will then start familiarisation with new rounds before the new bins are delivered in March 2026.

Risk 3 - Procurement

- 3.18 With most Councils across England needing to procure vehicles and containers for their new food waste service, and with a limited number of manufacturers, all orders for food collection vehicles, refuse collection vehicles, bins and caddies were placed immediately after obtaining Council approval in order to minimise the risks associated with late delivery. All equipment is due to arrive between February and April 2026
- 3.19 Officers are in regular contact with suppliers of these significant items, in order to ensure we are aware of any production issues, variations or potential delays.

- 3.20 As well as giving a good margin for any potential delays, this delivery schedule also gives ECSS time to arrange fleet management and training for the new vehicles, in advance of the new service commencing.
- 3.21 Bins and caddies will be delivered to the Council over a period of around 6 weeks. This will ensure that the delivery contractors always have at least a spare week's worth of containers in case of delays in bins arriving at the Council's site within the delivery period.
- 3.22 Delivery of all containers to households has also been progressed and is due to commence from 23 March 2026, being undertaken by an experienced external contractor. This will take approximately six weeks, but the exact dates are still to be confirmed. An additional two weeks is also built into the delivery contract for contingencies, such as manufacturing or transport delays.
- 3.23 In support of the delivery contractor's work to receive bins and food caddies arriving from manufacturers and then delivering them to every household, the Council will provide a secure, temporary depot site, which will be manned 24 hours a day for the duration of the work. Plans for the site are still being finalised and further detail will follow.

Risk 4 - Communication

- 3.24 Communication is identified as the greatest risk factor within the project, with timing and accuracy of information critical to success. Key to this is undertaking much of the preparatory work very early, which will allow us to be well prepared for delivering the key messages to residents as needed later on.
- 3.25 The Communication Plan has now been largely completed, with the general order of release laid out and some flexibility allowed for in the actual dates for release/delivery of the items required.
- 3.26 Most of the communications pieces are now at initial drafting stage and will be released across the project timeline on all media. They will now be worked up in terms of design, branding and proofing, so they are ready to be printed and released as required.
- 3.27 As well as communicating directly with all residents as to what the changes will be and what the Council needs them to do, support is also being offered from very early in the campaign, to those who may have concerns with using the changed service. At the time of writing this report, the first link for residents to the waste service change project is planned to be attached to the annual bin collection calendar when it goes out in late September. This will give residents the opportunity to contact the Council, voice any concerns and for officers to then work with the residents affected.
- 3.28 Additional staff, funded by the government's transition payments, are being recruited on temporary contracts for this purpose. This decision was taken so that we can resolve as many issues as possible before the new service goes live next

year. This will reduce the workload and the pressure on all those involved at the busiest time in the project, thus reducing risk of service failure.

- 3.29 As the project progresses, it is almost inevitable that some residents will contact local Members and, to assist with such queries, officers will provide additional information to Members, to help them deal with such constituent queries.

4.0 Arguments/Conclusions

- 4.1. Since the last update to the Committee, officers have continued to make good progress on this important project. A risk based approach has been taken in this work.
- 4.2. To date, the key areas of work have expanded to include the recruitment of additional staff into both temporary and permanent roles and to finalise the routing of the new collection rounds. Work on procurement issues and the communication plan has continued at pace.
- 4.3. Overall, the waste service change project is currently on track and on budget for a successful launch of the new service in 2026.

5.0 Additional Implications Assessment

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

Financial Implications

- 5.1 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. The overall project costs are still not yet fully known but this is expected to be within the current budget.
- 5.2 As described earlier in the year, 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 capital programme has been utilised as approved.
- 5.3 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.

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

Human Resource Implications

- 5.5 The report recognises there will be a need for additional temporary staff to support the waste service change project and at the time of writing these staff are being recruited. This has been costed and is within the transition funding provided.

6.0 Background documents

None