

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 to deliver the required changes in the Council's waste collection and recycling 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 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, whilst a capital allocation from reserves was used to purchase the new bins to replace black sacks, and new vehicles with bin lifts.

- 3.4 Government has also provided transitional revenue funding to set up the food waste service, however this has been wrapped up in the overall settlement for Local 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, and especially since the last update to the Committee, has concentrated on the following:

Risk management

- 3.7 As discussed in previous reports, the management of risks associated with the project remains 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 around half of our residents will also see a change in their collection day. With changes of this scale, detailed planning has taken place and continues to be amended across all areas of the project.
- 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 The risk register established as part of the Project Plan has been regularly updated as issues have arisen and been progressed.
- 3.11 As part of the Council's Internal Audit programme, an assurance audit was undertaken in November/December as to the organisation's readiness to deliver the waste collection service project. The auditor found a good level of assurance with only some minor, technical procurement matters being raised.

Risk 1 - Recruitment

- 3.12 Risks around staff recruitment are highly significant to the project, both for additional, permanent staffing at ECSS for crew and drivers, and temporary council staff to cover anticipated additional work throughout the project.
- 3.13 The risk around operational recruitment was recognised early in the project, especially with a wider shortage in HGV drivers. ECSS colleagues are already

working with agencies to supply these, as well as through the usual recruitment routes, including some crew being trained up to take on driving roles.

- 3.14 In addition, the council's Waste Client, and Customer Services teams recruitment of temporary staff is now complete, in order to manage residents' issues across the run up to and launch of the new services.

Risk 2 - Collection Round Restructure

- 3.15 With a comprehensive review of the waste collection service being completed over a year ago, officers have been able to plan well in advance for the changes that will now follow. A key part of this has been the early completion of waste collection round optimisation, provided by experienced outside consultants, to ensure efficient working for the Council.
- 3.16 The resulting data has been taken forward by ECSS colleagues to set up the new collection rounds. This took account of potential issues with the proposed round structures, and provided positive engagement and buy-in to the proposed changes by the collection crews
- 3.17 The work has now been further refined and at the time of writing this report, the rounds are being uploaded onto the digital round management system, which is shared across ECSS, the Waste Client Team, and the Customer Service Team. Importantly, it will also form the foundation of the delivery of waste containers to all residents over the coming weeks, where ECSS drivers will act as guides for the delivery crews.

Risk 3 - Procurement

- 3.18 Orders for collection vehicles, waste containers and bin delivery were placed in late 2024 to minimise risks associated with late delivery, especially with so many councils commencing food waste collection at the same time, with limited suppliers. Officers are in regular contact with these, in order to ensure we are made aware of any production issues, variations or potential delays.
- 3.19 As well as giving a good margin for any potential delays, this delivery schedule also gave ECSS time to arrange fleet management and other training for the new vehicles, in advance of the new service commencing.
- 3.20 The new collection vehicles for residual waste were delivered to the Council in February, on time as planned.
- 3.21 At the end of January we were notified of a 12-week delay in delivery of food waste collection vehicles, which would have meant those vehicles arriving after our planned date for the new service commencing. Officers successfully negotiated a shorter delay, due to our early ordering, but this remains a risk to our planned start date and every effort is being made to ensure that we maintain that. This risk is being monitored weekly, with regular updates from the supplier. The project team

is considering a range of mitigations including hire vehicles and use of an alternative style of vehicle. This risk is considered to be a red risk on the project, however at the time of writing the service remains on track for commencement as planned.

- 3.22 The black wheelie bins have remained on track for delivery on time from Germany. However, food waste caddies have been subject to delays, despite early ordering, and this will mean a slightly later start to our delivery of containers to residents. This potential delay does not currently impact the start date for the new service, however it continues to be monitored closely.
- 3.23 As previously advised, officers have utilised the car park extension at Littleport Station to provide a temporary distribution depot. Bins and sundry items will be delivered direct from manufacturers to the site and will then be offloaded, stored and delivered to residents.
- 3.24 This has required additional procurement of security and various works, with bins stored in a secure area and a manned presence on site 24 hours a day for the duration of the distribution work. A full health and safety plan is also in place, along with a welfare facility for those working on the site.
- 3.25 Communications were placed at the car park and on parked cars, to advise all users of the reduced parking available during the project, which will have commenced on 13 March and go through until late May.

Risk 4 - Communication

- 3.26 Good progress has continued in delivering the Communication Plan with, overall, a very positive response to the communication provided.
- 3.27 The introduction pack for the new service, which will provide details of changes to regarding bin collection day and additional instruction, will be provided to all residents alongside the delivery of the bins.
- 3.28 All of this work seeks to gain maximum participation in the new service from its commencement, with as few negative issues, such as contaminated material and side waste, as possible.
- 3.29 As has been previously advised, it is almost inevitable that some residents will contact local Members and, at the time of writing this report, additional information is being prepared for all elected members to assist with such 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 all of this work, with contingencies and mitigation in place.

- 4.2. However, much of the planned month between delivery of bins and the new service starting has now been taken up by later delivery of food waste vehicles and this will be the subject of constant monitoring and work to minimise any negative impact.
- 4.3. All areas of work have continued, with additional staff recruited, the bin delivery site due to be completed in mid-March and ongoing work with residents to help them adjust to the new service. In parallel, ECSS Colleagues have continued work to finalise the routing of the new collection rounds.
- 4.4. Overall, the waste service change project remains on track and within the approved budget, for a successful launch of the new service in June 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 previous reports and has not changed significantly since that time. The overall project costs are still expected to be within the current approved budget.
- 5.2 As described previously, government New Burdens capital funding was provided for the budget items required for food waste collection, i.e. new vehicles and food waste caddies, and these have been ordered. Similarly, the Council’s capital funding has been utilised as approved for new black bins for rubbish and new collection vehicles with bin lifts.
- 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 There will be a need to utilise some Council reserves to complete the project, as originally approved by Council in late 2025.

Human Resource Implications

- 5.5 The report recognises there is a need for additional temporary staff to support the waste service change project. At the time of writing, such staff are already working

in the Waste Client team and Customer Services, with ECSS also requiring additional staff across the operational service. This has been costed and is currently within the transition funding provided for this purpose.

6.0 Background documents

None