



## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY AND GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 27th SEPTEMBER 2021**

**PRESENT:** Councillor S Goodall (Chair), Councillors J Chesworth, R Claymore, A Cooper, D Maycock, B Price and M Summers

**CABINET:** Councillor Daniel Cook

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Nigel Harris (General Manager, Joint Waste Service) and Jo Hutchison (Democratic Services, Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

Apologies received from: Councillor(s) T Clements, Dr S Peale and K Norchi

### **31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Clements, Dr S Peale and K Norchi.

### **32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor J Chesworth reported for transparency reasons that he had been the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Culture which included the portfolio for waste management until May 2021 which covered the period prior to any decisions in respect of this contract being made.

### **33 CALL IN - CABINET DECISION DRY RECYCLING CONTRACT RENEWAL**

The Chair reported that this meeting had been called to consider the Cabinet decision on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021 in respect of the Future Dry Recycling Update, and in particular to consider the practicalities of the collection method proposed as opposed to the necessity of moving to a dual stream process.

The Chair invited the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Waste to provide an overview to the Committee of the current recycling position in the Borough and the steps taken to consider the future provision. He reported that following changes to the recycling market, only quality recycled material would be accepted and that co-mingled waste (as currently collected) had to be cleaned which had additional cost implications. The current contract for the disposal of dry waste

was due to expire in March 2022 and therefore work had commenced to identify options for future provision. The results of the tender process undertaken indicated that to be an effective and affordable service it would require a move to dual stream service which produced a quality product.

Given that, the Portfolio Holder reported that there were options appraised for moving to a dual stream process which included as alternatives the handing back to the County Council of the waste disposal responsibility and alternative methods of collection. In terms of methods of collection, options included:

- the use of a separate bin for paper / card and a separate bin for other recycling (plastics and tins) with one of the two bins collected every two weeks with the black bins collected every alternate two weeks.
- the use of bag for paper / card and a bin for other recycling (plastics and tins) which would both be collected every two weeks, with the black bins collected in the alternate two weeks.

In terms of the costs associated with the equipment required for the alternative options, the Portfolio Holder reported that the additional costs of using two recycling bins (as opposed to one bin and one bag) including the costs of any delay to the implementation of dual streaming which would be expected if there was a requirement to procure bins (with a longer lead time) rather than bags amounted to an additional £1million. Furthermore by the end of July 2021, the Council, together with Lichfield District Council, had agreed that, if the disposal responsibility were retained with the Borough / District, the County Council would make a 50% contribution to the additional disposal costs.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that an option had been considered to use a bin within a bin, but that there were considered to be operational issues for the crew with this option which involved a significant degree of lifting for staff.

The Chief Executive reported that there was urgency to this process as the contribution for the County Council was time limited and required the new arrangements to be implemented by the end of June 2022.

The Committee sought clarifications in the following areas:

- whether the decision been made to move to the option of one bin and one bag for recycling waste, which the Portfolio Holder confirmed was the case at this point.
- The Cabinet report referred to a joint scrutiny task group that would be established to help inform and shape the operational detail of the new collections, and clarification was sought on what this covered, and the Chief Executive reported that the operational detail covered how the crews would work, how collections would be made, using the slave bin, however the methodology was enshrined in the Cabinet decision. The General Manager reported that this was to address the fine tuning, eg how many bags residents could have, where the bag would be left after it was emptied.
- How many properties in Tamworth had multiple blue bins. This data was not available, however, it was reported that there was a requirement for the collection process to be both equitable for residents, and also consistent to

ensure the crews were able to collect waste efficiently from one type and one colour of receptacle.

- What the respective volume split between card / paper and other recyclable waste was. The General Manager reported that from the data collected they had established that an 80 litre bag would be sufficient for most homes' card / paper recycling although it was noted that some households could require additional capacity and it was hoped that additional bags could be provided and would be ordered and the unit cost for bags were relatively cheap. In terms of excess blue bins, there would be an exercise to collect and reuse those bins in the detailed planning phase.
- How to manage the high rise properties, given that for operational efficiency simplicity and consistency was desired. It was reported that there would be surveys of multi-occupancy properties and a service would be designed around what that survey showed.
- How the truck accommodated the dual streams of recycled waste where it was confirmed that there were two separate compartments in the truck which were split in capacity 67% (plastics / tins) and 33% (card / paper) which operated independently and it was confirmed that the capacity split reflected the fact that plastics retained their shape considerably more than paper and card.
- Where any empty blue bags would be left by the crew and if within the blue bin, the difficulties this could lead for some residents to retrieve the bag. The General Manager confirmed that there were assisted collections available and this would be considered as part of the implementation process. It was requested that the assisted collection service was communicated effectively to all residents as part of the overall communication and engagement plan.
- The reasons for not progressing with the option of a tray / caddy within the blue bin as was in operation in other local authorities. It was reported that the issues with these operational methods was in part capacity which in a caddy was limited to approximately 35 litres and it would be difficult to provide additional caddies to residents, and further there were safety issues in terms of the lifting of the caddies out of the bin and it was reported that the industry was phasing out the caddy solution.
- The option to use the existing stock of collection devices at properties, for example additional blue bins, for dual stream collection. It was reported that it was expected that if this solution were followed it would lead to a significant additional demand for blue bins, at additional cost and that furthermore the risk of contamination from the incorrect load being decanted into the incorrect part of the truck could result. From the market testing undertaken it was reported that the contamination allowance was only 1.5% and therefore any contamination could cost significant amounts in terms of rejected loads. For operational efficiency there was a need for there to be a clear difference in colour or design of the receptacles for plastic / tins and paper /card, without which there could be a significant increase in calls from residents over missed collections.
- Whether unwanted extra blue bins would be collected from residents, where the General Manager reported that this would be looked at as part of the fine tuning and it was not known how quickly the team would be able

to collect in such blue bins, but they would build up a collection programme to do that.

- How durable were the blue bags and how were they impacted by rain water and how would any water impact the quality of the recycled material. It was reported that the bags were considered quite durable and whilst water damage could be an issue for the quality of the product we would work with our partners to blend any water damaged waste.
- How environmentally friendly are these bags and can they be recycled at the end of their life. The General Manager reported that he would find further information on the potential to recycle the bags at the end of life and he confirmed that the financial model had built in a 10% turnover of the bags which reflected the overall loss rate from experienced by other local authorities.
- How the service managed mixed waste, for example plastic windows on paper envelopes and paper on plastic bottles, where it was reported that this was permitted and there would be requirement on residents to separate this waste.
- How the service would manage a resident's contaminated bag and whether this would lead to the whole bin / bag being rejected or would they remove the contaminant. This was detail still to be decided, but current practice was to work with residents and try to educate the public on requirements and changes.
- Whether we were confident that we would have the supply of the bags necessary to fulfil the needs of the town. The General Manager reported that if we orders were placed quickly then we expected to receive a sufficient supply and that there was an equivalent issue with orders for the new trucks to deliver the dual service and that there would be a requirement to keep monitor these supply chains and delivery closely. The Portfolio Holder reported that any delay to implementation would mean that the Council would be required to pay for the cleaning of current co-mingled waste beyond spring 2022, the cost of which was currently borne by our contractor.
- Aside from the cost of utilising an additional bin what other factors led to the two bin methodology not proceeding. It was reported that the time to procure additional bins was expected to be longer than the procurement time for the bags, and that agreement with our partners at Lichfield District Council as well as with Staffordshire County Council regarding the additional costs of dual streaming and the disposal responsibility had been undertaken through the spring and summer. Additionally there were properties within Tamworth where it would be more difficult to accommodate an additional bin rather than the bag.
- Whether these changes could lead to residents having to take large cardboard to a recycling centre or will there be the ability, exceptionally, to leave additional cardboard out separately to the blue bag. The General Manager confirmed that consideration of this would be part of the detailed fine tuning and that at times this would be looked at operationally although the majority of times we would not the cardboard in the bag, however we would not want this to be left on roads.
- Whether utilisation of the existing blue bins already in circulation had been fully assessed, and whether consideration had been given to residents

utilising their 2 blue bins to separate paper / card and plastics / tins at source without requiring a further receptacle, which could result in an existing blue being unneeded. The Portfolio Holder considered that there was a fairness and equality issue which could result from this and further that for operational efficiency utilising the same coloured bin could lead to contaminated loads and / or significantly slower collection requiring additional crews. The General Manager reported that planning was underway to bring back unwanted blue and other bins to reuse them for new property developments locally.

- Evidence was requested of how many other local authorities used the bag system nationally. The General Manger reported that there was not a significant amount of evidence longer term as the changes had been driven by China's change on recycling from 2018. However there were already two Staffordshire councils (Newcastle and Stafford) who utilised this system and two more Staffordshire councils were looking to move to this system. The Chief Executive reported that this was commonly used in London Boroughs where there was a front door collection. However waste was changing fundamentally and a Government White paper was expected which could change what was collected and the process.
- Consideration was given to a formal review process being put in place for this service where there was potential for a change after the service had started at the 6 month point which would be brought back to scrutiny with a performance update.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee:

- (i) receive a quarterly update from the Portfolio Holder and Officers on the progress with the dual streaming service, including the detail which was still to be looked at, at the decisions that had been made and the decisions still to be made as well an update on the implementation experience of one of the two Staffordshire councils who had implemented this methodology of service. The first such report to be prior to 31 December 2021; and
- (ii) recommend that there be improved communication and advertisement of the assisted service available to residents.

*(Moved by Councillor J Chesworth and seconded by Councillor B Price)*

The following motion was moved by Councillor S Goodall, but not seconded and therefore not voted on:

Recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet look at some of these details more before a final decision was reached and the Committee would provide an evidence based report with the evidence gathered at this meeting.

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Chair