

18 January 2023

Report of the Chief Executive**Briefing note on the implementation phase of the dual stream recycling service****Exempt Information**

None

Purpose

To update Scrutiny on the post implementation review of the dual stream recycling service that commenced in May 2022

Recommendations

1. That Committee notes the report and reads it in conjunction with the quarterly update report to note progress in key areas.

Executive Summary

The Tamworth and Lichfield Joint Waste Service has now largely implemented the agreed changes to the recycling service; transitioning to dual-stream collections, with residents asked to separate paper and card from glass, cans and plastics. There remain a small proportion, notably flats and houses of multiple occupation (HMOs), who have not moved onto the new service yet, however as detailed in the quarterly update paper this is in progress currently.

At the point of service change, Councillors received significant numbers of concerns from residents at the outset of the implementation of this change in service and consequently, a review of its design and implementation was requested. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with the findings of that report.

Implementation

The implementation of the new service took place over an 8-week period from 4 April 2022.

Date	Activity
4 April – 15 April	Delivery of bins
18 April – 27 May	Delivery of bags
2 May	New round structure for recycling, refuse and organics commenced
2 May	First dual stream recycling rounds commenced – jointly with co-mingled service
17 May	Final co-mingled rounds ceased (flats/HMO excepted)

Whilst it was considered that implementing all these changes concurrently was unavoidable, it is clear from the report's findings that while the roll out benefitted from having detailed implementation plan and risk register, it was not clear if any assumptions were tested prior to roll out.

Other issues were identified through the intervention of the two Chief Executives.

- The design of the new rounds implemented as part of the new recycling service rollout, undertaken by a commercial organisation rather than one experienced at providing a local authority service, together with the decision to divert drivers from collection rounds to bag deliveries, significantly restricted the crews’ capacity and capability to complete new recycling rounds.
- There was therefore a period of persistent round non-completions which adversely impacted on residents, particularly following the commencement of dual-stream collections from 2 May.
- There was frustration from ward Councillors and residents over a lack of urgency in the response to these service requests which were being reported daily.
- Despite training prior to implementing the new service, waste crews were unclear in some areas over what could be recycled, and over side-waste and whether it was to be collected or not. The service was slow in implementing ‘toolbox talks’ to aid understanding of the collection crews.
- Bin ‘tagging’ caused significant anger to residents as crews were correctly refusing to collect waste put out, but without explaining the purpose of the red and yellow tags.
- The inability of the service to complete daily co-mingled and dual stream rounds led to capacity being moved from other services (refuse and organics) to support. This further exacerbated residents’ frustrations because it led to these services also failing to collect full rounds at times.
- Early positive communications with residents over the new service were lost as it was not backed-up with daily, consistent messaging.

These issues inevitably placed enormous pressure on the service, not helped by an initial slow response to them and this pressure was worsened by a number of other factors:

- Several drivers resigned at the start of the roll-out, with a difficulty in securing additional agency drivers (the scarcity of HGV drivers is a national challenge). Interestingly subsequently both drivers have subsequently returned.
- Our waste reprocessor also had to move to dual-stream disposal – leading to persistent delays (90-minutes+) with the tipping the RCVs (Refuse Collection Vehicles). There was a slow reaction by them to resolve this and the consequential effect this would have on the collection rounds. Fortunately these problems are now resolved.
- The period of highest pressure – delivering bags whilst running both dual-stream and co-mingled collections – was increased due to bag delivery delays and pausing the delivery of new bags to focus on requests for second bags.

The independent review details commentary on 7 specific areas of implementation.

Review commentary	Service learning
<p>New Vehicles and Driver Training – Twin pack vehicles used to collect the bin and bags had to be specially ordered in and drivers and loaders trained. The vehicles design meant 35% capacity was given to paper and card and 65%</p>	<p>Tonnages collected do support this split. In the first 10 weeks 962 tonnes (36%) of paper & card were collected, 1,686 (64%) tonnes glass, cans and plastics.</p>

<p>capacity to glass, plastic and mixed metals.</p>	<p>Tool box talks now occur on a regular basis with all staff.</p> <p>No Further action required.</p>
<p>Round Review – New service takes longer because of the additional time used in emptying a blue bin and blue bag. To assist in the design of the new rounds, consultants from Biffa were commissioned and suggested an additional two crews with vehicles.</p>	<p>The new rounds were slower than modelled, with crews collecting from fewer households per hour than anticipated. Initial modelling suggested an average of 8.5 recycling crews per day (and the service budgeted such), the round review suggested this could be reduced to 7.8 – which was what the new service was launched at. The service is currently running at 8.8 crews.</p> <p>A further review of the rounds is intended (some days are easier than others), which may bring the number of crews closer to the budgeted 8.5.</p> <p>The round review is now partially completed, and will continue to be reported in the quarterly update report</p>
<p>Public Information Campaign – Initial information was sent and received well. However, once problems started occurring, public response became hostile. Additional negative public comments were received following a unauthorised press release stating that the blue bags procured were not the correct size. This exasperated the situation beyond a point where the comms teams could offer effective messaging.</p>	<p>Communications was a critical point of failure in the project. Both the Joint Waste and Customer Contact teams were overwhelmed by the volume of calls, all of which required an element of manual processing and many required double-handling (Customer Contact then Joint Waste). The service became slow to respond to even the most routine requests, exacerbating resident dissatisfaction.</p> <p>Having a robust comms strategy for any future service changes will be critical in its success.</p>
<p>Staffing – The report identifies that there is considerable pressure on the availability of HGV drivers. A national shortage and wage inflation led at the point of implementation to two drivers leaving. Therefore, there was a shortage of drivers during a critical part of the implementation.</p>	<p>Diverting drivers to bag deliveries, plus the unexpected departure of 2 drivers at the start of the service roll-out left the service stretched and ill-resourced to respond to pressures when initial implementation struggled.</p> <p>Transferring bag deliveries to a third party was an option considered, however it was felt that an external contractor with less district knowledge</p>

	<p>could have led to inconsistent and unreliable deliveries.</p> <p>The service has now implemented a driver training plan to up-skill existing staff to both fill driver vacancies and provide greater resilience for staffing pressures. The service is targeting the training of 10 additional drivers by the end of the municipal year. This project is progressing well.</p>
<p>Management of the Implementation Programme – The report identifies whether at the point of implementation began to go wrong whether the programme was managed in an active way and mitigation actions followed. The report furthermore states that in a materially changing environment, it is vital to have staff with experience of managing change and have both the governance and executive structures in place to support real time decision making and date to test assumptions.</p>	<p>An omission in the project management was a documented escalation route for risks and issues. As a result, when the lack of (additional) driver availability became a critical point of failure – whilst it may not have been possible to mitigate the underlying issue - the service was slow to manage the consequences and did not quickly get on the front-foot to support residents and keep them informed.</p>
<p>Data – The report finds that the data that the service collects is not assembled or analysed from past rounds to inform understanding and future services. The only exception is data surrounding the number of missed property collections. The author of the report recommends the Bartec system to track collections and this data can be extremely useful and should be a source for better trend analysis and service reviews.</p>	<p>As with communications, there is a huge opportunity to use automation and improved systems to enhance the way the service handles the large amount of data collected and translate that data into management information that can be used to drive service improvement and better inform future service changes.</p> <p>Data is now shared on a regular basis with scrutiny committees as part of the quarterly update report.</p>
<p>Transportation and Tipping Off – The effectiveness of the MRF facility was an issue that compounded the problems associated with the implementation.</p>	<p>The limited waste transfer and disposal infrastructure within Staffordshire restricts options – the current disposal contractor is the only disposal facility within practicable travel time from Lichfield & Tamworth. The service has engaged with the contractor to improve systems and reduce turnaround times,</p>

	and is now not experiencing the level of delay that was present in the first stages of the implementation phase. Action completed
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The implementation of the dual stream recycling to general households has been completed, the service has stabilised with collections restored and recycling being collected. However, the dual stream project is not at an end, key activities include:

Activity	Target date
Assessing and supporting the households that are continuing to struggle with the new service.	On-going action
Assessing the effectiveness of the recycling bags – whilst most households are managing with one bag, capacity needs to be reviewed.	31 December 2022 – strategy is to encourage greater uptake as part of the xmas preparation campaign
Smoothing and levelling the new recycling rounds to ensure that resources are deployed most efficiently – currently some days / rounds are notably more challenging than others.	Partially complete
Planning for Christmas collections – especially in the context of the increased amounts of paper and card produced over the festive period.	Completed
Transitioning multi-occupancy properties onto dual-stream collections. These properties (with communal bins) have tended to produce poorer quality recycling with higher levels of contamination which will struggle to meet the more stringent contamination levels for dual stream. Officers are currently assessing the multi-occupancy properties (201 sites across both authorities).	28 February 2023
Transitioning 250 trade waste customers onto dual-stream recycling.	Completed

Options Considered

N/A

Resource Implications

Not directly arising from this report

Legal/Risk Implications Background

Equalities Implications

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

Climate change and sustainability are noted as a key priority for the service and both authorities.

Background Information

Report Author

Andrew Barratt – Chief Executive

List of Background Papers

Nil

Appendices