

INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY AND GROWTH COMMITTEE

18th January 2023

Report of the General Manager

Dual Stream Recycling Service Performance Update and Data

Background

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the dual stream recycling collections which were introduced in both Tamworth and Lichfield in May 2022.

Service reliability has been re-established following the challenging rollout period and the general direction of travel for the key performance indicators is quite positive. Complaints have fallen significantly but there is still some resident dissatisfaction with recycling policy and the change in collection methodology.

A breakdown of the Joint Waste Service performance data is attached as Appendix A and the trends are discussed as follows:

Operational Performance

All collection rounds are now being completed on time unless there is an operational issue such as a breakdown or a road closure. The Recycling Service is being provided using an average of 8.8 crews per day compared to the approved budget which contains provision for 8.5 crews per day. The cost of providing this additional infrastructure is £1,100 per week which is currently being met from within budget. However, a further round review was started before Christmas which has identified that the collection infrastructure can be realigned closer to the original budget provision. The changes will be made during the week commencing 23rd January 2023 and monitored closely to ensure that there is no impact on service delivery. The on-going review will also consider the growth of new housing developments in both Tamworth and Lichfield in the coming years which will need to be factored into future rounds.

There has been a steady reduction in the number of service failures such as missed bins because the crews have got used to the new rounds and the new collection methodology. The number of formal/escalated complaints peaked at 22 in June and reduced to 1 in October.

The number of assisted collections that the service is required to provide has continued to increase. At the start of 2022 there were 1,852 assisted collections across both authorities; by the end of November this had increased to 2,211. The equality impact assessment completed prior to the implementation indicated that more residents may struggle to handle a bag when compared to wheeling a bin. Residents can easily apply for an assisted collection on-line or over the telephone if they don't have an able-bodied person in their household to move bins or bags.

The Service has also been able to demonstrate a higher level of resilience as it had to react quickly to events following the death of Her Majesty the Queen and rearrange collections.

This year's Christmas and New Year catch up collections were all completed on time without any problems. Pushing everyone's collection back a day over a two-week period was a very simple message to communicate and using the bin tags paid dividends. Consideration will be given to adopting a similar approach for the next festive season.

Resident Participation

Resident participation is very high with most properties presenting both a bin for the glass, cans and plastic and a bag for paper and card every fortnight. Some residents do present side cardboard and additional bags are still being supplied. To date 8,521 additional bags have been delivered (10.6% of households).

The significant fall in the number of rejected bins does show that residents are getting to grips with sorting their dry recyclate into the two different streams. The number did fall by more than a third over the first few weeks of the new service and it has now plateaued, averaging 430 bins per week which is approximately 1.2% of households. Visits are being made by the Recycling Officers to some of the properties that have had their bin rejected, to offer advice on how to use the service correctly, but we don't have the capacity to visit all of them. Therefore, we are proposing to write to each property again offering advice.

Recycling performance

The dry recycling rate for the first two quarters of 2022/23 was 21.43% compared to 23.4% for the same period last year. Whilst the reduction is disappointing it is probably too early to draw any firm conclusions and it will be interesting to compare the data for Q3 and Q4.

The headline recycling rate that includes garden waste was 43.36% for the first two quarters of 2022/23 compared to 46.87% for the same period last year. This is a more significant reduction, but it is in line with national trends and the garden waste yield was impacted by the long hot Summer this year.

The total tonnage of dry recyclate collected from the kerbside has fallen this year compared to 21/22. In the first two quarters of 2022/23 we collected 7,585.1 tonnes compared to 9,505.5 last year. The reductions have coincided with the country coming out of lockdown and there has also been a significant reduction in residual tonnages which are down 2,561.66 tonnes. Further reductions in both recycling and residual waste tonnages are expected to occur during the remainder of the year because of the cost-of-living crisis.

The quality of the recycling continues to be very good. One load was rejected recently but this was due to an operational error whereby some residual waste had been left on the truck from the previous day. The fibre stream is very clean and the amount of contamination and non-target waste in the blue bin averaged 2.89 % and 7.66% respectively at the end of Q2 for both authorities. Most of the non-target waste in the blue bin is paper and card which we will attempt to address through regular checks and communications.

A substantial residents engagement campaign is currently being planned which aims to improve performance by explaining the benefits of recycling correctly, for both the community and the environment.

Financial Performance

The total gate fees spent on re processing the dry recyclate during the first two quarters of 2022/23 was £404,360 compared to the full year budget of £840,810.

The Recycling Credit received from the County Council for the first two quarters of 2022/23 was £639,789 compared to the full year budget of £1,198,480. While this is an encouraging figure, it should be noted that the first half of the year is always stronger than the second, because it encompasses the growing season for garden waste.

The income from the sale of dry recyclate for the first two quarters of 2022/23 was £388,270 compared to the full year budget of £330,570. Commodity prices were very strong during the first half of the year because of high demand following the end of lockdown but are expected to fall during the rest of the year as the economic slowdown starts to take hold.

The current end of year forecast for the Joint Waste Service budget is to breakeven. Whilst income levels have been strong, they will need to offset increases in driver pay, agency rates, additional infrastructure on the Recycling Service and fuel. There is always a risk that this position could change either way depending on the performance of commodity markets and if there is bad weather over the Winter months.

Recycling bags

Whilst the demand for additional bags has been quite buoyant as described above, the service has only received a small number of complaints about their quality. Most of the complaints have been about faulty seams and broken handles. This is a similar scenario to both Newcastle Under Lyme and Stafford who have been using bags for paper and card for the last two years.

The service has enough bags in stock to last approximately three months, but a decision does need to be made as soon as possible on securing further supplies as the lead times can be quite lengthy.

Joint Waste Service Projects

Several important projects are currently underway or will be completed over the next few months. These include:

- Complete the migration of flats and HMOs onto the new dual stream recycling service
- Options appraisal for the future operating model for the Joint Waste Service
- Completion of the round review
- Options appraisal for the proposed weekly collection of food waste
- Fleet review and procurement
- Workforce plan
- Review of the commercial waste service

Regular updates on the progress of each of these projects will be reported to the Committee.

Recommendation

That the Committee:

- 1. Note the update on the performance of the Dual Stream Recycling Service**