

**Report of Director of Environment and Housing**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 22nd January 2014**

**Subject: Waste Collection Service Policies**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Affects all Wards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

The Waste Management service provides a range of kerbside collection services for Leeds residents. Over recent years, new services have been rolled out across the city that has increased the number of collections to approximately two million per month. This, linked to a greater societal understanding of the need to recycle and divert valuable resources from landfill, has meant that the recycling rate for the city has increased significantly year on year. In the past three years, recycling rates have increase from around 30% to 47.2% ytd (2013/14). The strategic aim remains to recycle over 55% of household waste by 2016 with a longer term aspiration of recycling more than 60%.

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members to a range of specific policy issues in relation to the kerbside collection of waste and recyclables. The policies are complementary and collectively support the Best Council objective of, *“Dealing effectively with the city’s waste: minimising waste in a growing city, with a focus on:*

- *ensuring a safe, efficient and reliable waste collection service;*
- *providing a long-term solution for disposing of our waste;*
- *increasing recycling;*
- *reducing landfill tax costs.”*

The Waste Management service has, in the majority of cases, been working to these policies for a significant period of time. If adopted, these policies will then be implemented by the Service through more detailed operational guidance, and can then also be communicated more effectively to residents and other stakeholders.

As a collective, the range of policies provides the opportunity to communicate to residents their on-going role and responsibilities in managing their household waste, to divert waste from landfill and increase recycling such that the waste service can be provided effectively and efficiently. Working together with residents in this way, aims to further reduce the cost of waste management services and so release funding for other vital Council services.

Led by the Chief Waste Management Officer, and in conjunction with the Contact Centre, these policies would, subject to approval, be communicated and implemented with immediate effect.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Executive Board approve formal adoption of the specific operational kerbside collection policies proposed within section 3 of this report.

## **Purpose of this report**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to formalise the Council's policies for the kerbside collection of waste and recyclables.
- 1.2. The Waste Management service provides a range of kerbside collection services for Leeds residents. Over recent years, new services have been rolled out across the City that has increased the number of collections to approximately two million per month. This, linked to a greater societal understanding of the need to recycle and divert valuable resources from landfill, has meant that the recycling rate for the city has increased significantly year on year. In the past three years, recycling rates have increase from around 30% to 47.2% ytd (2013/14). The strategic aim remains to recycle over 55% of household waste by 2016 with a longer term aspiration of recycling more than 60%
- 1.3. The Waste Management service has, in the majority of cases, been working to these policies for a significant period of time. The adoption of these policies represents an overall consolidation of operational practices and an opportunity to communicate this information more effectively to residents and other stakeholders.
- 1.4. It also provides the opportunity to communicate to residents their on-going role and responsibilities in managing their household waste, to divert waste from landfill and increase recycling such that the waste service can be provided effectively and efficiently.
- 1.5. This report seeks approval from the Executive Board to the formal adoption of a range of specific operational kerbside collection policies relating to the following services:
  - a) Residual waste (black bin) collection service;
  - b) Mixed dry recyclables (green bin) collection service;
  - c) Garden waste (brown bin) collection service;
  - d) Bulky waste collection service.
- 1.6. The scope of this report is predominantly focused on the standard 240 litre wheeled bin and bulky item kerbside collection services.
- 1.7. Alongside the planning for the next phases of the implementation of alternate weekly collections, the Waste Strategy and Operations teams are engaged in further work to develop the Council's approach and policies for the provision of bespoke waste collection solutions for areas of the City where the standard service is not the most appropriate. This will be incorporated into the suite of policies once approved.
- 1.8. The adoption of the above policies will contribute to the delivery of the Best Council objective of "dealing effectively with the city's waste", focusing specifically on "ensuring a safe, efficient and reliable waste collection service, increasing recycling and reducing disposal costs."

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1. Leeds offers kerbside collection services to approximately 330,000 households across Leeds. The core service is configured around the use of 240 litre wheeled bins for residual, recyclable and garden waste. Other properties are served by a variety of methods including, but not limited to, communal, refuse chute and plastic sack collections.
- 2.2. Phase 1 of the implementation of alternate week collections of residual waste and mixed dry recyclables (black and green bins) was implemented for approximately 56,000 households in April 2013, with Phase 2 then rolled out to around a further 113,000 in November 2013. It is anticipated that this service will be rolled out to the majority of properties deemed suitable city-wide during 2014/15 (estimated to be around 80% of households).
- 2.3. Fortnightly collections of garden waste in brown wheeled bins are now provided (except during winter months) to around 200,000 properties across the City.
- 2.4. These core kerbside services are based predominantly on a standard policy whereby residents present their bin at the kerbside close to their property by 7am on the day of collection. It is emptied that same day and the resident is then expected to collect the empty container, again on the same day, and return it to their property.
- 2.5. There are a range of exceptions specifically addressed within the policies, usually relating to property type or the ability of the resident to present their bin at the kerbside. Where households are offered alternative collection arrangements they are advised specifically how to use their service by means of tailored communications.
- 2.6. However, there are other areas in which the existing policies for waste collection services are currently either insufficiently clearly defined or open to interpretation. It is therefore essential to the future successful delivery of services that clear and consistent policies are documented, adopted and published. This will enable effective communication with residents such that, in line with the principles of a social contract, they understand clearly the basis on which Council services are to be provided, and in turn what is expected of them.
- 2.7. Bulky Waste Collection Service
  - 2.7.1. Leeds City Council offers a free bulky waste collection service to residents for large items of household waste that cannot be collected through the normal kerbside collection services. The management of the bulky waste collection service transferred from Waste Management to Environmental Action Services in April 2013. Further work to fully integrate this service with the rest of Locality Team services is in progress, such that the teams can be used more flexibly across the whole service.
  - 2.7.2. The service is currently free of charge for all, and can be used up to 13 times per year. At each of these 13 collections, residents can currently book up to 4 large items or 10 bags of waste (excluding food waste). Collections are booked

in advance and, whilst the Council advises that waiting times can be up to eight weeks, the current waiting time is generally around three weeks.

2.7.3. In 2012/13, 34,500 bulky collections were requested (around 660 per week). Only a small minority of Leeds' households use the bulky waste collection service (around 8%), with 97% of users using the service three times or less a year. The 3% of users who accessed the service more than three times in 2012/13 equate to 673 households; around 0.2% of households in Leeds.

2.7.4. Of the other seven Core Cities only two, Nottingham and Liverpool, operate a wholly free of charge service, and Liverpool restricts the number of collections offered to five per year. All of the others either charge for all collections, or offer only one free collection a year before charging for this service. Table 1 below summarises the current policy in each of the eight Core Cities.

*Table 1*

<b>Core City</b>	<b>Number of free collections</b>	<b>Chargeable collections</b>
<b>Leeds</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>
Birmingham	1	£25 per collection
Bristol	0	£15 per collection, limited to three per year
Liverpool	5	0
Manchester	1	£27 per collection
Nottingham	Weekly	0
Newcastle	0	£15 per collection
Sheffield	0	Ordinary rate: 3 at £18 rising to 10-12 at £54 per collection. Concessionary rates: 3 at £10 rising to 10-12 at £35 per collection.

### **3. Main issues**

3.1. As stated above, the Council's 'Best Council' objective of "dealing effectively with the city's waste" focuses on ensuring a safe, efficient and reliable waste collection service, increasing recycling and reducing disposal costs. Essential to this are a clear published set of policies for the waste collection service, and a clear understanding on the part of residents of both the level of service that they can expect from the Council and what in turn is required of them.

3.2. More detail on the Waste Management service's collection policies can be found within the full operational policy guidance documents through which the policies covered in this report will be implemented by the Service (see 'Background Documents' referred to at 7.1 below). These set out details for each kerbside service offered and address, in particular, the following:

- a) Collection frequency;
- b) Container type;
- c) Replacement/extra containers;

- d) Presentation;
- e) Accepted materials types;
- f) Unaccepted materials;
- g) Contamination;
- h) 'Side waste';
- i) Missed bins;
- j) Assisted collections;
- k) Closed lids;
- l) Overweight bins;
- m) New occupants.

3.3. It is important to note that the Waste Management service has, in the majority of cases, been working to these wider policies in conjunction with Customer Services for a significant period of time, and this simply represents a consolidation of these existing practices and an opportunity to communicate this information more effectively to residents and other stakeholders.

3.4. However, there are a range of specific key issues or important policy developments which are worthy of particular note and for which approval is sought from the Executive Board, and this is the subject of the remainder of this section of the report.

### 3.5. Replacement/extra containers

3.5.1. For each household receiving the relevant kerbside collection service, one wheeled bin will be provided for each waste stream (i.e. residual waste, mixed dry recyclables and garden waste). Exceptions are made to deal with various issues, for example including larger families and frail or disabled residents who may require alternative containers or collection methods to those provided as standard.

3.5.2. For households not in receipt of (or not about to receive) a fortnightly collection of mixed dry recyclables, an additional green bin may be requested.

3.5.3. The delivery of new/replacement bins costs approximately £600k per year with the Waste Management service currently arranging for the recycling, treatment or disposal to landfill of some 330,000 tonnes of household waste per annum, at a total annual cost of around £20 million. With the scale of activity and cost, a key aim of the Integrated Waste Management Strategy is to move waste management up the waste hierarchy with a particular focus on waste reduction, prior to recycling, treatment and then final disposal. Therefore, the proposed policy is not to provide replacement bins on demand.

### 3.6. Contamination

3.6.1. In general terms, 'contamination' refers to materials that are not intended to be disposed of in the relevant bin or to be dealt with by the relevant processing or disposal contractor, and therefore present the risk that a whole or part load of materials may be rejected and therefore sent to landfill, or may require some form of additional, special sorting, treatment or disposal.

- 3.6.2. With regard to contamination of residual waste bins in particular, the Council will not collect bins which contain hazardous waste items (e.g. asbestos) or that are so heavy that they present a health and safety risk to Council staff or others.
- 3.6.3. When collection crews become aware of a contaminated (or excessively heavy) bin, a sticker or tag will be used to explain why the bin was not emptied and request that the householder remove and make arrangements for the safe and appropriate disposal of any contaminating material prior to the next scheduled collection.
- 3.6.4. It is recognised that different services take time to be fully communicated and understood. Therefore the Council intends to adopt an approach of offering advice, support and guidance in the first instance to reduce the instances of contaminated bins.
- 3.6.5. If a recycling bin at a particular property is found to be persistently contaminated, such that it becomes a cause of nuisance, this may result in the removal of the bin.
- 3.6.6. There is clearly a resource implication associated with this kind of education activity, which is currently being targeted primarily in support of new areas of roll-out of alternate weekly collections. This activity will continue to be targeted in line with the availability of resources.

### 3.7. Side Waste

- 3.7.1. The proposed policy relating to 'side waste' (i.e. excess waste from the household which is presented for collection at the side of the wheeled bin), as far as it relates to the alternate week collection service, was approved by Executive Board following their meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2013. Executive Board approved the adoption of a 'no side waste' policy to be applied throughout the City where households have residual and recyclable waste collected on an alternate weekly basis.
- 3.7.2. This policy is required to drive good waste habits, as by increasing the number of recycling collections residents are now required to manage their waste more effectively between the recycling and residual waste bins provided.
- 3.7.3. It should be noted that, in areas where this policy is being introduced, a pragmatic approach is being taken while residents make the transition to the new collection regime, including provision of education and assistance with management of their waste such that no side waste is left.
- 3.7.4. Excess mixed dry recyclables left by the side of the green wheeled bin on the scheduled collection day will be collected if presented in transparent bin liners to enable crews to check that the materials are those that can be accepted via the green bins.
- 3.7.5. As a general rule beyond the 'no side waste' policy for alternate weekly collections, the Council discourages householders from leaving side waste beside their bins in order to minimise the environmental problems associated with

uncontained waste. The Council will, however, commit to taking side waste on the first collection after Christmas and New Year and after a period of significant service disruption.

### 3.8 Presentation and missed bins

3.8.1 Bins should be presented by residents for collection by 7am on the scheduled day of collection, at the kerbside in a place which will cause minimum obstruction. It should be noted that the Council commits to providing waste collections on specific days, not at specific times of day, and bins should not necessarily be deemed to have been missed and be taken back into properties because they have not been emptied by an accustomed time of day. Failure to present bins in accordance with the policy may result in the service not being provided.

3.8.2 The Waste Management service strives to ensure that all bins are collected on the scheduled day. However, some level of missed collections may occur due to the scale and logistical complexity of collecting around half a million bins a week across the City (i.e. access, highways, vehicle maintenance, adverse weather related issues, human error, etc.).

3.8.3 Where individual bins have unfortunately not been collected, the Service will not return, and the householder is advised to return the bin to their property and to await the next scheduled collection. There is a significant cost associated with deploying a vehicle and crew, estimated at £230k per year, and it is uneconomical to deploy this level of resource to recover individual bins.

3.8.4 In the instance of missed collections for a group of properties, residents are advised to leave their bin out for two working days after the normal collection day as the Service should be aware of the failure and may already have made arrangements to 'recover' the missed collection. If more than two working days have elapsed, the householder is advised to notify the Contact Centre such that the Service can check for consistency with its own information and take the appropriate remedial action where required.

3.8.5 In those instances where unfortunately there have been consecutive missed collections for a particular recycling or waste stream, a bespoke response will be instigated by the Service whilst the on-going issue is investigated so as to ensure that the customer receives a regular and reliable collection service.

3.8.6 These instances of consecutive misses are often as a result of access problems for collection crews. Crews will endeavour to return to collect where this can be achieved without an unacceptable impact on collections for other residents. Residents are requested to ensure wherever possible that access issues do not arise (e.g. inconsiderate parking) that have a negative impact on the Council's ability to provide the Service.

3.8.7 It should be emphasised again that the priority for the Service will be to ensure that missed collections are kept to a minimum rather than relying on recovery operations.

### 3.9 Assisted Collections

- 3.9.1 The provision of assisted collections is aimed at residents who are disabled, frail or otherwise physically incapable of presenting their bin at the kerbside in accordance with the Council's policy. When a householder requires assistance in presenting their wheeled bin for collection, they need to complete a form to demonstrate that they meet the criteria to be entitled to this service. The form is available on the Council's website. The names and addresses of householders in receipt of this service are logged on the Council's data recording system. Provision of false information may result in requests being refused.
- 3.9.2 If a householder requests assistance for one type of waste collection they will automatically receive it for all kerbside waste collection services (not including bulky waste collections).
- 3.9.3 This service is not provided if an able bodied person over 16 years of age lives at the property.
- 3.9.4 Entitlement for this service is reviewed at least every eighteen months for individual properties.

### 3.10 Garden waste collections

- 3.10.1 The garden waste collection service is intended to divert garden waste away from the residual waste bin, and not to displace existing, alternative disposal arrangements. It is not the Council's intention or policy to provide free collection or disposal for significant quantities of garden waste from households. Therefore only one garden waste bin is provided per suitable household. Extra containers will not be provided. Any excess garden waste should be composted at home (the preferred environmental option) or taken to a household waste recycling site. Home compost bins are available to Leeds residents at competitive rates via the Council's preferred supplier.
- 3.10.2 Those households eligible to receive a brown bin collection and on a collection route are not eligible to request a bulky waste collection for garden waste. As before, these households are advised to compost their excess garden waste at home or take it to their nearest household waste recycling site.
- 3.10.3 Those households not yet able to receive a brown bin collection service are encouraged to compost their garden waste at home, take it to the nearest household waste recycling site or, as a last resort, request a bulky waste collection.

### 3.11 Bulky waste collections

- 3.11.1 Some of the changes to refuse collection policies (particularly associated with fortnightly collections and other initiatives to increase recycling) mean that some elements of the bulky waste collection service policy are not now compatible and need to be amended accordingly. For example the collection of general waste (i.e. that can be disposed of through the normal residual waste/black bin collection service) through the bulky waste service

undermines the alternate weekly collection policies agreed by Executive Board in October 2013.

- 3.11.2 Furthermore, many items collected by the Council could be collected for reuse by other organisations through the existing network of third sector organisations or through individually made arrangements via websites such as Freecycle or eBay. The Council has been actively working with and supporting the Furniture Reuse Network in Leeds in order to build skills and capacity within this sector. In addition, access to reuse collections are being improved, with support from the Council to procure relevant ICT systems and in working towards a single point of contact for all Leeds based furniture reuse organisations. It is expected that this will increase the proportion of bulky items such as furniture which are reused (thus also contributing to the Council's own Waste Strategy priority in this regard), and provide a faster and more bespoke service to customers as well as reducing the level of collections which need to be provided by the Council.
- 3.11.3 In 2012/13, 34,500 bulky collections were requested (around 660 per week). Only a small minority of Leeds' households use the bulky waste collection service (around 8%), with 97% of users using the service three times or less a year. The 3% of households who used the service more than three times in 2012/13 equate to 673 households; around 0.2% of households in Leeds
- 3.11.4 It is proposed that households should be restricted to three collections per year, with a potential future option for the Council to charge for additional collections to be considered. A limit of four items per collection is proposed.
- 3.11.5 The guidance on acceptable items for collection via this service will be published on the Council's website. General waste that can be disposed of through the standard residual waste collection service will not be accepted via the bulky waste collection service. As stated earlier, the residual waste collection policy specifically provides for exceptions (e.g. large families), so use of the bulky waste collection service should not be necessary for general waste if households are managing their waste effectively.
- 3.11.6 Where households are not offered a separate garden waste collection service due to their suitability, the allowance of four items may be used for four bags of garden waste. Where households are provided with a brown bin collection service, garden waste may not be included amongst the four bulky items. As stated earlier, these households are advised to compost their excess garden waste at home wherever practicable, or to take it to their nearest household waste recycling site.
- 3.11.7 These restrictions are essential in order to enable the Service to manage and deploy resources more effectively, and will encourage heavy users of the Service to manage their waste more effectively and use the other, preferred opportunities for waste minimisation, re-use and recycling available to them

### 3.12 Enforcement

- 3.12.1 It is recognised that services can take time to be fully communicated and understood by residents. Therefore the Council intends to adopt an approach of offering advice, support and guidance in the first instance in order to implement these policies.
- 3.12.2 Where residents are not abiding by the Council's policies formal enforcement action will only be pursued once all other courses of action to address the issues have been exhausted (i.e. advice, support or guidance to the resident concerned). Enforcement action is only ever taken as a last resort, after advice, support or guidance has been given and the problems persist. In the vast majority of cases the involvement of enforcement staff does not result in formal enforcement action being taken, as residents take the advice and change their behaviour without it being necessary.
- 3.12.3 However, where residents persistently breach the Council's policies, for example where large quantities of side waste are frequently left or bins are persistently left out after the scheduled collection day, with a resulting impact on amenity for neighbours, more formal enforcement measures may be taken. This action will be targeted in line with the availability of resources.
- 3.12.4 On occasions where the problem has been exacerbated or caused by a failure of a Council service, for example a failure to collect refuse or bulky items as per the schedule, enforcement action would not be taken.
- 3.12.5 It should be noted that, where enforcement action is taken, the full cost to the Council is not covered by the penalties that are imposed. It can involve many hours' work, including visiting residents to give advice or guidance or undertaking research to understand ownership and responsibility for the problem, before any action, formal or informal, is taken. Costs can only be claimed from the point in time when an offence has been committed (i.e. after a formal legal notice has expired, so none of the work prior to this point can be claimed in costs in court).

## 4.0 **Corporate Considerations**

### 4.1 **Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 The importance of resident communication and engagement to the success of kerbside collection services is crucial to their successful operation. Where significant changes to current collection practices are implemented the service will ensure they are fully communicated to residents.
- 4.1.2 'Waste Recycling Advisor' communication resources are being deployed alongside the implementation of the alternate weekly collection service.
- 4.1.3 Once these policies have been formally agreed, this will enable additional communications to be made about the policies to the public, in an easy-to-understand format via the council website and a wide range of media so as to reach as many residents as possible.

- 4.1.4 The Executive Board Member for Environmental Services has reviewed these policies and supports the proposal to adopt them formally.
- 4.1.5 Environmental Leads and/or Sub Groups and Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board have also been consulted on the key issues associated with these proposals.
- 4.1.6 The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board have specifically reviewed how revised elements of the bulky waste collection service policies remain compatible with the overall range of policies.

## 4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 An equality impact screening report has been completed for the proposed policies and is attached as an appendix to this report.

## 4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 Delivery of kerbside collection services that are safe, efficient and reliable and meet the needs of residents are key to Leeds realising its target to meet 55% by 2016 and exceed 60% recycling in the longer term. These targets support wider aspirations for Leeds set out in the new Leeds Vision, City Priority Plans, Directorate Priorities and Cross Council Priorities.
- 4.3.2 The five new City Priority Plans developed by the Partnerships Boards cover the period 2011-2015 with the most relevant in relation to the policies being:
- *Safer and Stronger Communities- including city-wide cleanliness*
  - *Sustainable Economy- including low carbon economy*
- 4.3.3 The proposed policies are clearly support of the Best Council objective of, *“Dealing effectively with the city’s waste: minimising waste in a growing city, with a focus on:*
- *ensuring a safe, efficient and reliable waste collection service;*
  - *providing a long-term solution for disposing of our waste;*
  - *increasing recycling;*
  - *reducing landfill tax costs.”*
- 4.3.4 The proposed policies also support the propositions contained within the Commission for the Future of Local Government in terms of their reference to *“devising a new social contract”*.

## 4.4 Resources and Value for Money

- 4.4.1 Adoption of these formal operational kerbside collection policies will ensure that collection services are consistent, more targeted and efficient. They also look to further encourage residents to utilise these services more effectively, thus driving up participation in recycling and diverting more materials from landfill or other disposal.

#### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 The recommendations in this report are in line with the Council's on-going statutory duties as Waste Collection Authority under the Environmental Protection Act.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 The main risks associated with a failure to establish clear waste collection policies relate to the resulting significant potential for uneconomical deployment of resources, greater levels of resident dissatisfaction with services and the environmental impact of not maximising the opportunity to minimise waste and maximise re-use and recycling.

#### **5.0 Conclusions**

5.1 The kerbside collection policies covered within this report do not represent a significant change in the way services are currently offered to residents, other than as highlighted.

5.2 Adoption and formal documentation of the policies through operational guidance and resident communications will provide all stakeholders with a clear consistent understanding of the services that the Council offers.

5.3 In keeping with the principles of a social contract, residents can be clear about the basis on which services will be provided by the Council and, in return, what the Council expects of them to ensure the provision of an efficient service that supports the City's objectives in terms of sustainable waste management.

5.4 As stated earlier, it should be noted that the scope of this report is predominantly focused on the standard 240 litre wheeled bin and bulky item kerbside collection services. The Waste Strategy and Operations teams are engaged in further work to develop the Council's approach and policies for the provision of bespoke waste collection solutions for areas of the City where the standard service is not the most appropriate. This will be incorporated into the policies once approved.

#### **6.0 Recommendations**

6.1 It is recommended that the Executive Board approve formal adoption of the specific operational kerbside collection policies proposed within section 3 of this report.

## 7.0 **Background documents**<sup>1</sup>

- 7.1 *Operational policy document: residual waste collection service;*
- 7.2 *Operational policy document: mixed dry recyclables collection service;*
- 7.3 *Operational policy document: garden waste collection service;*
- 7.4 *Operational policy document: bulky waste collection service.*

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.