



Leeds

CITY COUNCIL

Waste Management Service

Review of Refuse Operations

INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT (MAY 2019)



Working together to develop a publicly delivered, world-class refuse service for the residents of Leeds



INTRODUCTION

The overall objective of the review is to update and where necessary redesign the current household kerbside collection service so it is better placed to meet the challenges of a growing and evolving city/population.



The review is being undertaken within the context of significant housing/population growth citywide since the current routes were designed nearly 10 years ago, and the further growth planned in the city for the next 10 years. In addition, the national Resources and Waste Strategy, currently in the first consultation stages, talks about significant changes to be made in 2023. For example, the Strategy sets out Government commitments to fully fund kerbside collection of food waste, as well as a national deposit return scheme for plastic and glass bottles by 2023.

We therefore need a service in Leeds that is not only future proofed for the forecast growth, but in the best position possible to evolve our recycling offer to residents in a way that complements how consumers, producers and the retail sector also change habits, materials and recycling offers.

In addition to “looking forward” there is also a recognition the service needs to better respond to existing localised challenges. The city has large areas of terrace housing with very little off road parking, transient populations (including a large student population), high/low rise accommodation and city centre living.

The review is therefore not just a technical exercise of redesigning routes, but one that also looks at processes that support the operational work, how we better support and involve staff, our interaction with and accountability to the residents of Leeds and how we can get more recycling out of our existing kerbside infrastructure.

A Terms of Reference (ToR) for the review was developed in conjunction with the two main Trade Unions representing the workforce (GMB and Unison). The ToR set out clear, joint objectives to deliver on. The commitment is to complete the review within 6 months, with a desire to agree and implement elements during that period where sufficient progress is made. This progress report reflects on what has been achieved in the first 3 months of the review and makes recommendations on what there is benefit in implementing now rather than wait a further 3 months or more.

As part of the agreed governance arrangements, a Project Board has been established to oversee the review comprising senior managers and union shop stewards. Updates are provided to the Communities and Environment Leadership Team (Chaired by James Rogers, Director) and a regular liaison meeting is held between Union Convenors/Area Coordinators, Chief Officers and HR. The Executive Board Member with responsibility for Environmental Services, Cllr Mohammed Rafique, is also regularly briefed/kept updated.

PROGRESS AGAINST THE AGREED OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: *To make the rounds/routes more fair through the usual finish times of routes being much more equal. This will require us to establish and agree what a reasonable day's work looks like;*

Progress:

The Project Board has agreed an approach to route design that starts with a blank page approach – i.e. it won't be about tweaking existing routes. Furthermore the agreement is for the routes to be designed around 10 areas, to be based as far as possible on Community Committees boundaries. There is also an agreed desire to design the black/green routes so that each area is collecting the same waste stream each day. These are important steps in being able to design "equitable" routes and to enable a "team approach" to collections.

The review has so far made the most significant progress on redesigning the garden waste (brown bin) routes. The technical work behind the route redesign has considered factors such as collection weights, travel to tip times, new builds and more capacity to successfully deliver the service in hard to access/reach locations. Conversations have taken place with every garden waste route/crew, mainly facilitated by the Lead Stewards. The discussions have enabled crews' practical experience to be fed into the design process.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- Citywide route redesign from a blank map;
- Routes designed around 10 operational areas based on Community Committee boundaries;
- Team approach to task and finish, with Crew Chargehands working together, helped by the same black/green waste stream being collected across each area where possible.

Objective 2: *To add capacity into the rounds to be able to collect from new house builds now and planned in the next few years.*

Progress:

As part of the city-wide route remodelling for waste collections, new developments will be planned for as far as is realistically possible. By working closely with City Development and their respective planning data, we aim to ensure all proposed new builds are accounted for in our model, and in turn, a more accurate resource requirement can be identified for waste collections. For further future-proofing we work to the most recent site schedule for year-on-year delivery for the Council's five year housing land supply sourced from the updated SHLAA which takes into account greenbelt sites anticipated to be released as part of the Site Allocations Plan. For the purpose of modelling, sites will be banded by size, volume, location, start/completion dates.

So, in accordance with the Site Allocations Plan for Leeds and related information provided by Planning, best efforts are being made to ensure planned growth at a localised level rather than an average applied city-wide. This allows for more realistic route/crew requirements to be identified.

However, the Project Board's view is a balance will have to be struck between building capacity in route designs to accommodate forecast new builds, with the risk of creating routes with a significant amount of collections that may not materialise for years. Also there is a lot that can change in the next 2/3 years in terms of customer expectations/demand, government requirements arising from the waste strategy and associated funding opportunities.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- Recently built new homes that are being covered by citywide crews will be designed into new local routes;
- All routes will include "future proofing" for known housing developments planned for the next few years, although the scale of some developments planned in Leeds is such that the new routes required for these may need to be designed and resourced at a later date;
- In the period prior to the additional homes being built, the crew will have a degree of spare capacity which may be used for additional tasks – such as helping do recoveries or assisting with area completion of daily collections;
- There is particular pressure with the degree of existing and forecast city centre (inc South Bank) growth and a dedicated city centre team will be created to have the capacity and resources to meet the specific service challenges. There is a recognition this may need bespoke solutions;

Objective 3: *To add capacity to cover seasonal peaks in presentation of garden waste;*

Progress:

The management of the garden waste service (brown bins) is being changed so it is managed as a separate, citywide service under one Service Manager and dedicated Team Leaders. This will help ensure it is more responsive to spikes/troughs in demand that is inevitable (e.g. due to weather/seasonal variations). There is agreement that the service will still be at the bottom of the list in terms of crewing up priorities (i.e. the priority order for getting a full service will remain black-green-brown). To mitigate this there is agreement that the new routes are designed on higher presentation days and there will be the ability for routes to be "doubled up" in low presentation periods (e.g. March, hot summers and end of collection season).

The Project Board also considered whether the service could/should be offered all year round – with a reduced service in winter. The consensus is that more work should be done to assess potential demand and what could be achieved with the minimum of provision in those months.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- One, separately managed, garden waste team/service for the city;
- Greater ability/flexibility to "double-up" routes in time of low presentation;

- Routes designed on higher presentation rates, so able to cope in high demand weeks;
- During exceptional periods of high presentation an additional vehicle will be crewed-up;
- Explore whether offering a reduced service throughout winter is needed/feasible – possibly looking to try it out in a part of the city.

Objective 4: *To increase the % bins collected on their due day and where that's not possible, to always recover multiple addresses within 48hrs (so having a clear and achievable solution to addressing how "slippage" is recovered);*

Progress:

The review has focused on work to identify where access problems is a key factor in the non-collection of bins on scheduled days. A mapping/analysis of reported missed bins (by customers and staff) has been undertaken. Consultation with ward members has also been carried out. The information has now been mapped and shared with highways with a view to an emergency citywide TRO proposal being presented to Exec Board for approval (possibly July). In addition, stewards have been consulting with crews to help map out where the use of small size refuse wagons would result in a higher collection rate. This information is being fed into the route design process.

The work of the review to remove anomalies created by additional temporary, citywide crews to deal with new builds and additional brown bin roll-out will also improve reliability as well as efficiency.

The Project Board has also agreed that on top of the 10 area approach to operations citywide, the delivery model/design needs to include options to create dedicated teams for city centre, large areas of high population/housing density coupled with high transiency and high rise accommodation. The review has identified these as locations where the reliability of the service to be able to collect on scheduled days is most challenging and needs a more bespoke, locally managed solution.

It is agreed that better use of in-cab technology is key to effective and timely recovery of missed bins/"slippage". The Project Board has developed the Crew Chargehand proposal and sees this is vital to ensuring that such technology is effectively used. The new post coupled with a more area based and accountable management structure, would also be important in ensuring crews work together across an operational area to support each other in meeting service commitments to customers.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- local solutions to prevent illegally parked cars (eg TRO/yellow lines);
- the introduction of more, smaller size wagons;
- embedding the temp new build and additional brown bin crews into the new local route designs;
- creating dedicated teams for city centre, high rise and densely populated/housing areas that also have high transiency levels (Harehills, Headingley/Hyde Park/Woodhouse has been identified by the Project Board);

- introduction of a new Crew Chargehand role on every vehicle;
- ensuring in-cab technology is fit for purpose and being used by crews, overseen by the Crew Chargehand;

Objective 5: *To establish clearer lines of responsibility within crews for tasks undertaken during the day and how that relates to the role of supervisors/managers. This includes the introduction of a new Crew Chargehand role (see Appendix A for more detail on that proposed role);*

Progress:

The proposed Crew Chargehand JD has been developed in consultation with Unions and been through job evaluation (comes out as C1). The Project Board has agreed to undertake an indicative expression of interest exercise to help inform decisions about the implementation of the new role; the view of the Board being there needs to be enough appetite amongst the workforce for this role to ensure it would be an effective way forward.

It is agreed that should there be sufficient interest/support for this new role, its introduction should be made as soon as possible; to allow time for staff to be recruited into the role and a development programme completed so they are better able to play their role in implementing the recommendations of the completed review (due to be completed August 2019).

Also in relation to this objective is the previously mentioned agreement that new routes should be constructed around 10 areas of the city; plus dedicated teams for city centre, high rise and high density/transient areas. Together with the better use of in-cab technology to empower crews, this will help develop a greater, closer team ethos and supportive link between operational staff and Team Leaders.

The supportive role of the Team Leader, in particular in ensuring the Crew Chargehand is given feedback on issues referred through, is agreed as key.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- the introduction of the new Crew Chargehand role as soon as is possible;
- a development programme for new Crew Chargehands;
- better use of in-cab technology used to empower crews to complete tasks and report issues;
- importance of good two-way communication between Team Leader and Crew Chargehand.

Objective 6: *To be more open and accountable as a service to customers, but at the same time being clearer about what is expected of customers in the presentation of their waste and the limitations of the service we provide;*

Progress:

A workstream has been established looking at performance information that will be meaningful to customers/residents. The focus is on "live" and end of day information on scheduled collections, performance of the service in terms of "missed bins" and on how the kerbside recycling

infrastructure contributes towards the city's overall recycling aims (and what residents can do in that regard too). There is agreement that reliable and better use of in-cab technology is key to ensuring the best customer service/relationship is possible.

Working in partnership with Customer Services and colleagues in North Lincolnshire Council, a grant funded project has been delivered which explored what "live" dashboard style information is technically possible, which will help inform further development of such a facility for Leeds residents. This will help inform the workstream.

A partnership is also being established with HW Martins (who process our sort/green bin waste) to develop a positive relationship with groups across the city who wish to promote recycling and encourage greater/better use of the green, recycling bins. Front line/union stewards will be involved in that partnership work. The use of social media will be a feature of this work.

Also, the decision to design routes around the 10 Community Committee boundaries will enable a greater accountability and influence relationship to be established between the service and Elected Members. The intention is to create much closer link between Elected Members and local managers/supervisors and a performance accountability to Community Committees, with a focus on local opportunities to promote better recycling (e.g. use of green bins) and to work collaboratively to address issues effecting reliable collections.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- achieving reliable and accurate end of day reports every day is a priority for the review, and effective use of in-cab technology is the key to that;
- we need to be better at explaining to customers/residents how to use their green bins to greatest effect;
- we will restructure our service around Community Committee areas to help develop positive relationships with local communities and their democratically elected representatives;
- we will have a clear service agreement with residents (our customers) which will both set out what can be expected of us and what we need from residents.

Objective 7: *To ensure we can reliably make collections in the more challenging locations and bring different solutions and resources to support collections in these areas;*

Progress:

This objective to a large degree brings together other objectives that seek to address the issues causing repeat missed bins in locations (e.g. smaller wagons), create dedicated teams in certain areas and to be more locally responsive to opportunities. This workstream is initially looking at how a local delivery model could be developed for the Headingley/Hyde Park/Woodhouse area, working collaboratively with the Cleaner Neighbourhood Team. In addition ideas on how a new city centre team would best meet the changing needs and demand are being explored.

The Project Board has discussed how closer working with Cleaner Neighbourhood Team colleagues could help deal better with issues such as contaminated bins, low recycling rates and responding to

access difficulties. The further development of the “rapids team” resource within CNT within the most problematic areas to support Refuse is an idea being looked at.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- we need to do something different in our most challenging locations – and that may include variations on our delivery model and/or closer collaborative working with the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team;

Objective 8: *To deal with changed travel patterns as the service moves to the new headquarters/depot from early 2020, including the facilitation of crew pick-ups.*

Progress:

The plans for the new Waste Management HQ and citywide depot are being finalised ahead of submission for planning approval. Staff have been involved and consulted in the development of the plans, influencing a number of changes from the original design/layout. This has included an increase in parking spaces for operational staff. Current estimate is for the new facility to be operational in early 2020.

The new route designs will be based around the full service being delivered out of the one citywide facility. This will have the greatest impact on routes previously operating out of Henshaw.

The timing/phasing of the implementation of the new routes will need to consider when the new facility will be operational.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- when the new routes are agreed, particular consideration will need to be given to the impact on staff, in particular the Loaders, once they are operational from the new depot/facility.

Objective 9: *To help inform decisions on future fleet requirements – reviewing types & numbers of vehicles needed now and in the future;*

Progress:

Fleet services are aware of a probable outcome of the review being the requirement for more small wagons. The new depot will be future proofed for the conversion of fleet to electric over time. There will be opportunity to look at both these issues at the next phase of fleet renewal.

Objective 10: *To ensure we have a reliable electronic record of what's gone on in each round, every day;*

Progress:

This objective is mainly covered in objectives 4, 5 and 6 and relates the routine and effective use of in-cab technology. In addition to the main focus on recording missed bins to help with end of day reports, managing customer contact and planning recovery; this objective also covers the need to make sure incidents such as contaminated bins, broken bins, excess bins etc are recorded. The development of automated actions created by the recording of such incidents will be part of this workstream (such as an automatic letter to the resident generated from a reported contaminated bin). The discussion at Project Board has been about how this will help empower operational staff to have problems they encounter dealt with.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- if working correctly and used effectively by staff, the use of in-cab technology to report/record issues the crew come across would help empower them to have frustrations such as repeat recycling bin contaminations dealt with.
- staff need the appropriate training and support;
- the technology needs to be reliable/fit for purpose.

Objective 11: *To build in time for proper staff appraisals and training and development*

Progress:

The appraisal process for 2019/20 is now underway. Following the success last year of achieving for the first time in the service 121 appraisals for very front line member of staff, this year will also allow staff to have their appraisal done on a day when they are not expected to undertake normal physical duties. This is seen as key to helping staff have a good quality discussion, which is their annual welfare check as well as formal appraisal.

The need for a specific development/training programme for the proposed new Crew Chargehands has been identified and under development looking at a similar programme provided to the new CNT Chargehands.

The review will look at how the appraisal review window can look at combining that with a training day for staff.

In addition the need to support Loaders in their career opportunities has been highlighted as a priority by the Project Board. This is not just about ensuring there is opportunity to train/get a licence that will enable them to become a Crew Chargehand, but to ensure they have access and are aware of the other opportunities at higher grades across the Council in largely operational services such as Parks, CNT, Housing, CEL and Highways. The idea of allowing staff to work for a day in other services was suggested.

The Project Board also agreed the need to ensure Loaders are supported/encouraged to aspire to become Team Leaders, and that career path should not be restricted to Crew Chargehands.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- allowing staff to have dedicated appraisal days is key to ensuring quality discussion;

- development programme for new Crew Chargehands needed (as per objective 5);
- opportunities for Loaders to progress within the Council need to be highlighted
- staff to be encouraged and supported to spend a day working with other services where they feel it would be a good/useful experience for them;
- mainly through the appraisal process, Loaders aspiring to become Team Leaders should be identified and opportunities to shadow Team Leaders (inc. in other services) offered.

Objective 12: *be a basis to build on as different kerbside collections are considered to increase recycling rates;*

Progress:

To a large extent this objective will be a measure of success of many of the other objectives. The review sets out to make the service more effective and efficient, more accountable and responsive to customers and local needs, have a more motivated and happier workforce with the right tools for the job and able to deliver a reliable service.

The Leeds Waste Strategy is being drafted, and the consultation phase is underway for the national Resource and Waste Strategy. There are some clear expectations being set out in the national strategy that include for example requirements to offer food waste collection to households. Some issues are less clear how they will happen but clear enough that something will be expected – such as more consistency in what is collected/recycled at the kerbside across the country and a commitment for funding to be provided by Government from the proceeds of a producer responsibility scheme.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- to ensure that we are getting the most out of the available resources/infrastructure to deliver a reliable service for Leeds with a workforce motivated and supported to do the best they can;
- to continue to work closely together following the review to consider what future changes to kerbside recycling requirements will mean and what would work best for Leeds.

Objective 13: *enable implementation of the Council's policies on excess bins, contamination and side waste;*

Progress:

Work has started across Refuse and CNT to look at the existing policies relating to these issues, what needs changing and how any revised policies can realistically be implemented. Discussion so far had been focused on process and logistics. The Project Board has identified excess bins as an issue there is greatest opportunity to make early progress on. A process is being developed to be tried out with a small number of crews/target area to focus initially on the more blatant examples of excess bins – probably those households that have 3 or more black bins.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- excess bins – to develop a process to initially target and remove excessive black bins which will involve the identification of the bins by crews
- contaminated bins – to develop a process initially targeting green bins that have been contaminated with non-recyclable material. To involve the identification by crews and then an agreed process that makes clear what then happens to the bin, what the message to the resident is, what punitive action is taken and at what stage, and who does each element of this process (including evidence gathering).

Objective 14: *ensure enhanced services (e.g. assisted collections/pull outs and medi-waste) are provided where justified.*

Progress:

Information is being collated for both these services, including current processes for how customers “apply” for them. Both these services involve some of the most vulnerable customers we serve.

The medi-waste service has recently moved to be managed away from the main refuse black and green operations. In part this is refocus this service around the customer and to ensure it is given appropriate priority in crewing up. The review will also consider whether we should be providing this service to private companies/organisations.

The feeling of stewards is that there still remain residents in receipt of an assisted wheelout that should not be eligible. Mainly due to changes in the household/occupier that have not been reported/recorded.

Similarly, the level of complaints for missed assisted wheelouts is noticeable and causes extra customer contact time, customer upset and recovery resources. This often seems to be related to scratch crews and/or not using in-cab technology effectively.

Key principles for action there is collective agreement on:

- the Medi-waste service should be a priority and the most reliable service we provide;
- assisted wheel-outs should be reliable and the effective use of in-cab technology is key to that;
- there needs to be a better process for crews to report where they believe a change in occupier has taken place at an assisted wheel out address.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

As the update demonstrates, good progress has been made across all agreed review objectives. The most significant being:

- ✓ agreement on how routes should be redesigned from scratch, and the key factors that need building in (e.g. new builds); with a key outcome being more effective and efficient use of the resources and staff feeling service finish times across crews are fair/equal;
- ✓ move to the core routes designed around 10 areas of the city, coterminous with Community Committees and to help embed more local working/pride between crews (and other relevant services such as Cleaner Neighbourhood Teams) in those areas;
- ✓ more bespoke solutions to be worked up for city centre, high rise and areas of high population density/transiency;
- ✓ reducing the amount of missed scheduled bin collections through tacking causes of access problems – for example more yellow lines to reduce vehicle blockages, and smaller wagons where street designs and swathes of terrace housing without drives necessitate;
- ✓ the agreement that the daily use of in-cab technology is key to achieving many of the joint objectives and in empowering crews to do the job effectively;
- ✓ agreement on the importance of the proposed Crew Chargehand role and need to support staff in their successful development into that role;

There is agreement the immediate implementation of the new Crew Chargehand role will provide opportunity to move interested staff into the new roles and provide them with opportunity to develop in that role so that when the outcomes of the full review are implemented later in 2019/early 2020 (for example introducing the new routes across the city), the service is in the best possible position to ensure a smooth transition and improved outcomes.

A protocol for the recruitment of current staff into the new role has been agreed (appendix A). In order to assess how realistic the proposal to implement the new role now is, an indicative expression of interest exercise was carried out by management and stewards. The results so far are:

- *Drivers wanting to be a Crew Chargehand = 86*
- *Loaders who can drive wanting to be a Crew Chargehand = 7*
- *Drivers wanting to remain as a Driver = 1*

Proposed Next Steps:

- 14th May – meeting between Director/Chief Officer and Unions to assess and agree the progress made so far (as set out in the Terms of Reference);
- DDR setting out decision to create new Crew Chargehand posts and the recruitment process to ultimately replace the existing Driver posts;
- Once DDR is confirmed, process to recruit staff to the new posts as set out in the agreed protocol.