

**Report of: John Woolmer, Deputy Chief Officer, Communities & Environment**

**Report to: Inner West Community Committee**

**Report author: John Woolmer**

**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

**To Note/Comment**

## **Waste Management Services – Update on the Refuse Service Review and National Waste Strategy implications for Leeds**

---

### **Purpose of report**

1. This report provides an update to the Community Committee on progress with the review of the Refuse Service in Leeds;
2. The report also takes the opportunity to provide a brief update the development of a new National Resources and Waste Strategy and how that relates to Leeds.

### **Main issues**

#### **Refuse Service Review**

##### **(a) Background**

3. 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.
4. 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, still in formal consultation stages following publication in December 2018, 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.

5. 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.
6. 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), multi-occupancy housing, high/low rise accommodation and city centre living. There are often significant practical issues for both the service and the customer.
7. 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.
8. 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 set 14 clear joint objectives to deliver on (see Appendix A).
9. The initial intention was to complete the review by late 2019, with a desire to agree and implement elements during that period where sufficient progress is made and determine an implementation timescale for the remaining elements.
10. This progress report reflects on what has been achieved with the review to date, the timescale for the review to be completed and likely implementation timescales of remaining key elements.

## **(b) Progress to date**

11. Significant progress has been made on each of the stated objectives of the Review. Both in terms of actions and agreement as to what the way forward/solutions are.
12. The initial phase of the review was to work through each agreed objective and develop/agree key principles and actions that if developed and put in place would deliver those objectives, a full list of these is provided in Appendix B.
13. The most significant principles/priorities for action agreed at this stage were:
  - ✓ 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 the 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;

14. The headline principle that perhaps will interest the Committee the most is that all routes covering the whole city will be redesigned for all waste streams, and the new routes will be designed as much as possible to be coterminous with the Community Committees.

15. This is seen as a key development so as to:

- Improve the accountability of the service
- Improve operational links/relationships with other localised services, such as Cleaner Neighbourhood Teams
- Improve connectivity and relationships with Councillors and local initiatives/people that have a shared desire to see improvements in recycling rates and tackle localised issues that affect the reliability of collections.
- Support crews to feel part of a local team

16. The technical work underpinning the route redesign element of the review has taken much longer than originally planned, mainly due to the ambitious scope of the project, including designing around Community Committee boundaries, specialist areas and factoring in new builds/developments.

17. However, in the meantime progress has been made on many of the objectives. The most significant being:

**(a) Introduction of a new Crew Chargehand role to the service**

In late spring/early summer consultation took place with Trade Unions and staff to agree and introduce this new role for every crew/vehicle. The recruitment has been successfully completed – with 98% of posts filled from existing Drivers. A training/development programme is currently being delivered. The new role includes responsibilities to:

- *lead on understanding and following the collection route/tasks assigned for each day's work and ensure completion to level of quality required – for example that assisted collections/wheel-outs are completed, access problems are safely overcome where possible and empty bins are returned in a safe and neat position;*
- *be responsible for ensuring the main in-cab recording system (currently Bartec) is operational at all times and where it is not that is reported immediately;*
- *be responsible for ensuring accurate input/recording of all necessary information on the in-cab system is being done; for example crew check-ins, missed collections and the reasons for the non-collection, damaged bins etc.*

#### **(b) Effective use of in-cab technology**

Historically when this task was divided amongst the crew, in-cab technology usage was as low as 10%. We are still in the early stages of training all our newly recruited Crew Chargehands; however effective in-cab usage (i.e. not just switching it on, but using it to properly record misses etc.) is already over 60% and producing good information that is helping us improve how we deliver the service. This level of in-cab technology use is consistently higher than we have ever achieved in the past, and will improve further as we complete the Crew Chargehand training programme currently underway, as well as deal with the hardware and software issues now being identified.

#### **(c) End of Day (EOD) Reports**

The two main areas for improvement were identified as reliability and quality of information provided. The reliability of information (which is mainly reassurance that the streets that crews have been unable to collect bins from that day are actually included on the report) has seen improvement over the last 2/3 months as Crew Chargehands get used to their role and as the use of in-cab technology grows. Contact from Members pointing out streets that have been reported to them but not on the EOD report has fallen considerably. The report itself has been redesigned and a new, consistent format will be used from December. This will include the “carry forward” of any recoveries not made from the previous day's report. In addition, once the necessary IT changes have been made to the in-cab and the case management system, a more useful range of reasons will be provided to explain why a particular street could not be collected that day.

#### **(d) Fleet renewal**

The replacement of well over half of the existing fleet (45 Refuse Collection vehicles) is on track to be in place by the end of December 2019 with 7 already delivered and operational. These vehicles will all be Clean Air compliant. The remainder of the fleet will be replaced in 2020 and 2021.

#### **(e) Traffic Regulation Orders**

Proposals have been worked up through consultation and involvement of Members and staff and using missed collections analysis. Technical assessments on over 100 sites has been completed by highways colleagues. The relevant Traffic Regulation Order is now ready to present to Executive Board for approval. However, due to the cancellation

of the December meeting due to the General Election, we are now working for this to be presented in January 2020. The intention is for the approval to allow additional locations to be added to the Order without further reference to Executive Board, subject to any necessary local consultation etc.

**(f) Proof of concept work for new route coterminosity with Community Committees**

Modelling has been completed to test the potential impact of redesigning routes across the city to fit as much as possible with Community Committee boundaries. This indicates that, at least in principle, the concept is workable, “makes sense” operationally and is not likely to add disproportionate cost/inefficiencies.

**(g) New Garden Waste Collection routes**

The citywide redesign of the garden waste collection routes has now been drafted. The next stage is consultation with staff to reality check the routes, and then with Ward Members to provide opportunity to make suggested collection day changes etc. The current plan is to introduce the new routes/collection days when the service reassumes in March 2020.

**(h) Scoping work for “specialist” teams/areas**

Route design work has begun to scope what delivery models would be deliverable in the areas where the current model simply cannot work effectively; particularly in large areas of concentrated terraced housing/no driveways, high occupancy/dense population, transient communities and poor recycling.

**(c) Next Steps**

18. The current expectations are for the following key milestones:

**By end of December:** half the refuse fleet replaced with new vehicles; garden waste routes ready to consult with Members; new End of Day reports being used; consultation with relevant ward members on “specialist team” models.

**By January 2020:** training programme of Crew Chargehands complete and 100% use of in-cab technology, approval for new TROs to help improve access.

**By March 2020:** introduction of new garden waste collection routes; consultation with ward members on draft new black and green bin collection routes, introduction of new routes for black and green bins in the “specialist team” areas.

**Late Spring 2020:** introduction of new black and green bin collection routes for remainder of the city.

**Summer 2020:** introduction of public “end of day” style information providing residents with “live” details on problems experienced that day and what the recovery plans are; new citywide depot/HQ operational

## National Resources and Waste Strategy and Leeds Waste Strategy

19. The Government published its National Resources and Waste Strategy in December 2018. At the time, the key headlines from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) were:
- The introduction of extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging so business and industry pay the full net cost of recycling or disposing of their packaging waste.
  - EPR will include a review of producer responsibility schemes for items that can be harder or costly to recycle including cars, electrical goods and batteries. Extending EPR to textiles, fishing gear, tyres, certain materials from construction and demolition and bulky waste such as mattresses, furniture and carpets will also be explored.
  - Mandatory weekly separate collections of food waste for every household, subject to consultation.
  - A Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) will be brought in, subject to consultation, to increase the recycling 'on the go' of single-use drinks containers, including bottles, cans and disposable cups filled at the point of sale.
  - To increase recycling, a consistent set of recyclable materials collected from businesses and households will be instigated on a national basis together with consistent labelling on packaging.
  - Mandatory guarantees and extended warranties on products to encourage manufacturers to design products that last longer and drive up the levels of repair and reuse will be introduced.
  - Annual reporting of food surplus and waste by food businesses will be laid down. If progress is insufficient consultation will start on introducing mandatory targets for food waste prevention.
20. The initial consultation phase concluded in May 2019. DEFRA provided an update in late July which indicated no changes to the principle set out in the Strategy that any required changes to how Councils manage waste will be fully funded. The update stated the elements of the strategy that look to introduce greater producer responsibility for ensuring recyclability of packaging and a Deposit Return Scheme remain key. In July, DEFRA reported that it intends to bring forward fresh consultations on firm plans in early 2020.
21. In the meantime, the Government announced the Environment Bill 2019/20. This bill was due for its second reading towards the end of October 2019, but the dissolution of Parliament prevented that happening. The Bill makes reference to the Office for Environmental Protection's "25 Year Environmental Plan". This plan has a section "Minimising Waste" which includes statements such as: *"We will minimise waste, reuse materials as much as we can and manage materials at the end of their life to minimise the impact on the environment. We will do this by: working towards our ambition of zero avoidable waste by 2050, working to a target of eliminating avoidable plastic waste by end of 2042, meeting all existing waste targets – including those on landfill, reuse and recycling – and developing ambitious new future targets and milestones"*

22. Within the context of this emerging/evolving national strategy, the Waste Strategy for Leeds was approved at the July 2019 Executive Board. Appended to this report is the “plan on a page” summarising the agreed strategic approach (Appendix C).
23. The Council is in positive discussions with DEFRA in relation to the future recycling target for Leeds. There is recognition that the current position is reflective of a national trend, particularly in comparison to other core/large cities. Although it is not anticipated that the measure of success will change in the short term, there is an expectation that new/revised legislation that comes from the National Strategy will reflect both the tonnage based measures of amounts of waste recycled and a measure that recognises the carbon impact of actions taken. That is not yet stated however, and we await further guidance and detail from DEFRA in 2020. It is therefore difficult for the Council to be clear at this moment on what “the future recycling targets as defined by DEFRA” may be.
24. The Leeds Strategy and work being undertaken as part of the refuse service review, is however looking at ensuring we anticipate as much as possible what may be required, and ensure we move forward/improve on existing measures regardless.
25. In the meantime we continue to innovate and introduce new ways for residents to reduce, re-use and recycle, with a focus on supporting people to change habits/behaviours and to move our focus to carbon reduction. Recent examples include:
- ✓ From mid-November, the addition of new materials/items accepted in the green bin for the first time in Leeds (pots, trays, tubs and cartons). Resulting in the vast majority of household plastics now being accepted in Leeds green bins for recycling.
  - ✓ The innovative partnership with the charity Hubbub for the “recycling on the go” initiative in the city centre– with 60 new dedicated bins on the streets and 80 new bins inside places such as shopping centres. In the 8 months of the trial over 65,000 cans, 55,000 bottles and almost 600,000 coffee cups were collected for recycling. To help “mainstream” this initiative, we have now committed to continue to empty and take the bins for recycling as part of our city centre street cleansing offer.
  - ✓ Education/social media campaign to get back to basics with what goes in the green bin; for example clear, pictorial “what goes in your green bin” information on the leaflet that is being sent to all households to inform them of the Christmas collection arrangements/dates this year (attached as Appendix D for information) and the production of a social media friendly animation explaining what happens to green bin contents.
  - ✓ Expansion of bottle and textile banks in Leeds; there are currently 665 LCC bottle banks across the city, capturing around 9,500 tonnes of glass a year for recycling. Ward Councillors are being encouraged to help identify local sites where a new bank would be successful or where existing banks could be more effective. Longer term, the impact of national Deposit Return Scheme proposed in the National Resources and Waste Strategy on the amount of glass that residents would switch to taking to reverse vending or alternative “reimbursement” facilities is of course a consideration; and an example of the difficulty we have currently in predicting, planning for, prioritising and investing in recycling improvements for individual waste streams.
  - ✓ Development of better recycling service offers in areas of traditionally poor recycling; the refuse service review has identified areas such as Harehills, Headingley, Hyde Park, Woodhouse, City Centre and high rise flats as places where recycling rates are low and where a different approach would help residents recycle more.

- ✓ Improvements at Household Recycling and Waste Sites to encourage more recycling and re-use; for example, production of a social media friendly animation showing what can be taken to sites and promoting the re-use of items by charities, improved signage and layouts at sites and work with re-use charity partners to trial the use of volunteers at sites to advise customers/residents.
- ✓ We have begun trials at one of our Household Waste and Recycling sites, Kirkstall, to collect and dispose of polystyrene, crisp packets and coffee cups. If it's viable in terms of markets and cost we will be rolling out to other sites;
- ✓ Two successful bids have been made to the national Distributor Takeback Scheme, amounting to over £124,000 for Leeds. This will enable us to undertake activities and improve facilities to increase the amount of Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) we recycle by 130 tonnes and the amount that is re-used by 40 tonnes. We will be working on "amnesty" in schools, employing more staff at recycling sites, providing funding to our re-use partner charities to help with staffing and PAT testing and increase and improve our WEEE bring banks across the city;
- ✓ Closer working with Community Committees to better support local initiatives/opportunities; the Refuse Service review is looking at how the service can be better designed/structured, both operationally and accountability wise, so as to better link with Community Committees and local opportunities. The current route redesigns are being based on achieving as much coterminosity as possible with Community Committee boundaries. This of course is subject to affordability but is a priority of the review to try and achieve. The service is keen to engage with Community Committees on what local opportunities there are to better support those in the community who champion reduce, re-use and recycle.

26. However, it's worth summarising the key issues that until about which we receive further clarity from DEFRA makes it very difficult for us to make local decisions, at least until further clarity is provided by DEFRA, hopefully in 2020;

- Glass – a key part of the NRWS is to introduce a continental style Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) that would include glass bottles and possibly jars. The reason being to incentivise the public to take their glass back to facilities in shops/supermarkets that would accept the items and refund the customer in the form of a store credit or possibly money. This may take the form a "reverse vending machine" for example. An obvious consequence of a successful introduction of this requirement would be the amount of glass to collect from the kerbside would be far less. Indeed when launching the strategy for consultation, DEFRA said "Similar schemes already operate successfully in other countries – for example, total return rates of drinks containers in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden are at 90%, 92%, 98%, 92% and 85% respectively". Yet the NRWS still also talks about glass being on the list of proposed waste streams that Councils may be required to separately collect at the kerbside from 2023 - under the "consistent recycling collections" part of the strategy.
- Food – another key part of the NRWS is to require Councils to offer the kerbside collection of food waste to all residents. The rationale stated by DEFRA is to reduce the amount of food being landfilled and therefore contributing to greenhouse gas effect caused by the methane emissions. In Leeds, of course, any food placed correctly in the black bin goes to the RERF and is burnt to produce power and heating; so no food goes to landfill. In the NRWS it was initially clear that future food

collections should be collected and processed separate from any other waste stream. However, following the consultation period in 2019, DEFRA now indicates that the method of collection of food would be subject to what is “technically, environmentally or economically practicable” (known as the “TEEP” test). This is welcomed as it suggests that we can develop a solution that works the best for Leeds.

- Funding – as part of the NWRS consultation DEFRA stated “the government will ensure that local authorities are resourced to meet new costs arising from this policy”. The extension of a national producer responsibility system which could, for example, include the “world leading new tax” of any packaging that has less than 30% recycled content is a key part of the strategy. The Government states; “the management of packaging waste costs local authorities in the region of £820m per year. The proposals in this consultation mean that the funding to meet these costs will transfer from central government and local taxpayers to businesses”. Much of the cost to Council’s will of course be up-front, infrastructural costs (for example plant, machinery, vehicles). The Government. It is not clear when the clock starts ticking in this respect and DEFRA is yet to provide clarity on that issue. One interpretation is that means anything introduced by Councils after the strategy was approved in December 2018, another is that means once the appropriate legislation is approved, and some interpret as it as from 2023 when the strategy says the bulk of the requirements in the legislation will take effect from. Again, we look forward to further clarity on this in 2020.

## Conclusions

27. The review of the Refuse Service is wide ranging and ambitious – demonstrated by the agreed objectives set out in this report. The review is not just about bringing routes up to date and therefore more efficient; but about improvements to accountability, ethos, processes, communication, staff welfare and preparing for challenges to come. The review also seeks to develop solution to parts of the city where the current configuration neither works for the service or the customer.
28. Working collaboratively with Trade Unions, significant progress has been made on a number of key elements of the review. Action has already been undertaken to change roles in crews, improve the use of technology, produce more reliable end of day information, consult and agree a TRO proposal, redesign garden waste routes and
29. The broad ambitions set out in the National Resources and Waste Strategy are welcomed. Clarity about the future legal requirements on Councils and what exactly will be funded and from when is of course critical. It is clear that some of the detail will change as a result of the consultation period. Already for example, there appears to be some change on the food waste proposals.
30. In the meantime, as set out in the Leeds strategy, we will continue to prepare for what we anticipate to be future requirements, work with stakeholders across the city on influencing and supporting behavioral change to how people reduce and manage waste and make further improvements to our existing recycling and re-use offers.

## **Recommendations**

31. The Community Committee is asked to note and comment on the contents of this report and to help promote the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste locally; in particular to consider how best to support local groups wanting to make a difference and change people's behaviours.

## Appendix A: Review 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;*

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.*

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

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);*

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);*

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;*

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;*

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.*

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Appendix B: Key Principles/Actions developed and agreed

- 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.
- 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;
- One, separately managed, garden waste team/service for the city;
- Greater ability/flexibility to “double-up” garden waste routes in time of low presentation;
- Garden waste routes designed on higher average presentation rates than currently, so better able to cope in high demand weeks;
- During exceptional periods of high garden waste presentation an additional vehicle will be crewed-up;
- Explore whether offering a reduced garden waste service throughout winter is needed/feasible/affordable – possibly looking to try it out in a part of the city.
- local solutions to prevent illegally parked cars (e.g. Traffic Regulation Orders/yellow lines);
- the introduction of more, smaller size wagons;
- 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 as the largest areas of );
- 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;
- 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.
- 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.
- all staff need the appropriate training and support;
- the technology needs to be reliable/fit for purpose.
- allowing staff to have dedicated appraisal days is key to ensuring quality discussion;
- 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.
- 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;
- 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).
- 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;
- 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.