

COUNCIL MEETING – 24TH JUNE 2021

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 (2)

INTRODUCTION OF A WEEKLY FOOD WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE

A report from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 8th June, 2021

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

In November 2020, Cabinet approved the Council's Climate Change Action Plan in response to the Climate Emergency declared in summer 2019. A key action within the plan was the adoption of a separate food waste collection service, planned for 2021/22. Cabinet established a Member working group to guide the project and recommend to Cabinet the operational detail for the service.

On 8th June 2021, Cabinet considered and approved [Report No. OS2107](#) which set out proposals for the introduction of a new weekly food waste collection service in Autumn 2021. It was agreed that a phased implementation of the food waste service would start with properties with individual external wheeled bins, and that these important service changes would be accompanied by a communications plan to help residents move smoothly to the new arrangements.

The proposals were informed by conclusions made by the Food Waste Working Group and evidence about how the service would meet the Council's climate change objectives and compliance with the Government's forthcoming Resources and Waste Strategy. This requires recycling performance in England to be 65% of municipal waste by 2035. The Council's current recycling performance is 29.6% (2019/20).

The Cabinet has approved the recommendations in [Report No. OS2107](#) under its executive powers, and the sole requirement for the Council is to consider the proposed adjustment to the revenue budget to support the service change.

The Council is recommended to approve an additional revenue budget of £90,000 in 2021/22 to facilitate the roll out of the food waste collection service, and to note that the financial impact of these changes in future financial years would need to be addressed in the 2022/23 budget setting process. At the time of writing, it is estimated that an additional £131k may need to be provided for on an ongoing basis, subject to other matters referred to in this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In light of the Government's forthcoming Resources and Waste Strategy, which is likely to legislate that all households must be offered a weekly kerbside food waste service from 2023, and the significant proportion of food waste within Rushmoor's household rubbish bins, the early adoption of a food waste collection service presents a real opportunity for a step change in performance in both recycling rates and the council's carbon impact. This will demonstrate the authority's commitment to tackling the climate emergency.
- 1.2. This report seeks Council approval for additional revenue budget to facilitate the implementation of a new food waste collection service as approved by Cabinet and following recommendations from the Food Waste Working Group.
- 1.3. With limited changes to the Council's waste collection services over the past decade, recycling performance has only gradually increased in this time, peaking at 29.6% in 2019/20, which places the Council in the bottom quartile for recycling performance. It also falls a long way short of the forthcoming national target that is set at 65% by 2035.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. As part of the Environment Bill the Government is keen to address recycling performance across England and the implementation of the forthcoming Resources and Waste Strategy is designed to address this by improving consistency in local authority collection systems, improving material quality and introduction of a broader range of materials. Specifically, the strategy includes that all authorities in England must introduce a weekly collection of household food waste from the kerbside from 2023.
- 2.2. Local authority food waste collection services at the kerbside is commonplace and is currently received by almost half of households in England, with that number set to rapidly increase following the adoption of the national strategy.
- 2.3. A waste composition analysis was undertaken in 2018 of a representative sample of Rushmoor's household bins, in order to help inform the strategy for Hampshire's waste management infrastructure and collection systems. Analysis of Rushmoor's rubbish bins found that (by weight) 27.6% was made up of materials that Rushmoor already target and 39.4% was waste food, which is approximately 7% higher than the UK average.
- 2.4. Rushmoor's recycling rate has only increased by around 5% over the past five years, largely due to an increase in garden waste subscriptions and additional items being collected from the kerbside, including batteries and small electrical items.
- 2.5. The Council has continued to offer a weekly collection of household rubbish, going against the direction of travel of Local Authorities in the UK, the majority of which have reduced the frequency of rubbish collections to encourage better recycling participation.

- 2.6. In July 2008, Cabinet approved the use of 140L bins for residual waste, to try to limit the space available and encourage residents to think more about what they throw away and therefore recycle more. However, this size of bin has only been rolled out to new or converted properties, or where bins have reached the end of their life. Consequently, around two thirds of households in Rushmoor still use a 240L bin for residual waste, on a weekly collection frequency.
- 2.7. The food waste implementation programme reflects the need for the Council to significantly increase its recycling performance and reduce its carbon impact on the local environment. The approach taken in preparing this implementation plan has taken into consideration:
- The national position, in particular regarding the Environment Bill and Resources and Waste Strategy
 - The priorities set out in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan
 - The views of Members, industry experts, other local authorities and local residents
 - Financial considerations

3. FURTHER DETAILS

Food Waste Working Group

- 3.1. The proposed food waste implementation programme has been guided by a Cabinet appointed Member working group, consisting of Councillors Maurice Sheehan, Ken Muschamp, Mara Makunura, Jonathan Canty, Clive Grattan and Sophie Porter. The group was established in November 2020 and met on seven occasions between December 2020 and April 2021.
- 3.2. At their meetings, the working group invited industry experts to provide advice and evidence of best practice for the successful implementation of food waste services. The group heard from:
- Sally Wilson (Local Authority Technical Consultant from WRAP) who has a detailed and extensive knowledge of food waste implementation having supported many authorities with the introduction of the service
 - Sam Horne (Strategic Waste Manager for Hampshire County Council) who outlined the County Council position on food waste disposal in the short and long term. He affirmed the County Council's desire to work with the Council to successfully implement a service in advance of the mandated date in 2023. HCC are developing plans to provide treatment capacity on a larger scale from the 2023 date
 - George Roach (Contracts Manager for Serco) who described for the working group the operational considerations for the collection service including preferred vehicles, round configurations, knock-on effects on other materials and tipping points for the proposed service
- 3.3. The working group considered performance data provided by industry experts WRAP and Eunomia Research & Consulting which modelled the

relative performance of three differing collection options, both financially and in terms of waste yields and therefore recycling performance. The models clearly demonstrated a significant variation in performance based on the collection frequencies adopted by the Council. Specifically, the frequency of residual waste collections has a profound effect on both the yield of food waste and the cost of service.

- 3.4. The modelling report indicated food waste yields could double from 30kg per household per year to 60kg if coupled with a fortnightly residual collection frequency or indeed 77.4kg if introduced alongside a 3-weekly residual waste collection, rather than retaining the current weekly frequency. In addition, the Council could expect to see recycling rates of around 35% with weekly, 45% with fortnightly and 53% with 3-weekly residual collection frequencies.
- 3.5. Carbon impacts were also modelled for reduced frequency of residual collections, with a fortnightly frequency saving of 1,921 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_{2e}) and a 3-weekly frequency saving of 5,249 tCO_{2e}. This carbon saving is equivalent to removing 914 and 2,499 cars from the road respectively. A summary of the carbon impacts and recycling performance by service option is shown in Figure 1.
- 3.6. Based on the investigations carried out, understanding data and hearing from industry experts (above), the Working Group unanimously agreed the following recommendations surrounding the operational implementation of the food waste service:
 - The Council should introduce weekly collections of food waste in autumn 2021, ahead of the 2023 target date set out in the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy
 - The kerbside food waste caddy should be a different colour to the existing bins (blue, green and brown) as food waste is a different service. Black was agreed as the best colour and where possible, should be made from 100% recycled plastic. Industry best practice indicates that a 23L container is the right size. The kitchen food waste caddy should be a neutral colour that would suit most kitchens and silver was agreed as the best and should also be made from 100% recycled plastic. Industry best practice indicates that a 5L container would be best for most households in Rushmoor
 - An initial supply of 52 seven litre polyethylene (PE) liners should be provided to all residents at the start to encourage participation, then a move to an "any bag" policy, promoting the reuse of otherwise single-use plastic bags, such as bread bags, salad bags etc
 - Disposal of food waste should be undertaken in partnership with the County Council, using a fully accredited Anaerobic Digestion (AD) facility
 - Residual collections should be moved to a fortnightly frequency, to maximise food waste yield, promote waste minimisation, reduce carbon emissions, and limit financial impact.

Communications and Engagement

- 3.7. Very clear evidence demonstrated that a comprehensive education and communications strategy be in place to support major changes to waste services, specifically the implementation of a food waste service. WRAP have made available to the Council their toolkit of campaign materials, which serve as a good starting point to any local campaign. The Working Group have agreed the basis of a communications campaign for the borough, which consists of the following themes:
- **Early communications:**
Messages on social media and in the Arena magazine to highlight how much food is being wasted in Rushmoor and the associated environmental impacts, linking this to the Council's commitment to tackle climate change locally. Early messages also to include that the Council has agreed to introduce a food waste service in autumn 2021.
 - **Pre-service roll-out:**
Consisting of an information leaflet delivered approximately one month before start of service, which includes what the scheme is about, how it will be introduced and further changes to the waste service overall, what food waste can be recycled and what will happen to it and the benefits of recycling food waste and minimising waste. Also, wider communications to inform residents that their new service will be starting shortly. The pre-service communications will be followed up with a further instructional leaflet delivered alongside the caddies and liners, containing information on how to use the caddies, what food waste can be recycled and when each of the food waste, recycling and rubbish containers will be collected.
 - **Post service roll-out:**
Ongoing messages to remind residents of the food waste service and encourage its use, including information on why it is important for households to recycle all of their food waste and the associated local environmental benefits. Also to include top tips on how to make recycling convenient and some simple steps to reduce/prevent odours and any potential hygiene issues.
- 3.8. As part of the development of the communications campaign, a group of staff involved with the current leadership development programme undertook a project to identify ways to communicate and engage with the harder to reach groups in Rushmoor's community, e.g. those living in flats with shared bins, the military community and the Nepalese community. The group carried out interviews with other local authorities, met with industry experts and held a series of digital focus groups with Rushmoor residents to develop their proposals, which formed part of the broader communications plan.
- 3.9. The Member Working Group saw evidence that blocks of flats, specifically those using shared bins, had unique considerations, and should be given careful and bespoke thought to their set up. The recommendation is therefore that households with individual bins will form phase 1 of the roll out in October 2021, to ensure the service is established and running well






before the start of phase 2, to commence around spring 2022, when flats will start to be rolled in on a case-by-case basis.

- 3.10. An amendment to the current 140L standard size residual bin practice should be considered alongside moving the collection frequency to fortnightly. It is recommended that a 240L size becomes the new standard for all new or converted properties, or when bins reach the end of their life.

Alternative Options

- 3.11. The Council could delay the implementation of a food waste service until it is made mandatory from 2023, however, this will not assist with the Council's commitment to climate change or address the current poor recycling performance.
- 3.12. Rushmoor could retain a weekly collection of rubbish alongside a weekly collection of food waste. However, evidence suggests the food waste collected could be around half that than if rubbish collections were moved to a fortnightly frequency. Models indicate that this option would also result in increased carbon emissions, escalating the Council's negative impact on the local environment. In addition, the financial impact of operating two weekly services would be significant, estimated at around an additional £400,000 per year.

3.13. Figure 1: Waste collection options summary table

		Potential Food Waste Yield	Potential Recycling rate	Indicative Carbon Impact*	Indicative Collection Costs (pa)	Indicative disposal costs (pa – 1 year)	Current industry direction of travel
Collection Frequency options	“Existing” (no food waste collection)	0kg/hh/yr					Of all local authorities currently collecting food waste
	“Weekly”	30kg/hh/yr	35%	Unmodelled, but likely increase	Figures included in confidential appendix 4	Figures included in confidential appendix 4	15% 
	“AWC”	60kg/hh/yr	45%	-1,921 tCO _{2e}  - 912			75% 
	“123”	77.4kg/hh/yr	53%	-5,249 tCO _{2e}  - 2,499			10% 

Kg/hh/yr = kilograms (kg) per household (hh) per year (yr)

tCO_{2e} = tonnes (t) of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) equivalent (e)

*Annual estimated CO₂ equivalent emission savings against the baseline, based on weekly food waste and fortnightly recycling collections (RBC whole system analysis). [Carbon footprint calculator](#) – Average yearly mileage (7,500 miles) in a regular petrol car = 2.10 tCO_{2e}

Consultation

- 3.14 In past consultations undertaken to seek views on the waste and recycling services, residents have said they are uncomfortable at the prospect of a less than weekly service for their general rubbish, specifically highlighting concerns about smells and pest infestations from food. For this reason, separate food waste collections should be made on a weekly basis to help alleviate these concerns and allow for the remaining services to be made on a lower frequency.
- 3.15 A series of online focus groups were held in February and March 2021 attended by residents from some of Rushmoor's 'harder to reach' areas of the community, including residents living in blocks of flats using shared bins and Nepalese residents. When asked how likely they would be to use the food waste service based on 1-10 (with 1 being not at all likely and 10 being very likely), an average rating of 8.5 was given by those living in flats and 10 given by Nepalese residents. When asked what the barriers would be to using a food waste service, the main aspects raised were around the security of the external caddies from pests, frequency of collection and potential odour. The majority of participants wanted to receive a leaflet with clear and simple guidelines to the service changes, with lots of graphics to overcome any language barriers, in addition to regular education/useful tips etc. through social media channels and the Council's Arena magazine.
- 3.16 It is recognised that despite the positivity received around the introduction of the separate weekly food waste collection, the overall changes to the Council's waste and recycling services are significant and therefore require a comprehensive and on-going communications campaign that encourages engagement from all areas of the community.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Risks

- 4.1. Financial – the Government's new burden funding may not be as expected from 2023. In addition, Hampshire County Council have been increasing financial pressures across the whole system, which creates potential for incurred costs to be passed on to districts.
- 4.2. Service and implementation – availability of vehicles, disposal routes and delivery of containers could all have negative impacts on the Council's reputation if they fail to be achieved on time. The plastics market is extremely volatile at the moment, so this, coupled with a growing demand by local councils for food waste containers, could lead to delays/increased costs in the supply of caddies.
- 4.3. Scheme success – participation rate may fluctuate, particularly once the service has been established for a while. This can be mitigated by new

communication activities to encourage residents to use the service and a re-launch initiative to trigger behaviour change for 'non-users'.

- 4.4. Legislation – whilst it is highly likely the Government will put into law that all local authorities must separately collect food waste at least weekly from 2023, until the Resources and Waste Strategy is finalised later this year it is not guaranteed and food waste collections could remain optional. However, having considered the environmental benefits of collecting food waste separately for recycling and removing it from the residual stream, introducing this service as soon as possible in addition to changing the collection frequency of the residual bins to fortnightly, will provide a well-needed step change to the Council's recycling performance and impact on the environment.
- 4.5. All of the above risks have been included in the project risk register to support the implementation of these changes. Mitigations where appropriate are recorded in the risk register.

Legal Implications

- 4.6. There are no major legal implications as a result of the proposed changes to service within this report. The Council is entitled to introduce changes to service within the current legal framework that exists.
- 4.7. However, because major parts of this service provision are subject to contractual arrangements changes will need to be made to the current Service Specification for the Provision of Waste and Recycling Collection between the Council and Serco Ltd. This is outlined in the change control procedure located in Schedule 7 of the Service Agreement.
- 4.8. Although informal agreement has been reached, the Council will need to formalise arrangements for disposal with Hampshire County Council.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.9. The Council has included within the 2021/22 revenue budget £200,000 for implementation costs and £131,000 in the Capital Programme for 2021/22 in to cover the cost of kerbside Food Waste containers. There is likely to be an additional cost pressure in 2021/22 relating to the cost of food waste collection and disposal arrangements with the County Council which is estimated at £90,000. Any cost implication arising in subsequent financial years will need to be addressed as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process. At the time of writing this report it is estimated that an additional £131k may need to be provided for on an ongoing basis, subject to other matters referred to in this report.
- 4.10. The Council will be implementing changes to its Waste and Recycling services prior to the release of New Burdens funding from Government. The details of the funding arrangements for Councils is not currently known and whilst it may be possible for the Council to apply for implementation cost funding retrospectively this is not

guaranteed. Therefore, the Council will be funding these changes in full with an uncertain position on Government funding.

Equalities Impact Implications

- 4.11. Rushmoor's diverse population has been considered throughout the planning of this project and steps will be taken to ensure all communications reach every part of the community and that they are accessible and understandable. A separate project was conducted by the Council's internal leadership development group to address the needs of those who traditionally may be considered "harder to reach" or face specific challenges accessing waste and recycling services. Findings from this work have been included in the thinking around the design of service. A full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) will be carried out prior to implementation of the changes.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. The early adoption of a weekly food waste recycling service in October 2021 and the associated changes to the Council's waste and recycling services, in advance of the expected legislation changes from 2023, illustrates Rushmoor's commitment to the delivery of a crucial part of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.
- 5.2. This important change for residents is the first step of a number of changes in respect of environmental performance and the better management of waste that will be introduced over the coming years.

Background document – Report No. OS2107 Introduction of a Weekly Food Waste Collection Service

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