

FOOD WASTE AND ABSORBENT HYGIENE PRODUCTS- COLLECTION TRIAL

REPORT OF: Assistant Chief Executive
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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: No
Report to: Scrutiny for Community, Customer Services & Service Delivery
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Purpose of Report

1. To set out proposals for and to seek approval to work in partnership with WSCC to trial a weekly food waste and absorbent hygiene product collection alongside a restructured residual waste collection frequency across approximately 3,000 properties in Mid Sussex.

Recommendations

2. Scrutiny Committee are asked to recommend to Cabinet that the Council, in partnership with WSCC trial a food waste and absorbent hygiene products collection in three areas in Mid Sussex.
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Background

3. The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 requires all local authorities to meet recycling targets of 50% by 2020.
4. The costs of residual waste treatment are increasing; and therefore the Council needs to find ways to remove more waste from the residual stream.
5. A residual waste composition analysis carried out in Mid Sussex in November 2018 demonstrated that food waste is by far the biggest element in the residual waste bin, constituting over 41% of the contents, by weight.
6. Food waste that is disposed of to landfill generates methane, a greenhouse gas far more powerful than carbon dioxide. Not wasting food and drink would have the same positive environmental impact as taking 1 in 4 cars off UK roads.
7. When waste food is collected separately, it can be put into an anaerobic digester, a tank in which the food breaks down into sludge, carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane, which can be used for generating energy. The residual material is used as a soil fertiliser. There is a significant performance gap between the best and worst performers across the region; with the authorities in Surrey achieving an average recycling rate of over 54% and those in Kent achieving 44%, compared with 37% in West Sussex, and 31% in Hampshire.
8. This performance gap is almost entirely due to the significantly higher volumes of biodegradable waste (garden and food) being captured by the higher performing authorities.

9. In December 2018 the Government published its Resources and Waste Strategy for England.
10. Among the key themes within the strategy is a commitment to eliminating all food and bio waste to landfill by 2030. The strategy also proposes introducing new statutory responsibilities for Councils to have weekly separate food waste collections in place by 2023. Therefore, it is very likely that all waste collection authorities will be statutorily required to separately collect food waste within the next three years.

Mid Sussex Customer Consultation

11. Customer consultation carried out in October 2018 demonstrates that, after general waste electricals, batteries and textiles (separate collections of which are being introduced in 2020 following last year's trial), the largest number of respondents (just over 55%) said they would like to be able to recycle food waste.

Food Waste Feasibility Study

12. A modelling exercise carried out in 2018 suggests that the introduction of a food waste collection service and a reduction of residual waste collection frequency would deliver a significant increase in the amount of waste recycled, a reduction in residual waste, and could be delivered at no additional cost to the Council Tax payer.
13. In light of this, West Sussex County Council (WSCC) secured the funding to work with district and borough partners to trial food waste collection; and through the West Sussex Waste Partnership (WSWP) WSCC has sought volunteer Councils to work with them.
14. It is proposed that the trials would provide to 3,000 households a weekly food waste and Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP) collection alongside a reduction in residual waste collection frequency. This has been termed a '1-2-3 +' system, and works as follows:

1	Weekly food waste collections (and opt-in weekly AHP collections)
2	Fortnightly (commingled) dry recycling collections
3	Three-weekly residual waste collections
+	Fortnightly opt-in subscription garden waste service

15. This approach would result in households experiencing a significant increase in the number of waste and recycling collections they receive- from a minimum of 52 per annum (for a non-garden waste customer) to a minimum of 95 collections per annum (for those not subscribed to garden waste or AHP collections).

Food Waste Collection Trial

16. Mid Sussex District Council, as one of the higher-performing Waste Collection Authorities in West Sussex, and one of only two with a long-established fortnightly collection system is well placed to carry out a trial of the 1-2-3 system.
17. Aside from the very strong likelihood that the provision of food waste collections will soon become a statutory requirement, the local benefits for participating in the trial can be summarised as follows:
 - The introduction of weekly collections of food waste and AHP would be a service improvement for the residents of Mid Sussex.

- With fortnightly dry recycling collections, a popular green waste subscription service, and weekly collection of food waste and AHP, the residual waste stream would consist of only inert non-recyclable waste such as rigid plastics, plastic film and polystyrene; and so three-weekly collections would be sufficient.
 - Based on the initial modelling, a district-wide service could enable Mid Sussex to drive its recycling rates up by almost 15%.
 - The current approach to managing food waste in West Sussex is becoming increasingly outmoded; and is both financially and environmentally unsustainable.
 - The modelling indicates that the service can be delivered at no additional cost to the Council Tax payer.
18. A number of districts and boroughs in West Sussex are actively considering their position with regards to the trial, and the longer-term introduction of a food waste service; however, at this time, only MSDC has indicated a firm interest in carrying out a trial.
19. In the absence of any other volunteers it is proposed that the Mid Sussex trial will cover approximately 3,000 households, will commence in April/ May 2020, and will run for between 6 and 9 months.
20. In partnership with Serco, three potential collection rounds have been identified for the trial.
21. These have been selected in partnership with Serco to provide the most optimal opportunities to test the services. These are existing rounds which, when combined, provide:
- I. Approximately 3,000 properties;
 - II. A good geographical spread across the district;
 - III. A good mix of rural and urban properties;
 - IV. A representative cross-section of housing types; and
 - V. A representative sample of demographics

This is important to ensure the trials deliver a truly representative set of findings, which can be used, with confidence, to inform a wider roll-out.

The details of these rounds will be communicated to all key stakeholders and residents prior to the formal decision to proceed with the trial.

Headline Principles

22. The following headline principles have been agreed for the trial:
- a. There will be no cost to individual district and borough Councils who chose to participate in the trial; and mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that no participants are worse-off as a result of the change and that (where possible) all parties will benefit.

- b. Any food waste collected through the trial will be treated separately via Anaerobic Digestion and will contribute to the Waste Collection Authority's recycling rate. WSCC have an 'in principle' agreement to bulk all food waste collected in-County, at Ford, before onward shipping for processing in Basingstoke. WSCC will also explore the possibility of bulking the waste at Burgess Hill.
- c. WSCC have provided a longer-term commitment to develop a facility within the County, at the MBT in Warnham, when there is a wider roll-out of the service. However, WSCC cannot currently provide a timeline for when this is likely to happen as it is dependent on the scale and speed of the wider roll-out of collections.
- d. If the trials are successful then they will continue uninterrupted beyond the initial trial period for up to a year at no additional cost to the Council, and wider roll out will take place within a timescale agreed with MSDC.
- e. The apportionment of the cost of rolling out and running the service beyond the trial is yet to be determined and agreed. Some, if not all, of this cost could fall to the collection authorities. However, the modelling suggests that the 1-2-3 approach can be delivered at no additional cost across the system. It is therefore recognised that the principle of cost and benefit sharing established for the trial would need to apply to any wider roll-out, and would be subject to agreement via a newly-established Joint Committee.
- f. The MSDC trial, and any wider roll-out of the service, would be best delivered by varying the Council's current contract with Serco. Officers are now working with them to fully understand the operational and financial implications of both the trial and any wider roll-out.
- g. It is proposed that a separate vehicle will be used for the trial, but it is likely that it would be more financially, operationally, and environmentally efficient to provide a district-wide service via a new fleet of 'split-bodied' or 'podded' refuse vehicles that would collect the full range of materials from the kerbside. In anticipation of a wider roll-out in due course, work is underway to identify the likely costs of this approach, and to consider funding options.
- h. Future Government funding may be available. The Government, in its Resources and Waste Strategy sets out its aspiration to ensure that any funding required to enable the local implementation of the strategy (which includes the introduction of food waste collections where they are not currently in place) will be made available. Further information on the details and mechanisms for this is awaited.

Operational considerations

- 23. The Council currently provides a very popular, and simple 'alternate weekly' waste and recycling service. It has been in place and remained largely unchanged for over ten years, and there will therefore inevitably be some concerns about changing the status quo.
- 24. A '1-2-3 +' service introduces a level of complexity, both in terms of the operational requirements, and how the collection regime is communicated and managed for residents.

25. In light of this, Officers recently visited Daventry District Council, who successfully introduced a '1-2-3 +' service in June 2018, and were recently shortlisted for a national award for the related communications campaign.
26. A summary of the key findings from this visit is provided at [Appendix 1](#)

Governance

27. WSCC has secured the funding for a temporary Project Manager on a 2-year Fixed Term Contract to oversee the implementation of this project, with additional support to be provided on communications and project management. The Project Team (comprising a Project Manager, Projects Officer and Communications Officer) is now in place.
28. Whilst this project is to be funded and led by WSCC, MSDC will be heavily involved in service design, and ensuring there are robust arrangements for managing the trial; as well as ensuring that the approach to project governance is clearly defined and understood by both parties. A project team and oversight group has been set up to manage this.
29. In order to share the benefit of the 1-2-3 collection system, to cover any extra costs incurred by either partner, and to ensure any financial benefits are properly shared post roll out, a formal Joint WSCC and MSDC Waste Committee will be formed. This formal Committee will provide oversight and transparency around how the service will be governed and funded. Final decisions relating to the service will be made by the Committee, which will comprise two Cabinet Members from each authority.
30. The Joint Waste Committee will be governed via an Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) which both Councils will formally agree to and incorporate in to their own constitutions.

Deliverables

31. It is proposed that the success of the trial will be measured against the following key deliverables:
 - I. Reduce the amount of food waste in the residual waste stream from 166 kg/hh to 83 kg/hh;
 - II. Reduce the amount of residual waste collected from 428 kg/hh to 346 kg/hh;
 - III. Improve recycling performance by at least 8% in the trial area;
 - IV. Capture at least 50% of food waste in the trial area;
 - V. Achieve a participation rate of at least 50% for weekly food waste collections;
 - VI. Positive customer feedback including a satisfaction measure benchmarked against current levels of satisfaction;
 - VII. Reduced dry recycling contamination rates including an indicator to measure the maintenance of recycling quality whilst increasing quantity.

Timeline

32. A detailed timeline has been developed for the trial, highlighting key milestones and deliverables. A high level summary is provided below:

Date	Activity
December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential trial area(s) • Determine operational collection methodology
January – April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSDC formal decision to proceed with trial • Procure collection vehicle(s) as required

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procure food waste containers • Design communications and engagement strategy • Procure treatment / disposal options – recognising food waste collected in the trials must be recycled
March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence communications and engagement activities
April – Sept 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence trial 1-2-3 collections (Phase 1) • Door-stepping to collect data on the trial
Oct- Dec 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse and evaluate trial 1-2-3 collections • Make recommendations and gain approval for wider roll-out
January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue trial 1-2-3 collections (Phase 2) until decision on roll-out is determined, scoped and implemented.

Communications

33. A key aspect of the project is the development and implementation of a comprehensive communications plan. This will be designed to ensure that all those taking part in the trial, and other key stakeholders are fully informed and provided with all the support they need to participate in, and get the most out of, the new services they are being offered.

Monitoring and Review

34. As detailed in paragraph 29, above, the success of the trial will be closely monitored against an agreed set of key deliverables, looking at a range of aspects from recycling rates and residual waste reduction, to customer perception/feedback and participation rates.
35. Analysis and evaluation will take place throughout the trial period, culminating in a set of recommendations around options for a wider roll-out of the service in December 2020.

Legislative / Policy Context

36. The requirements for UK local authorities to meet the target of 50% recycling by 2020 are driven by European Legislation. This legislation will remain in place after the UK's exit from the European Union.
37. The recently published Waste and Resources Strategy outlines the Government's intention to legislate further and introduce new statutory responsibilities. Of those items currently being considered, those with the most direct impact to local authority waste collections are:
- (a) separate collections of biodegradable waste (food and green waste) by the end of 2023;
 - (b) separate collections of textiles and hazardous waste by the beginning of 2025;
 - (c) strengthened TEEP (the method by which local authority collection systems are deemed technologically, environmentally and economically practicable) with a view to improving the quality of dry recycling collected;
 - (d) 55% recycling by 2025 and 65% recycling by 2035.
38. It is therefore highly likely, that in line with strengthening national legislation, changes to the way local authorities collect rubbish and recycling will be forthcoming.

Financial Implications

39. WSCC have allocated £260k towards the project, and they will fully fund the trials for the first year. There will be no cost to MSDC from participating in the trial.
40. The apportionment of the cost of rolling out and running a service beyond the first year is yet to be determined and agreed.
41. It is intended that the formal Joint Waste Committee will provide oversight and transparency around the costs for both councils; and will ensure that any costs and savings arising from a wider roll-out are fairly apportioned.
42. WSCC propose to ring-fence £2m to support districts and boroughs with the costs of introducing new waste and recycling initiatives in 2020/21, with a particular focus on encouraging a wider roll-out of the 1-2-3 approach.
43. As detailed within this report, the modelling suggests that the 1-2-3 approach can be delivered on a cost neutral basis. It is therefore acknowledged that the principle of cost and benefit sharing established for the trial would need to apply to any wider roll-out.

Risk Management Implications

44. Key risks and issues have been captured, and are managed through a Project Risk Log Document. This will be reviewed and updated by both the Project Team and Project Board at every meeting.

Appendix 1

Daventry Site Visit- 5/11/19 Introduction of 1-2-3 +

The Place

- Population of 85,000; 37,000 households
- 256 Square miles
- A largely rural district with approximately 1/3 of the population living in the town of Daventry and the remainder living in outlying rural areas (78 villages/ hamlets).
- 100% Parished (73 Town/ Parish Councils)

Previous Service

- Fortnightly recycling (kerbside sort in boxes)
- Fortnightly residual
- Weekly food (with poor take-up)
- Fortnightly free garden waste

Reasons for change

- Services provided through a contract with Amey (2011-2018).
- Daventry needed to plan to provide a new service at contract end in June 2018.
- The main drivers were to mitigate/ avoid the anticipated cost increases arising from re-tendering (expected to be circa £1.25m). The status quo would be unsustainable.
- Engaged with members and carried out a significant public consultation exercise through 2016/17 to inform the design of the new service.

New Service (since June 2018) - 1-2-3 +

The new service was introduced as a 'big bang' in June 2018. The changes were:

- A move from 'kerbside sort' (boxed) recycling to commingled
- A move from fortnightly to three weekly residual waste collections
- The introduction of a £35 charge for garden (previously free) waste collections

The service now looks like this:

1	Weekly food waste collections
2	Fortnightly (commingled) dry recycling
3	Three-weekly residual waste collections
+	Fortnightly opt-in subscription garden waste service

Note- there is no separate provision for the collection of AHP; meaning this is disposed of in the residual bin and collected on a three-weekly basis.

In 2016/17, Daventry's recycling rate was 49%; and by April 2019- as a result of these changes- it had increased to 60%.

Operational Arrangements

The service is delivered via a combination of standard refuse collection vehicles and vehicles with 'pods', as follows:

Week	Refuse Collection Vehicle (with food pod)		Refuse Collection Vehicle
			
1	Dry Recycling	Food Waste	Residual Waste
2	Garden Waste	Food Waste	-
3	Dry Recycling	Food Waste	-
4	Garden waste	Food Waste	Residual Waste
5	Dry Recycling	Food Waste	-
6	Garden Waste	Food Waste	-
7	Dry Recycling	Food Waste	Residual Waste

Communications

A comprehensive Communications Strategy was developed and implemented. This utilised the full range of media channels, and was divided into key 'themes', each of which was underpinned by its own key messages/ FAQ's, etc. These were:

- Theme 1: Why the waste and recycling service is changing
- Theme 2: Three-weekly black bin collections
- Theme 3: Two-weekly recycling collections
- Theme 4: Two-weekly chargeable garden waste service
- Theme 5: Weekly food waste collections
- Theme 6: Changes to collection days

Considerable focus was given to communicating collection days. As well as on-line 'find my collection day' tools, and the provision of a paper collection calendar to every household (as shown below), they also used, and promoted, a bespoke App which residents can use to search their collection day; and which can be configured to send 'push' notifications and reminders

Public reception

Generally, residents have accepted, or even welcomed the changes. Garden waste take-up has been good (over 22,000 subscribers) and there has been very little issue with residents understanding and adjusting to the change to the collection regime.

Example collection calendar

Your new 2018/19 collection calendar

Your collection day is FRIDAY

fr-wk1

F Food



Collected every week

R Recycling



Collected every 2 weeks

W Waste



Collected every 3 weeks

G Garden Waste



Collected every 2 weeks

Garden Waste Collections
 You will only receive garden waste collections if you are subscribed to the new service. There will be a short break for garden waste collections during the second week of January 2019.

June 2018				July 2018				August 2018			
08	F	R	W	06	F	R		03	F	R	
15	F		G	13	F		G	10	F		W G
22	F	R		20	F	R	W	17	F	R	
29	F		W G	27	F		G	24	F		G
								31	F	R	W

September 2018				October 2018				November 2018			
07	F		G	05	F		G	02	F		W G
14	F	R		12	F	R	W	09	F	R	
21	F		W G	19	F		G	16	F		G
28	F	R		26	F	R		23	F	R	W
								30	F		G

Please put out your bins by 6.30am on your collection day.

To find out more visit www.daventrydc.gov.uk/recycling