

Report to:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Regeneration & Skills	Date of Meeting:	19 September 2017
Subject:	Refuse Collection, Recycling & Food Waste Update		
Report of:	Andrew Walker - Head of Locality Services Provision	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Locality Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To update Overview & Scrutiny Committee as requested in relation to refuse collection, recycling and food waste collections during the last year (2016 / 2017).

Recommendation(s):

That the Committee note the report and its contents and agrees to a future report in 2018 on progress

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Report is for information only

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no revenue costs associated with this report

(B) Capital Costs

There are no capital costs associated with this report

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): N/A – For information only
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications arising from this report
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Services provided for all vulnerable residents
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Services contribute to confident and resilient communities by removing refuse and recycling on a regular and planned basis.
Commission, broker and provide core services: Refuse and recycling collections constitute 'core' services.
Place – leadership and influencer: Not Applicable
Drivers of change and reform: Not Applicable
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Not Applicable
Greater income for social investment: Not Applicable
Cleaner Greener: Cleansing Services assist in promoting and delivering cleaner, greener spaces for residents, businesses and visitors.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD4827) and Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD4111/17) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Not Applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee / Council meeting.

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

Introduction/Background

1. The waste collection operation within the Council's Cleansing Services Section effectively consists of four strands of operation:
 - Waste which cannot be recycled (collected via black sack or grey wheeled bin)
 - Waste which can be recycled (collected via hessian sack or brown wheeled bin)
 - Food waste (collected via a green caddy and compostable liner system)
 - Green 'Garden' Waste (collected via green wheeled bin)
2. In April 2014, Cabinet agreed to change the method of green waste collection, introducing a three weekly (predominantly) Monday collection. Cabinet also agreed that there would be no charge for this service. Households were able to have a second or even a third bin if they generated large amounts of green waste. However, a delivery and administration charge of £35 per bin was applicable.
3. In November 2015 Cabinet agreed to insource the previous externalised dry recycling and food waste service. The aim was to 'streamline' the existing collection operation by using the grey, brown and green wheeled bins as the main source of collection systems for the majority of households in Sefton. Small variations continue to exist in terraced properties that use plastic sacks for waste collections and hessian sacks for recycling collections. In addition, the frequency of food waste collections was amended from weekly to fortnightly, but compostable liners were provided free of charge for all residents and households utilising this service.
4. The insourcing of the contract for dry recycling involved a TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)) process, and approximately 50 staff transferred to the in-house operation. As a result of this decision the Council would undertake to deliver all dry recyclable material to the Merseyside Waste & Recycling Authority (MRWA) Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) at Gilmoor, Liverpool, and be a fully-fledged comingled Council in line with neighbouring Liverpool City Region Councils.

Current Position

5. It is now just over one year since the dry recycling service was brought in-house, and a number of interesting outcomes have become apparent since the service was changed to fully comingled operation on 1st August 2016.
6. The anticipated extra tonnages of recycled materials have not materialised and recycling performance across the Council has actually remained static at some 39%. However, evidence from MRWA shows that all other Liverpool City Region Councils have actually achieved lower recycling rates in 2016. Following discussion with a number of parties, it is felt that the EU directive of a compulsory

50% recycling level of every Council by 2020 has likely been affected by the 'Brexit' decision, coupled with the subsequent confirmation by the Government that waste and recycling policy would only be considered and developed following the UK leaving the EU in 2019.

7. The tonnage of collected food waste has reduced from approximately 2,700 tonnes per annum to around 1,800 tonnes, despite the availability of free compostable caddy liners and a free additional food waste storage bin if requested. It is felt that more people are choosing to dispose of food waste via the residual waste stream, which somewhat mirrors the lack of increase in dry recycling rates over the last year.
8. The Green (garden) waste service has improved dramatically over the last twelve months. There was an initial drop of some 3,000 tonnes per year when the service was changed to a three weekly cycle from a fortnightly cycle in April 2014. However, tonnages have now recovered and are now at pre-2014 levels of around 20,000 tonnes per year. The Council's Green (garden) waste service is still free at source. Knowsley Council have now followed Sefton by changing to a three weekly cycle and offering a free service. Liverpool Council have also amended the service but are considering a charge. All other Liverpool City Region Councils charge for green waste collection varying from £25 per household/bin to £42 per annum.
9. The total of household waste collected in 2016/2017 increased over the previous twelve months by approximately 1,200 tonnes. In 2016/17 the service collected just over 108,000 tonnes in total, which was approximately 1% above the total tonnage generated in 2015/ 2016.

Current Issues Within Refuse, Recycling and Green Waste Services

10. In 2014/15 one of the saving proposals for Cleansing Services saw the removal of the provision of clear plastic sacks to residents/households in the 'sack collection areas'. A 'clear-all' policy was introduced whereby all refuse presented in these areas was removed and residents provided their own sacks/plastic bags to present the refuse. It was envisaged that as well as providing a financial saving, this policy would assist with the growing problem of fly tipping in these areas, and also rubbish being presented as 'side waste' in containers or bags not suitable for collection.
11. Concern was raised in July 2017 with the 'clear-all' policy in operation in sack collection areas, comprising of some 15,500 properties across the Borough. Following the removal of the provision of clear sacks to residents, rubbish has been presented in black sacks/bin bags, boxes, and in a variety of manners. In addition, an unintended consequence has been to make fly tipping easier for those wishing to do so. On collection days in sack areas, vans have been seen to be dumping waste on pavements to await removal by the collection team. In some cases local businesses have also disposed of waste via this method as opposed to using a licenced waste carrier as per the current legislation.
12. All of the above has led to a poor or worsening visual amenity in certain areas, with the perception of residents and businesses being that large piles of unsightly rubbish are left prior to collection, and in some cases are added to with materials that cannot be collected, such as furniture, flat contents, etc. As a result, refuse is sometimes left for investigation by the Enforcement Team, and thereby creates a messy environment even immediately following scheduled collections.

13. Therefore, in order to address the concerns of residents, elected members and all stakeholders, Cleansing Services is currently reviewing operations across all sack collection areas with a view to amending collection processes to reduce, minimise or do away with rubbish being left directly on pavements for collection. A comprehensive report is to be produced and presented for further discussion/decision within the next three months.
14. Green (garden) waste collections have proved to be extremely popular and currently some 99% of all collections are undertaken on a Mondays, including public holidays. To accommodate this dedicated Monday recycling operation, collections are now undertaken between the hours of 06.30am and 8.30pm in the night. This later operation has proved very popular with residents who are notified of the later collection, this operation may also be extended in future as the additional 1% of properties currently collected on a Tuesday are brought into line with Monday collections.
15. The growth in recent years in new-build and converted housing stock has also placed considerable strain upon existing resources within Cleansing Services. Since 2014 some 2,700 additional properties have required refuse collection services. By 2019 it is expected that some 4,000 additional houses/properties will have been built/developed within the Borough.
16. These increases in housing stock amounts to effectively a new collection vehicle and crew being required as each collection crew collects on average 4,000 properties per week. The cost of a vehicle and crew amounts to approximately £180k per year. The flexibility built into the last major review of operations in 2014 has been completely absorbed by existing new build, especially in Formby, Netherton and Southport, where the current collection arrangements are under particular pressure.

Additional Information relating to Refuse Collection / Recycling / Green (Garden) Waste Collections and Food Waste Collections

17. There are currently 126,000 properties that receive a waste collection service across the Borough every week, either a grey wheeled bin, a brown wheeled bin, or a sack collection. In addition, each Monday another 30,000 properties receive a green waste collection. Therefore, in effect, there are 156,000 collections each week. This equates to over 8 million collections over the course of the year.
18. The Council receives approximately 10,000 contacts per year relating to missed or delayed collections. These figures also include collection issues during the Christmas & New Year period which are invariably subject to disruption or change of some sort.
19. However, even with this apparent large number of contacts relating to missed or delayed collections, the refuse collection service still undertakes some 99.98% of all collections as per the schedules on the Council website. This is a particularly impressive operation when viewed across the industry as a whole, and based on current APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence) data Sefton has the best performing service across the Merseyside region.

20. A large proportion of contacts relating to missed collections are due to the crews being unable to access particular roads as a result of poor or illegal parking in residential areas. Further attempts are made to access later in the day and in some cases another crew return to re-collect the following day in a smaller vehicle. This is particularly the case when there are ongoing utility works or the like in a particular area or road which is likely to restrict access for a number of days.
21. Surveys have been undertaken in certain 'problem' areas and additional measures have been taken in conjunction with the Council's Highways Section in order to assist with the collection process. This may include extending existing yellow lines around the corners of smaller or narrower roads, as well as reviewing and amending parking restrictions during the day. This process also benefits other agencies which require access in such areas, such as the emergency services. Letters are also delivered to specific households or areas when repeated problems occur, requesting understanding and support from local residents in ensuring that access is maintained on collection days for the good of the whole area.
22. The Cleansing Services refuse collection operation employs 108 frontline staff across a variety of collection rounds and collection systems. This equates to each member of staff collecting weekly from 1,444 properties. Each crew has a designated driver and two operatives, and as such, each crew is responsible for collecting from an average of 4,332 properties per week. Staff commence work at 6:30am and finish at 4:00pm (operatives) and 5:00pm (drivers).
23. When account is taken of the necessary rest and meal breaks for the collection staff during the day, coupled with the 'down time' when the vehicle is travelling to and from the tip, over 4,500 collections are taking place every working hour across the Borough. This equates to 75 collections every minute, or 5 collections every 4 seconds!
24. Sefton generates the highest tonnage of green (garden) waste arisings sent for composting across the region. In 2016 (the last available figures) some 20,000 tonnes of garden waste was sent for composting into soil fertilizers. This compares with Liverpool who generate on a fortnightly collection operation (and whilst still free) some 12,000 tonnes and Wirral (who charge in excess of £40 per annum) some 11,000 tonnes.

Summary

25. Any reduction in budget across the service has effectively been found via efficiencies alone as the Council is still required to collect refuse or empty bins from every property across the Borough. Zonal arrangements, extended working week, vehicle and route optimisation and varying shift patterns are just some of the strategies utilised in order to maintain the required level of service against the backdrop of reducing budgetary provision.
26. Locality Services Provision will continue to seek ways to reduce expenditure and increase efficiencies across the Refuse Collection Service, and as such, the Service welcomes observations, comments and suggestions from any interested party or parties.