

Report to:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Regeneration & Skills	Date of Meeting:	18 th September 2018
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 over the last financial year 2017/2018.

Recommendation(s):

That the Committee note the report and its contents and agrees to a future report in 2019 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 (FD 5279/18) and Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD 4503/18) have been consulted and have no comments on the report.

(B) External Consultations

Not Applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee / Council meeting.

Contact Officer:	Gary Berwick
Telephone Number:	0151 288 6143
Email Address:	gary.berwick@sefton.gov.uk

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:
 - 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 Gillmoss, Liverpool, and be a fully-fledged comingled Council in line with neighbouring Liverpool City Region Councils.

Current Position

5. It is now just over two years 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 reduced since last year's update by 2% (from 40% in 2016/ 2017) and the figure now stands at 38%. However, evidence from MRWA shows that all other Liverpool City Region Councils have actually achieved lower recycling rates in 2017, and Sefton still leads the way, although with a much lower recycling rate than was expected. Following discussion with a number of parties such as WRAP (Waste, Resources Action Group) the MRWA (Merseyside Recycling & Waste Authority) and RWM (Waste Resources Management), it is felt that the decision to leave the EU and the existing directive of

a compulsory 50% recycling level of every Council by 2020 has been affected by the 'Brexit' decision, effectively Councils squeezed by reduced budgets and 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, recycling has slipped in the agenda of priorities.

7. MRWA, however, and the City Region Councils are about to organise a City Region wide strategy called " Recycle Right", targeting areas of poor recycling rates and contamination, in an effort re-engage the residents of the City Region into recycling and re-use.
8. The tonnage of collected food waste has reduced from approximately 2,700 tonnes in 2016 per annum to around 1,250 tonnes in the last financial year, 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. The recent hot weather of this summer will also have impacted on collection rates again despite the free issue of caddy liners / sacks.
9. The Green (garden) waste service has continued its upward growth since the last report with the collected tonnage at 19,900 tonnes in the financial year 2017 / 2018. 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. The Council's Green (garden) waste service is still free at source and this 'free' service is a major driver in increasing tonnages and yields.
10. Just three City Region Councils now provide a 'free' garden (green bin) waste service, namely Knowsley, Liverpool and Sefton, with the others, Wirral and St Helens & Halton, charging for green waste collection varying from £32 per household/bin (St Helens) to £42 per annum (Wirral). St Helens being the latest Council to charge for garden waste collections.
11. The total of household waste collected in 2017/2018 increased over the previous twelve months by approximately 900 tonnes. In 2017/18 the service collected just over 65,000 tonnes of household waste which was not sent for recycling or re-use or composting in total, the main explanation for this increase is the growth in house building which in the last year amount to over 1,000 additional properties to be serviced / collected by the refuse crews.

Current Issues within Refuse, Recycling and Green Waste Services

12. 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.
13. All of the above has led to a poor or worsening visual amenity in certain areas, with the perception of residents, Members 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.

14. As a result of feedback received a 'new' agreed procedure is to be trialled in the terraced properties from September, whereby crews will sticker all excessive presentation of bags for inspection by officers within Cleansing and followed up by colleagues in enforcement, with a view to fixed penalties notices and in extreme cases resorting to the courts for action against continuous offenders
15. Green (garden) waste collections have proved to be extremely popular and currently some 99.9% 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 is continually reviewed with a view to the additional 0.1% of properties currently collected on a Tuesday being brought into line with Monday collections.
16. The growth in recent years in new-build (see paragraph 11 above) and converted housing stock has also placed considerable strain upon existing resources within Cleansing Services. Since 2014 some 3,500 additional properties have required refuse collection services. By 2021 it is expected that some 7,000 additional houses/properties will have been built/developed within the Borough. The refuse collection service, and to a lesser extent the street cleansing service, is having at present to 'absorb' these large increases in properties built or planned to be built, the latest total property count in the Borough is 127,050 some 3,000 above the 2014 level for which no additional funding has been received by Cleansing, be it for refuse / recycling / green waste collections or street cleansing.
17. 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 £200k 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, Maghull (some 1,600 are planed here alone) and Southport, where the current collection arrangements are under particular pressure, resulting in some collections being delayed until the subsequent day.

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

18. There are currently some 127,000 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 33,000 properties receive a 'free' green waste collection. Therefore, in effect, there are 160,000 collections each week. This equates to over 8 million collections over the course of the year.
19. The Council receives approximately 11,000 contacts per year relating to refuse collections. These figures also include collection issues during the Christmas & New Year period which are invariably subject to disruption or change of some sort. The number of 'on time' refuse / recycling / green waste collections is 99.98% of all scheduled collections, and Sefton has one of the highest % of scheduled

collections, but this figure is under pressure from the 'new builds' outlined above in paragraphs 11, 16 17 & 18 above.

20. However, even with this apparent large number of contacts relating to potential 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.
21. Sefton also is also best placed (as stated by APSE) amongst its City Region neighbours in terms of collection cost per household and numbers of households collected by each refuse crew. The APSE cost of collection within Metropolitan Councils is £55.94 whilst the Sefton cost is less than £42.00. In addition, the Metropolitan Council average for properties collected per crew is 1,097 per day per crew, whilst in Sefton is its 1,168 per day per crew.
22. The 0.02% of the complaints regarding potentially missed refuse and recycling collections is mainly due to the on-going issue of access into narrow or roads with parked cars. The issue of parked cars and cars which transgress the 'normal' parking arrangements (e.g. parking on the crown of roads denying refuse vehicles the turning circle to gain access into roads) is becoming a major issue of concern for the cleansing operation. The operation has only two smaller vehicles whose primary function is to deal with these specific types of issues. However, the two vehicles are at maximum capacity and are also not as cost effective in terms of cost per household / per crew.
23. Working alongside a number of elected members, 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. These have included 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.
24. The Cleansing Services refuse collection operation employs some 100 frontline staff across a variety of collection rounds and collection systems. Each crew has a designated driver and two operatives, and as such, each crew is responsible for collecting from an average of 4,000 properties per week. Staff commence work at 6:30am and finish at 4:00pm (operatives) and 5:00pm (drivers).
25. 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 4,000 collections are taking place every working hour across the Borough. This equates to some 70 collections every minute or 5 collections every 4 seconds!
26. Sefton generates the highest tonnage of green (garden) waste arisings sent for composting across the region. In 2017 just short of 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 £42 per annum) some 13,000 tonnes.

Summary

27. In the years 2010 to date 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. As such, no services have ceased, but the service still operates with a much-reduced budget. This arrangement obviously cannot continue ad infinitum, especially when compounded by the increasing pace of new-build houses, the development of properties across the Borough, the ever worsening access issues into some roads caused by parked cars, and the general demands upon the refuse and recycling operation.
28. A range of new initiatives have been developed in recent years to mitigate the budgetary reductions. These include zonal arrangements, extended working week, reducing green collections to three weekly, vehicle and route optimisation and varying shift patterns. However, the cleansing refuse and recycling operation is at a critical stage in maintaining the required level of service against the backdrop of real time reducing budgetary provision. Work is currently being undertaken to assess the likely future impact of expanding service requirements, and further details, including financial and operational requirements going forward, will be presented for further debate in due course.
29. Locality Services (Cleansing) will continue to seek ways to maximise its existing expenditure and will continue, wherever possible, to increase efficiencies across the Refuse Collection Service. As such, the service always welcomes any observations, comments and suggestions from any interested party, parties or stakeholders.