

Report to: **Executive**

Date: **7 March 2024**

Title: **Waste and Recycling Services Update**

Portfolio Area: **Waste, Recycling and Community Composting - Cllr Jacqi Hodgson**

Wards Affected: **All**

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**That the Executive RECOGNISES:**

- 1. The significantly improved performance of the waste and recycling service over the last 17 months;**
- 2. The detailed planning by officers that resulted in the successful implementation of the kerbside recycling service to the whole of the District;**
- 3. The opportunity that residents now have to contribute to increase recycling and reduce residual waste; and**
- 4. The work to be undertaken to drive forward continuous improvement of the service.**

**1. Executive summary**

- 1.1. This report updates the Executive on the progress and performance of the waste and recycling service since the roll out of the Devon Aligned service (kerbside recycling service known as DAS) in November 2023.
- 1.2. It sets out the work undertaken to implement the improved recycling service and provides a summary of next steps to maintain collection performance as well as improve all other aspects of the service such as street cleansing.
- 1.3. The new recycling service is fully compliant with the requirements as set out in the Environment Act meaning the Council is now offering:

- A weekly food waste collection to all residents
  - Weekly recycling of paper, card, plastics, steel/aluminium cans and glass.
- 1.4. This improvement in the service will enable the Council to work with residents to reduce the overall residual waste arisings, increase recycling rates and contribute to the Councils climate change and biodiversity targets.
  - 1.5. The Council's current recycling rate is 44.5% with a Devon wide target of 65% by 2035.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. The Council outsourced its waste and cleansing services in 2019 and entered into a contract with the specification to include the roll out the Devon Aligned Service (known as DAS) to all of its residents.
- 2.2. In 2021 the Council's waste contractor initiated a phased roll out of the service, but this was subsequently suspended with the contractor citing operational challenges around rurality of the district and access issues to properties. As a result of fundamental issues with the design, implementation and management of the day to day operation, residents experienced unprecedented numbers of missed collections resulting in significant numbers of customer complaints.
- 2.3. On the 12 July 2022, a report to the Executive set out recommendations to bring the service back in house and terminate the contact by mutual agreement with effect from 03 October 2022.
- 2.4. The Council brought its waste and recycling service back in house on 1 October 2022 and inherited a three-tier recycling service which was not equitable for its residents as only approximately half of the district were able to recycle food waste with other residents restricted on the items they could recycle.
- 2.5. After the successful transfer of services and stabilisation of collection performance, members of the Council's cross-party waste working group convened on 30 March 2023 and considered a number of proposals to improve the service and recommended that the Council should roll out the kerbside collection service DAS which has been a fundamental part of the Council's overarching strategy since 2019. Members also reached a unanimous decision on recommendations to the Executive as follows:
  - i. That the service provided to residents did not deteriorate further.

- ii. That any service change resulted in minimum disruption to residents.
  - iii. That the existing workforce was reassured over the change in management and control.
  - iv. That it enabled the Council to deliver a consistent collection service following transfer as soon as possible.
  - v. That it improved the service and increased recycling rates in the South Hams.
- 2.6. On 13 April 2023 the Executive recommended to Council (minute E97.22 refers) and a subsequent Special Council then considered and approved a report on 13 April 2023 (minute 84.22 refers). The report outlined the risks and considerations around rolling out a new service in the autumn of 2023, particularly around the risks so close to Christmas. The agreement was made to roll out DAS as soon as possible pending vehicle delivery and successful completion on infrastructure works.

### **3. Roll out of the Devon Aligned Service**

#### **Routes and Vehicles**

- 3.1. Since taking the service back on 3 October 2022, officers supported by industry technical advisors have been reviewing all service data to include vehicle capacity, tonnages and depot infrastructure to roll out the Devon Aligned Service to the remainder of the district.
- 3.2. Officers instructed a detailed route analysis carried out by Integrated Skills, who are a route optimisation company, in advance of service commencement. Further detailed validation work was then carried out alongside waste operatives and drivers who have robust geographical knowledge of the South Hams.
- 3.3. It was clear from the outset that to deliver the DAS service for all of our residents, there would be a requirement to re-design all collection routes including refuse. This would be essential to secure the maximum efficiencies and would match with recycling collection days thus making the service easier to navigate for residents.
- 3.4. Garden waste would remain unaffected as the subscription service commenced in March 2023 and was a standalone service and not affected by the other core statutory services.
- 3.5. Upon analysis of the round data, it was clear that the fleet profile needed to be reconfigured to accommodate the rurality of the South Hams. This is due to the way the recycling collection vehicles are loaded and the capacity around the weight on the wheels before needing to tip. Smaller kerbside collection vehicles would be vital to the new service success and would ensure access to the narrowest of lanes safely. Subsequently a robust

vehicle procurement was carried out to secure the additional vehicles.

- 3.6. A large part of the successful roll out of the service has been due to waste operatives being able to drive the new routes ahead of the service change and being able to feedback any challenges around access issues or finding properties so they could be rectified ahead of the service going live.
- 3.7. Undertaking a wholesale service change, with new vehicles and new working practices for a large percentage of the workforce meant that new ways of working were required to be implemented. This included;
  - i. Reviewing and amending all risk assessments
  - ii. Creating new safe systems of work for all activities
  - iii. Driving of all the rounds ahead of service implementation and highlighting any risks with the relevant control measures in place
  - iv. Rolling out new training plans to all drivers and operatives

### **Infrastructure at the transfer stations**

- 3.8. Detailed analysis of the tonnage data and the new fleet profile, indicated that the Councils Ivybridge depot alone would not be sufficient to tip all the recycle material for bulking ahead of onward transfer as was originally in the contractor's proposals. The site simply could not support the additional vehicle movements safely and the additional volume of materials it would be required to store.
- 3.9. Therefore, significant infrastructure works were required to be undertaken at the Council's other transfer station located at Torr Quarry to utilise this space and capacity to tip recycle ahead of any service change.
- 3.10. The use of the Torr Quarry site for storing and bulking recycle posed some challenges due to recent guidance announced by the environment agency around the use of exemptions on a permitted site.
- 3.11. Officers instructed Tetra tech, a waste consultancy company to draft a proposal to submit to the environment agency detailing how the site would work towards increased compliance and mitigate against and risk of fire and subsequent pollution should one occur.
- 3.12. Officers met with colleagues from the Environment Agency including the environmental area Manager who agreed with the proposals and provided assurances it met with the requirements

of the site and showed significant improvements in fire compliance.

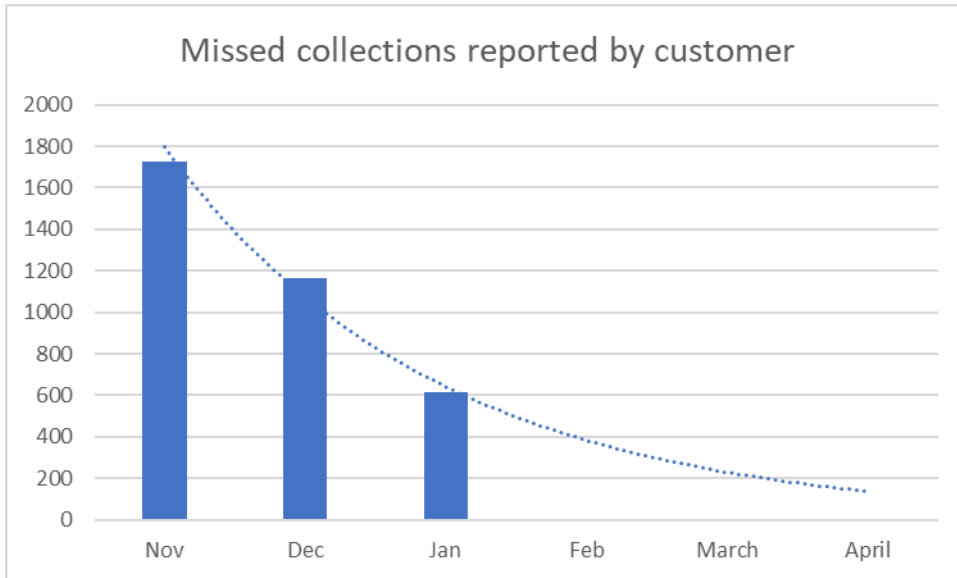
- 3.13. Works were procured and contractors worked through the summer months to complete the works ahead of service go live in November 2023.
- 3.14. With significant lead times for procurement, manufacture and delivery of vehicle timescales and contracted works to be completed at Torr Quarry, the earliest operational window for the service to be rolled out was Nov 2023. If this timescale was not met, then the operational risks would be too great to continue with the service change as Christmas is a significantly busy time for waste and recycling collections due to increased volumes of materials presented. This would mean the next operationally viable launch window would be March 2024 carrying additional financial implications.

### **Communications and engagement**

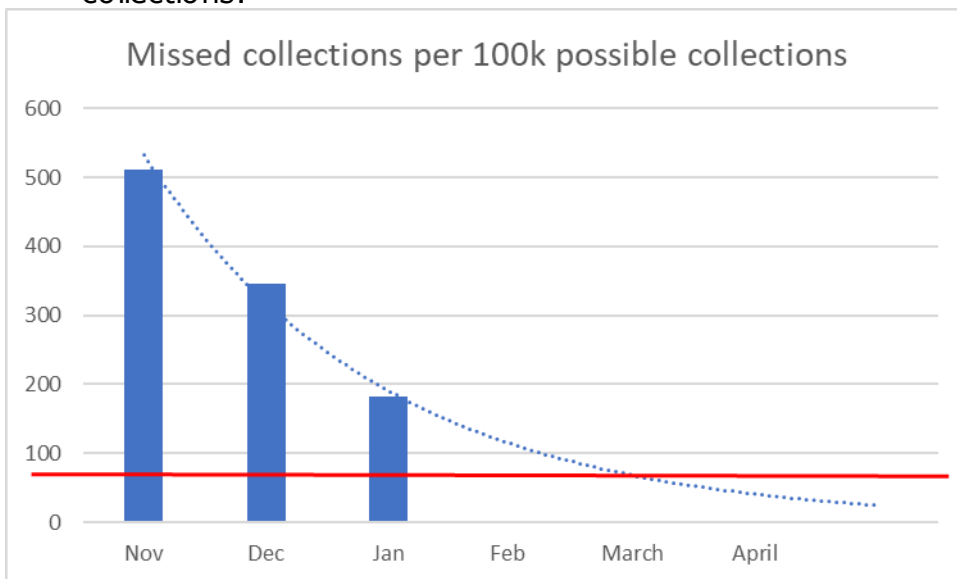
- 3.15. As the Council inherited a three-tier recycling service from its contractor, some residents were never provided with the recycling containers required to fully utilise the DAS service including food waste containers.
- 3.16. A detailed plan was devised to deliver the full set of recycling boxes to 8,000 residents in the summer of 2023. Resources were scaled up and the work co-ordinated by officers with a plan to deliver all containers in 4-6 weeks. Due to the meticulous planning, the team were able to complete this in just two weeks. A social media campaign was launched to notify residents ahead of the container deliveries with an accompanying leaflet to advise residents when to start using the boxes.
- 3.17. Communication and engagement with residents and members have been key in the successful delivery of the service. The robust comms campaign consisted of the following:
- i. Social media campaigns
  - ii. A detailed press release
  - iii. Information on container roll out and service change in the local media
  - iv. Member toolkit with up-to-date information around affected areas for day changes
  - v. Towns and Parish e bulletins
  - vi. Resident e bulletins
  - vii. Over 17 Roadshows across the District with local ward members in attendance

#### **4. Service performance**

- 4.1. The Council's new kerbside collection recycling service began on the 20 November 2023 with the majority of the district affected in some way. Residents either had a change in their collection day or how they presented their recycling.
- 4.2. Since day one of operating the new service, all collection rounds have been deployed with a lower than anticipated missed collection rate.
- 4.3. The Council sought technical advice on the level of disruption expected with such a significant service change and ways in which it could prepare and mitigate to improve.
- 4.4. Officers were advised to expect to see a range of missed collections between 2,000 & 3,000 per month for a period of 6–8 months as outlined below with a further 3 months of stabilisation.
- 4.5. Robust management of the rounds coupled with regular debriefs with crews at the end of the day has meant collection issues have been identified swiftly and resolved before the next collection days in most cases. In parallel, a further recruitment drive has meant that performance has seen a significant improvement much faster than anticipated due to retention and stabilisation of the workforce.
- 4.6. Furthermore, detailed analysis of the round data on the Council's collection 'in cab' system has meant that anticipated issues particularly around Christmas collections were addressed ahead of time.
- 4.7. As a result of the actions and active management of the operation, the actual drop in collection performance has been significantly lower than expected as shown in the table below.



4.8. The table below outlines the total number of possible missed collections per 100k. The Councils indicator around performance is to ensure no more than 80 missed bins per 100k possible collections.



4.9. It is anticipated that if this trend can be maintained, we will return to the national industry standard KPI of 80 missed bins per 100,000 collections by April 2024.

4.10. In addition to rolling out the new collection service and the launch of the garden waste service in March 2023, the team has continued to deliver wider services such as toilet cleaning, litter bin emptying, clinical collections, street cleansing and bulky collections.

4.11. Officers carried out a huge amount of planning and ensured robust contingency plans were in place ahead of the Christmas period and were able to minimise disruption for its residents.

## 5. Proposal and Next Steps

- 5.1. Officers will now undertake further detailed analysis of the route design in the coming months to continue to validate assumptions around the round data to ensure it is the most efficient and cost-effective service for its residents.
- 5.2. As the Garden waste service routes have not been reviewed since implementation in March 2023, it is proposed officers instruct Integrated Skills – a route optimisation company, to review them to ensure they are the most efficient they can be thus delivering the best subscription service to its residents.
- 5.3. Officers will continue to drive service improvements and work with crews where there are missed collection issues to ensure that the key performance indicator of no more than 80 missed bins per 100k possible collections is achieved by April 2024. This will stabilise the service and bring performance back to where it was prior to the new service roll out.
- 5.4. The service will now undertake a review of its wider services such as street cleansing and prepare for the busy summer period ahead. Recruitment of seasonal staff will now begin, as well as a 'reset' of all community services which will mean the Council is prepared to support its residents and visitors ahead of the high footfall anticipated across our Towns and coastal areas.

## 6. Implications

| Implications   | Relevant to proposals Y/N | Details and proposed measures to address   |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| Legal/Governance   | Y                         | Following the unsuccessful partial roll out of the kerbside recycling service in 2021 by its contractor and the significant performance issues, it was imperative the Council was able to roll out the service fully and perform well otherwise the Council would be in breach of fulfilling its statutory obligation to deliver waste services. |
| Financial implications to include reference to value for money | N                         | The revenue position of the service is set out within the Revenue Budget monitoring report for 2023-24 which is also an item on this Executive agenda.   |



|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
|   |   | The capital position of the service is set out within the Capital Programme monitoring report for 2023-24 which is also an item on this Executive agenda.  |
| Risk  | Y | Following the unsuccessful partial roll out of the kerbside recycling service in 2021 by its contractor, it was imperative the Council was able to roll out the service fully and perform well. If the Council failed to do this there would be significant and detrimental reputational damage.           |
| Supporting Corporate Strategy                       | Y | The Council has a statutory obligation to deliver waste and recycling services. The Council in delivering the new and improved kerbside recycling service will contribute towards increasing recycling rates and reducing its overall environmental impact by diverting more resources away from disposal. |
| Consultation & Engagement Strategy                  | N | There is no consultation or engagement required as part of this report   |
| Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact       | Y | The Council can work towards increasing its recycling rates and contribute to reducing its overall waste arisings  |
| <b>Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications</b> |   |  |
| Equality and Diversity                              | N | None   |
| Safeguarding  | N | None   |
| Community Safety, Crime and Disorder                | N | None   |
| Health, Safety and Wellbeing                        | N | None   |
| Other implications                                  | N | None   |

**Supporting Information**

**Appendices:**

None

**Background Papers:**

None