

# REPORT TO ECONOMY, SKILLS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY BOARD

**07 March 2019**

<b>Subject:</b>	Food Waste Recycling Update
<b>Cabinet Portfolio:</b>	Councillor David Hosell - Cabinet Member for Highways and Environment
<b>Director:</b>	Alan Caddick, Housing and Communities
<b>Contribution towards Vision 2030:</b>	 
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## **DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board:**

1. Consider and comment on the update given in the attached report.

## **1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To present an update of the food waste recycling process and performance.
- 1.2 To discuss the Government '[Our Waste, Our Resources, a Strategy for England](#)' paper and the implications for Sandwell.

## **2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS**

- 2.1 Further to the discussion at the Board on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2018 which deliberated the Government thinking about separate food waste collections, statistics and poor collection rates of food waste in Sandwell.

- 2.2 Members agreed that a report relating to the future of organic food waste and the use of the anaerobic waste site should be brought to a future meeting.

### 3 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 Currently the service is provided as an add on to the recycling blue lidded collection service in that the same vehicle carries out both domestic dry recycling and food waste collections. A vehicle with a separate container 'pod' and a main compaction body is used to carry out these collections. A crew of four carry out these collections i.e. driver, two recycling loaders and one food waste loader. This is the most expensive domestic collection service to operate as opposed to other recycling or general waste collection services in that the vehicles are more expensive to procure, maintain and operate and the crew resource is greater compared to other collection services.

- 3.2 Domestic collection profile in Sandwell:

- Grey domestic waste bin (180 litre) collected **weekly**
- Blue lidded recycling bin (240 litre) collected **weekly**
- Food caddy (23 litre) collected **weekly**
- Green garden waste bin (240 litre) collected **fortnightly (9 months per year)**

### 4 Participation Levels.

- 4.1 The current householder participation levels for this service are around 18% boroughwide. The annual collected tonnages for 18/19 to date are estimated to be 3876 tonnes. These tonnages have reduced year on year since the introduction of the service in 2012, see table below:

Year	Tonnage	KG per household pa
2012/13	6362	50 kghh
2013/14	5251	41 kghh
2014/15	5199	40 kghh
2015/16	4864	38 kghh
2016/17	4623	35 kghh
2017/18	4225	32 kghh
2018/19 (estimate)	3876	24 kghh (estimate)

The above table indicates that collected domestic food waste tonnages have declined by 39% since its introduction in 2012.

- 4.2 The cost of the service and treatment - collecting food waste combined with dry recycling is more expensive than the general waste service due

to the additional resources. The recent estimate of removal of the food waste service equates to around £640,000 per annum. The treatment/disposal via anaerobic digestion is currently marginally lower than incineration at our main energy recovery site i.e. 1.7% lower per tonne for AD compared to incineration; which both produce energy recovery. However, the lower cost per tonne could shift to general waste being cheaper per tonne in future years due to annual indexation.

- 4.3 There is national anecdotal evidence that indicates that when people become more aware of the food waste they are producing such as participating in municipal food waste collection services, they change behaviour and take measures to reduce this waste thus reducing tonnages placed out for collection. In addition, there can tend to a natural 'tail off' of participation or initial usage especially when a resident has a weekly general waste collection.
- 4.4 In general, resident satisfaction levels have been good for the service, for those that participate. Levels are currently around 90%.

## **5 Anaerobic Digestion – treatment**

- 5.1 The food waste is collected on the vehicle in a separate 'pod.' This pod is emptied into a larger container at the Eagle Transfer Station at Danks Lane, Tipton. The waste is then delivered in the enclosed container to the treatment site at Biffa's anaerobic digestion (AD) treatment plant at Cannock in Staffordshire. This site is one of the largest AD plants in the country. The food waste goes through a series of enclosed 'speeded up' composting processes and produces gas and a compost like material. The gas is sold to the grid and the compost like material is used on site to remediate the land.

## **6 Targeted Reward Scheme**

- 6.1 The Council has made efforts to stem this decline in tonnages/participate. In 2014 the Council carried out a boroughwide comprehensive food waste participation reward scheme called 'BINgo' specifically targeted to increase collected food tonnages and capture new participants. This scheme was grant funded from Government and the scheme cost was in excess of £100,000.
- 6.2 The BINgo food waste reward scheme was run from September to November 2014. The scheme aimed to increase participation in food recycling and encouraging new users by rewarding those residents that continually participated in food waste recycling collection services over a specified period. The scheme operated by sticking numbers on bins by way of distributing to resident's bingo cards and the crews putting bingo

numbers on bins put out each week. Cash and voucher prizes were given for those participants first to present a completed bingo card.

- 6.3 In addition, householders across the borough were issued with free food caddy liners.
- 6.4 At the end of the scheme operational period the results were analysed and whilst a slight increase in tonnages was found in some areas the resource and management needed to operate this scheme were found to be prohibitive and not value for money in comparison to the results. As such the scheme was not continued.

## **7 Communications**

- 7.1 In recent weeks the service has looked at devising another campaign to increase declining participation levels and increase collected tonnages. The proposed campaign focuses on communications, free food caddy liners and rewards to local schools should participation increase. However, as can be seen under 'BINgo' above, these types of schemes are expensive and need to be monitored and assessed to ensure they represent value for money and deliver the required behaviour change.
- 7.2 Phase one of proposed scheme - the cost of this new revised scheme for 2 x collections on one day i.e. 3000 households total £21,000 (£7 per property.) As Phase 1 represents only 1.6% of actual daily rounds it is recommended that should phase 1 be successful it is rolled out to a further 8+ rounds at least to be able to measure accurately the effect on tonnages and any behaviour change; totally approximately £105,000.
- 7.3 The service does not have sufficient communication related budget to cover this campaign and would be seeking internal or grant funding.
- 7.4 With this in mind, the Council approached the industry experts the Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP) that assists local authorities with these types of campaigns and has collected data from a large number of local authorities on a huge range of recycling activity over many years.
- 7.5 WRAP was offering low cost or free assistance to local authorities with a food waste intervention project that they have compiled following their work with a number of local authorities over the last two years to increase food waste recycling tonnages and participation.
- 7.6 However, WRAP have now considered our application and responded as follows:

*“We are currently reevaluating the criteria upon which we are able to offer support to local authorities in 2019/2020 based on updated performance and scheme data. However due to Sandwell having a weekly collection of residual waste it is unlikely that we would be able to work with you on food waste interventions as our recent projects have shown that where food waste collections operate alongside weekly residual there is limited scope for improving yields.”*

## **8 Legislation/Policy**

- 8.1 As a Waste Collection Authority (WCA), under the Environmental Protection Act 1992, the Authority is required to provide a collection of household waste in its area. More recent legislation requires the Authority to provide a two-material recycling collection to householders if economic and practicable to do so. There is currently no specific requirement for WCAs to provide a food waste collection service.

*Note: this is just for guidance and not a legal interpretation of the legislation.*

- 8.2 However, the EU amending Directive 2008/98/EC (Circular Economy) requires member states to ensure that **bio-waste** (including food waste) is either collected separately or recycled at source such as home composting. This obligation is not required to be in place until **31<sup>st</sup> December 2023** and it will require transposition into UK regulation which is likely to include transition or derogation arrangements which could limit the effect of this Directive on current municipal collection arrangements.
- 8.3 Government has recently produced a new **resources and waste strategy** in December 2018 that includes outlined requirements for consistency of collections by local authorities and mandatory free domestic organic collections for householders in line with the EU directive above.
- 8.4 The Government is currently consulting on these proposals and at this time it is not known what the outcome and final regulations will look like regarding food waste collections.
- 8.5 It should be noted that despite this EU legislation and strategy a number of local authorities are making the decision to discontinue food waste collection services on primarily cost grounds. This includes most recently Wolverhampton City Council and Barnet Council.

## **9 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)**

9.1 The draft report has been circulated for comment.

## **10 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

10.1 This is an update report.

## **11 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no strategic resource implications arising directly from this report.

## **12 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE**

12.1 There are no legal and governance implications arising directly from this report.

## **13 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

13.1 There are no equality impact assessment implications arising directly from this report.

## **14 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

14.1 There are no data protection impact assessment implications arising directly from this report.

## **15 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

15.1 There are no crime and disorder and risk assessment implications arising directly from this report.

## **16 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS**

16.1 Scrutiny reports annually to Council.

## **17 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)**

17.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications arising directly from this report. Scrutiny reports and reviews consider added value when scoping topics and items to be considered.

## **18 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND**

18.1 There is no impact on any Council managed property or land arising directly from this report.

## **19 CONCLUSIONS**

19.1 The Scrutiny Management Board has been provided with the reports identified in (1) above for consideration and comment.

## **20 APPENDICES:**

None.