

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Waste and Recycling Collection (Separate Collection of Food Waste)</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 28 September 2017
<b>WARD</b>	None specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Josie Wragg, Interim Director of Environment
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Simon Weeks, Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Improving the Council's recycling performance not only helps the environment, by reusing valuable resources, it also reduces costs as the average cost of recycling per tonne is approx. £100 per tonne less than landfill/energy from waste.

It is estimated that we will capture approx. 5,000 tonnes of food waste that will be treated anaerobically and this will eventually be available for soil conditioning.

It should be noted that almost all of the top twenty Councils for recycling performance separately collect food waste.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive approves the introduction of weekly separate collection of food waste as detailed in the report subject to it being operationally possible and financially viable with the final financial outcomes to be reported to a future meeting of the Executive.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

This report sets out the mutual environmental and financial benefits of separately collecting food waste whilst maximising the efficiency of a weekly collection system.

The collection of food waste is achievable by:

- A. The addition of a food waste pod fitted at the front of each collection vehicle which will allow the same vehicle to collect; mixed dry recycling, residual (blue bag) waste and food waste across the borough. This would maintain a "one pass" collection service as detailed in Appendix 1;
- B. A two compartment vehicle collecting mixed dry recycling and food waste in one vehicle and residual waste (blue bag) in a separate vehicle "two pass" collection service as per Appendix 2 below or;
- C. A two compartment vehicle collecting mixed dry recycling and residual (blue bag) waste in one vehicle and food waste in a separate vehicle "two pass" collection service as per Appendix 3 below.

The collection of blue bag and black box waste would continue under the current policy of 80 bags per annum and black boxes free on request.

## Background

In 2012/13 the Council introduced a waste and recycling service change which for the first time included residual waste containment based on provision of 80 'blue' bags per annum. At the same time the Council moved its kerbside 'black box' recycling from a fortnightly service to a weekly service.

This change was implemented to restrict capacity for residual waste and increase the capacity for kerbside recycling. The results in the first year were significant with a 20% reduction of residual waste in the blue bags and a 30% increase in recycling in the black boxes.

However, since its first year of operation we have seen the amount of collected residual waste gradually increase with kerbside recycling remaining constant. This has resulted in a reduction of overall recycling rate as detailed below:

Year	Recycling rate	Collected residual waste	Collected recycling
2012/13	41.42%	24,922 tonnes	10,685 tonnes
2013/14	39.16%	26,799 tonnes	10,293 tonnes
2014/15	41.46%	28,188 tonnes	10,000 tonnes
2015/16	37.9%	28,332 tonnes	9,459 tonnes
2016/17	38.31%	29,287 tonnes	9,021 tonnes

### Analysis of Issues

There are both environmental and financial benefits to be achieved by increasing the amount of residual waste that is recycled.

Evidence collected by the Waste and Recycling Service shows that residents need to be supported in making substantive changes to their waste disposal routines. This was shown in the early increases in recycling that were achieved through the introduction of the Blue Bags system for household waste.

The Council recently commissioned some market research from residents across the borough to understand their waste collection views and preferences.

The results of this research highlighted that 77% of residents were happy with the current system of kerbside waste collection, but that there were some concerns over animals opening the blue bags when looking for food.

The consultation also showed that whilst there was overwhelming support for the importance of recycling, there were clear divisions amongst residents on waste collection and recycling options such as frequency of collection and wheelie bins.

Our blue bags contain approximately 30% of food waste which equates to approx. 10,000 tonnes. Research indicates that we could capture 50% of this through the introduction of a separate food waste collection, allowing us to divert approx. 5,000 tonnes of food waste from the most expensive disposal costs.

The recycling of an additional 5,000 tonnes of waste would increase our recycling rates by 7%, bringing our overall recycling rate close to 50%. The cost of recycled waste is around £60 per tonne, whereas general waste disposal costs around £170 per tonne.

Furthermore, from 2020, it is likely that Councils not achieving the 50% recycling target will face fines of up to £500k per annum. The introduction of separate food waste collection will be a crucial component of the Council achieving this target and avoiding any fines.

Separate food waste collection could be achieved through the introduction of 23 litre sealed food waste containers, smaller kitchen caddies and a supply of biodegradable bags to maintain a hygienic collection service from each home. These containers are much smaller and less intrusive than wheelie bins.

It should be noted that to ensure the success of this scheme a detailed communications plan should be implemented to ensure as maximum a yield of food waste as possible.

Having taken on board the views of residents and considered a range of options to improve recycling, the recommendation is to introduce a separate weekly food waste collection, whilst retaining the existing containers (black boxes for recycling and blue bags for residual waste). This will allow us to retain the principles of a weekly service but not prevent an incremental change to operational service delivery such as; collecting additional materials like pots, tubs and trays or preventing blown litter and wet paper.

#### The Proposed Service

- Weekly collection of residual waste in 80 x 80 litre blue bags (larger family policy applies)
- Weekly collection of mixed dry recycling in 55 litre boxes (free on demand)
- Weekly collection of food waste in 1 x 23 litre sealed containers (additional containers provided where appropriate, kitchen caddie and biodegradable bags also provided) (see attachment 2)

All the above could be collected under a “one pass” or “two pass” system as indicated above and in Appendices 1-3.

From 2019/20, regardless of the decision on food waste, there is expected cost growth of £127k per annum as a result of increased property numbers in the Borough plus a Contract growth of £400k meaning a total growth of £527k. The introduction of food waste collection could offset the majority of this after the initial capital investment in 2019/20 of approximately £500k for the containers.

#### **Tonnages of Food Waste**

The assumptions in this report on the amount of food waste that will be collected is based around an average of 1.49kgs per property per week which would yield just over 5,000 tonnes here in Wokingham. This is also borne by research from St Albans, Hertfordshire where a slightly higher figure is produced but as they are a fortnightly collection we have taken a cautious approach and opted for a lower figure.

Anecdotally it is thought that food waste yields decline as those using the service realise how much food they are throwing away which does sound rational, in essence this could be construed as a good, as food waste is completely avoided and not simply diverted back into the blue bags, which in turn avoids the total disposal cost of around £170 per tonne. This anecdotal feedback cannot be specifically identified in any

benchmarking and to be safe, all of our research uses tonnage data well beyond the start-up with those collecting food waste all maintaining their food waste yields thereby keeping their recycling rates above 50%.

To further understand any risks, we wanted to contact any other Councils who might have introduced a food waste collection but then withdrawn it. Our research indicates that no Councils have started a **separate** food waste collection and abandoned it. However, we have located Councils who have started a food waste collection within a free garden waste collection scheme and abandoned it so that they can charge for a garden waste collection which you can't do if collected with food waste.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue
Current Financial Year (Year 1)(2019/20	Cost neutral	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Cost neutral	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Cost neutral	Yes	Revenue

### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

**Revenue** - Regardless of the decision on food waste collection, the Council is facing additional costs of £527k per annum from 2019/20 in carrying out its waste service due to growth in property numbers and anticipated growth in Contract costs. It is anticipated that separate food waste collection could save up to £500k per annum compared to continuing the current service. Introducing the separate food waste collection will be crucial to avoiding new fines for non-achievement of the 50% recycling target from 2020 which could amount to £500k per annum on top of service increase detailed above.

**Capital** – This service would require an initial capital investment of in year one of £500k to cover the cost of the food waste containers, kitchen cadies and biodegradable bags.

### Cross-Council Implications

Increasing recycling materials like food will encourage residents to recycle more and further enhance Wokingham reputation as a great place to live.

### List of Background Papers

None

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<b>Date</b> 19 September 2017	<b>Version No.</b> 2

**Appendix 1** One pass vehicle/system as per A above:

- Two compartments at the rear of the vehicle and a pod behind the cab.



**Appendix 2** – Two pass system/vehicles as per B above:

Vehicle for recycling and food waste

Vehicle for blue bags



**Appendix 3 – Two pass system/vehicles as per C above:**

Dedicated food waste vehicle



Two compartment vehicle for recycling and blue bags (as per current vehicles)



**Appendix 4 - Weekly Food Recycling Collection Q&A**

Q 1. Why are you doing this?
<p>A. There are advantages for all residents and the environment of introducing weekly food recycling. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The food recycling bins are solid and lockable meaning birds and animals will not be able to get to them as they can sometimes with the Blue Bags.</li> <li>• By recycling food waste we could save up to £500,000 per year, which will help WBC protect other vital services</li> <li>• Recycling food waste will also help us reach the national target of 50% recycling rate by 2020 by adding approximately 7% to our overall recycling rate which currently stands at 40%. This could save a further £500,000 in fines for not reaching the 50% target</li> <li>• Recycling food waste – and generally reducing all landfill – will help us maintain a weekly collection service despite the financial pressures to change</li> <li>• Reducing landfill is good for the environment</li> </ul>
Q 2. How often will my food waste be collected?
<p>A. It will be collected once a week on the same day as your blue bags and black boxes and possibly in a separate vehicle as detailed in the Summary of this Report.</p>
Q 3. How will the system work?
<p>A. You will be given a 23litre food recycling box with a lockable lid, a smaller food recycling caddy and a supply of biodegradable bags that fit inside the caddy in the same way a black bin bag fits inside a rubbish bin.</p> <p>You will be able to put day-to-day food waste into the bags in the caddy and, when the bags are full, place them in the lockable food recycling box.</p>
Q 4. Will we have to pay for the recycling boxes, caddies or bags?
<p>A. No. Everything you need to recycle your food waste under this scheme will be provided free of charge. The bags that will be provided are biodegradable to go into food recycling waste and so we would ask people do not use other types of bag.</p>
Q 5. Will I get the same number of Blue Bags when food recycling is introduced?
<p>A. Yes you will continue to receive 80 bags per annum.</p> <p>B. Here’s how the scheme works:</p>

- Before the start of the service every household will be given on top of their blue bags and black boxes, food waste recycling equipment along with information on how the scheme works
- The black recycling boxes and the Garden Waste Scheme remain unchanged.
- Extra blue bags for larger properties remain unchanged (an extra 20 Blue Bags per year for a family of five and an extra 40 Blue Bags for a family of six).
- Those eligible for additional bags for clinical waste will continue to do so

**Q 6. What can go in the food recycling?**

A. Pretty much any kitchen food waste. We'd ask people not to add fats or oils but other than that any food waste – peeling, trimmings, leftovers, bones etc can all be recycled. If you home compost at the moment, please carry on doing so.

**Q 7. Will I leave my food recycling caddy and food recycling box out for collection?**

A. No. The caddy is for you to use in your kitchen and compostable / biodegradable bags with food should be put in the 23 litres bin for collection.

**Q 8. Will this mean another collection vehicle has to come round every week?**

A. Possibly. All the food waste recycling, general recycling and general waste will be collected in the same day but not necessarily in the same vehicle or at the same the same time.

**Q 9. Do we have to recycle our food waste – can't we still put it in general waste?**

A. You don't have to recycle food waste: it can be put in general waste and will be collected. But food recycling brings significant advantages to you and the community. These are:

- The food recycling bins are solid and lockable meaning birds and animals will not be able to get to them as they can sometimes with bin bags or Blue Bags.
- By recycling or reducing food waste we could save up to £500,000 per year, which will help WBC protect other vital services
- Reducing food waste will also help us reach the national target for cutting landfill by 2020 which could save a further £500,000 per annum
- Recycling food waste – and generally reducing all landfill – will help us maintain a weekly collection service despite the financial pressures to change

**Q 10. What will happen to the food recycled?**

A. It will be taken to a processing factory (known as an anaerobic digestion plant) where about 80% of it will be turned into fertiliser for crops and the rest used for energy creation.

**Q 11. Is this a first step towards bring a fortnightly collection of general waste?**

A. The Council recently committed to retaining a weekly waste collection so there are no plans to move to fortnightly collection of general waste and that will not be part of the waste any waste & recycling collection contract. .

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