

Agenda Item 55.

TITLE	Food Waste Service Review 2019/20
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee on 25 th November 2020
WARD	None Specific
LEAD MEMBER	Parry Batth, Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries
LEAD OFFICER	Chris Trail, Director of Place & Growth

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To review the 2019/20 performance of the food waste collection service and determine principles for the future so that residents can continue to divert food waste from blue bags which reduces costs and benefits the environment.

The overall benefits to the community include:

- Reinvesting savings into the service by diverting food waste from blue bags through the new food waste collection scheme;
- Litter free and cleaner/greener neighbourhoods and reduction of carbon emissions;
- Increased greener behaviour and considerate approach towards environment and less waste to disposal.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider and note the report on the performance of the new service and progress achieved.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report sets out the performance so far of the food waste collection service which was introduced across the borough in April 2019. It illustrates that the service has improved significantly into 2020.

A presentation on the progress of the service was delivered to the Committee on 16th October 2019 which was found to be good.

BACKGROUND

The Council extended its waste collection contract with Veolia in April 2019, continuing to maintain a weekly collection for general waste and recycling. This extension also included the additional weekly food waste collection service across the Borough. The primary aim of the service was to improve the overall recycling performance of the Council and reduce its dependency on energy from waste / landfill. The set objectives to achieve through the new service include:

- To divert 5,000 tonnes (50%) of food waste from blue bags through the food waste recycling scheme
- To contribute 7% towards recycling and achieve 50% statutory recycling rate by 2020
- To achieve and maintain 1.46kg or more of food waste per property per week
- To improve our ranking in the national recycling league table
- To support the climate emergency agenda

The service was first introduced for single dwellings, covering 64,000 houses. Every household received a 5-litre indoor caddy, a 23-litre outdoor lockable caddy and a roll of 100 liners. Flats were included in the service in December 2019 and each flat was provided with a 5-litre indoor caddy, a roll of 100 liners and a 240-litre outdoor bin which serves up to 10 flats. The initial participation rate was expected to be 50% of the Borough at the time of roll out.

Progress to date

The food waste collection service has been operating for 19 months and has received an overwhelming positive response from residents and associated participation. Since the service was introduced has resulted in increased tonnage and greater engagement of this important activity. By April 2020, the Council achieved the statutory 50% recycling rate. Of this, 6% was due to recycling wood, which together with food waste, raised the overall recycling rate of the Council to 57% in the first two quarters of 2019/20. However, due to the issue of wet paper, our recycling rate fell by more than 4% in 2019/20 and the final recycling rate for the year was recorded as 50.29%.

However, encouragingly, an average of 1.58kg/property/week of food waste was collected, exceeding the target of 1.46kg/property/week that was set as one of our targets. This resulted in diverting 5,154 tonnes of food waste from blue bags, which surpassed the target of 5,000 tonnes. This collected tonnage also reduced 52k tonnes of CO₂e for the borough. The following table outlines the targets and the associated successes for 2019/20.

Performance for the year 2019/20

Targets	Progress against targets	Targets met?
50% statutory recycling rate	50.29%	Yes
5000 tonnes diversion (50% of the borough)	5154 tonnes	Yes
1.46kg/property/week	1.58kg/property/week	Yes
£500k savings on disposal	£500k achieved	Yes

The food waste service has also improved the ranking of the Council in the UK's recycling league table. According to the most recent information (2018/19) the Council is ranked 204 across all waste collection and disposal authorities in England and 44 amongst unitary authorities. Based on the performance of 2019/20 the Council will jump to 81st for all waste collection & disposal authorities and 18th place within unitary authorities which is a significant improvement.

Indirect impact of the food waste service:

The collection of food waste also had indirect positive impact on other parts of the overall waste collection service. There was a downward trend in general waste, reducing by total of 5,288 tonnes in comparison with 2018/19. On the recycling front, more than 1,000 tonnes of additional recycling was collected as of 2018/19 and further details can be found in Appendix 1 below.

At the time of the food waste launch, the new scheme was supported with a substantial communications campaign and momentum to keep residents engaged continued through regular social media drives. Through these communications and updates including statistics/data analysis, residents were kept informed of the successes which increased their motivation even further.

Impact of Covid19 – Performance in 2020/21

Since the start of the current financial year (2020/21) performance has been and continues to be significantly influenced by Covid-19 across all parts of the service. For food waste this impact is in fact positive which is due to a combination of factors including working from home, relying on fresh meals, moving away from takeaways/frozen meals and closure of pubs/restaurants. These factors diverted a considerable amount of waste from other points to the kerbside collection. Since April 2020, 2,278 tonnes have been collected. As compared to the same period last year (April 2019 – October 2019) the food waste collection tonnage has increased 39%. Data from the first six months of 2020/21 also reveals collecting an average of approximately 500 tonnes each month which suggests that 6,000 tonnes will be collected this year. This has helped us reach 54% recycling in Quarter 1.

Next steps:

The Council planned to increase participation rate in the food waste collection service beyond 50% after the roll out. A strategy was agreed with Veolia to identify low performing areas including the use of a participation recording device which would be utilised by the crews during collection. This would help the Council to focus on non-participating households. The impact of Covid-19 (since March 2020) has led to reduced staff numbers that have been concentrated on the delivery of an uninterrupted waste collection service. Furthermore, closure of recycling centres has added enormous pressure on Veolia due to increased tonnages at the kerbside and an unprecedented demand for garden waste. These factors have kept the resources of Veolia highly engaged with limited availability to focus on increasing the participation rate in food waste.

Encouraging our services always comes with a surge in the demand. Promoting the food waste collection service to increase participation rate must be supported by the availability

of caddies and liners to our residents. Under normal circumstances these are made available to our residents through various outlets including public libraries and parish and town councils. With the closure of almost 80% of these outlets since March, and now the closure in November of remaining outlets due to second lockdown, alternative solutions have been put in place, including extra resource to deliver receptacles to residents and availability of some outlets to enable residents to direct collect their receptacles. Due to the fluidity of the situation, the supply outlets and associated information is located on the Councils website. Now that this supply mechanism is in place, it is expected that further communications will take place to drive further food waste participation and capture more material.

Overall, the performance of the food waste collection service has significantly improved with more residents engaged than ever. There is a drive to increase participation but to also focus on waste minimisation in 2021/22 to further increase recycling and reduce costs of disposal.

Going forwards a comprehensive strategy will be devised into short and longer term objectives. In the short term, the focus will be on the roll out of the new recycling bags with a dedicated communications campaign to revitalise resident’s participation. The new bags coupled with the campaign will increase our recycling rate whilst also addressing the important factor of waste reduction.

For the longer term, a waste consultancy (Resource Futures) has been engaged to help determine the direction of waste collection and management from 2026 and beyond for the borough. A number of aspects will be considered to further including minimising waste arisings, increasing the overall recycling rate, incorporating mechanisms to be compliant with upcoming legislation and reducing costs.

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/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None
List of Background Papers
None

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Appendix 1

Impact of Food Waste tonnage on kerbside Waste Collection Performance - 2019/20

Period	No. of collection days	Residual			Food Waste			Recycling		
		2018/19	2019/20	Variance 	Diverted through FW	Residual minimised	Additional generated directly into FW	2018/19	2019/20	Variance 
Apr	22	2430	2016	414	377	37	0	764	785	21
May	23	2611	2076	535	427	108	0	760	795	35
Jun	20	2399	1850	549	379	170	0	648	742	94
Jul	23	2477	2088	389	424	-35	35	652	792	140
Aug	22	2507	1954	553	391	162	0	701	725	24
Sep	21	2252	1871	381	402	-21	21	639	752	113
Oct	23	2517	2072	445	460	-15	15	759	897	138
Nov	21	2456	1882	574	435	139	0	794	866	72
Dec	21	2437	2040	397	442	-45	45	845	962	117
Jan	24	2789	2374	415	524	-109	109	851	978	127
Feb	20	2247	1858	389	405	-16	16	691	680	-11
Mar	22	2334	2087	247	488	-241	241	707	847	140
Total		29456	24168	5288	5154	616	482	8811	9821	1010