

TITLE	Proposal to Change the Collection Methodology and Containment of Waste in the Borough
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 22 February 2023 and the Executive on 21 March 2023
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth – Simon Dale
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Environment and Leisure - Cllr Ian Shenton

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report sets out how the Council intends to tackle financial pressures and drive forward its waste minimisation, diversion, recycling and carbon reduction commitments. Following the results of the second waste strategy consultation, it is proposed that Alternate Weekly Collections are introduced in Wokingham, with wheeled bins rolled out for containment of refuse.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation to Overview and Scrutiny:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee consider the draft Executive Report and make comments and recommendations to the Executive as necessary.

Recommendations to the Executive:

That the Executive:

- i) Approve the proposed change of policy from weekly blue bag collection to Alternate Weekly Collection (general refuse collected one week, recycling collected the next week, with retained weekly food waste collection);
- ii) Approve the introduction of wheeled bins for the containment of refuse from the summer of 2024;
- iii) Approve the utilisation of funds from the Waste Equalisation Reserve Fund to support the purchase and distribution of wheeled bins.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out a proposal for the Council to move from its current arrangements of weekly general refuse and recycling collections, to an Alternate Weekly Waste (AWC) collection model for the borough, following feedback from the Waste Strategy Consultation stating that 74% of respondents liked, accepted or had a neutral position on a move to AWC.

This proposal is in line with Wokingham Borough Council's environmental and climate commitments as a move to AWC will encourage residents to correctly dispose of recyclable material as well as minimise overall waste generation, and it presents an opportunity to assist the Council in delivering much needed financial savings at a time when financial pressures are increasing.

Across England, many councils have been successfully running AWC's for over 25 years. Nearly 80% of English council's already undertake AWC collections to boost recycling and restrict the amount of refuse produced through diversion and minimisation of recycling and general waste. Neighbouring authorities, Bracknell Forest and Reading Borough Council's made the move to AWC some time ago. BFBC changed in 2007 increasing their recycling rate by 13% per annum. RBC changed in 2006 increasing their recycling rate by 10% per annum. Since then BFBC have now moved to three weekly collections furthering their recycling rate and environmental performance.

Officers are confident that a move to AWC in Wokingham will lead to financial and environmental benefits as analysis of Wokingham resident's general waste and recycling shows that there is a significant amount of recycling incorrectly disposed of in resident blue bags which could be recycled rather than disposed of in general waste. Around 57% of material in blue bags is recyclable and could be recycled at kerbside (including food waste) or via the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). The approximate cost of wrongly disposing recyclable material is c.£1m per annum as the cost of refuse disposal (£121 per tonne) is more expensive than the cost of both dry recycling (£45 per tonne) and food recycling (£22 per tonne). Additionally, once this material is disposed of, it will contribute to carbon emissions and ultimately it cannot be used again.

In light of the Council's financial situation and commitment to improving environmental performance (including the Climate Emergency programme) it is proposed that Wokingham Borough moves from:

- A weekly collection of refuse in blue bags to a fortnightly collection in wheeled bins, ceasing the supply of blue bags.
- A weekly dry recycling collection to a fortnightly collection using the existing green reusable sacks already available to residents.

This would mean refuse and dry recycling is collected on alternate weeks. There will be no change to the existing weekly food recycling or the fortnightly paid-for garden waste collections. The proposed change will apply to kerbside properties only. Other arrangements will be made for flats and those properties without access to kerbside collection.

These changes are expected to generate a saving of more than £0.50m in 2024/25, rising to circa £1.05m to £1.50m from 2025/26. The recycling rate is expected to increase by c.10%, from 54% to 64%, and it is predicted that there will be a reduction in carbon emissions of 2,400t per annum. These expected improvements will be closely monitored and KPI's put in place to report on progress, including attendance at Overview and Scrutiny.

BACKGROUND

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) has a good track record of waste management with over 54% of rubbish being recycled in 2021/22. New initiatives have helped drive this forward including the food waste service that was introduced in 2019. Additionally, comprehensive communications and engagement campaigns have supported in capturing more recyclable material through increased environmental campaigns and waste and recycling information sharing with residents.

However, as Appendix 1 demonstrates, some of the top performing recycling authorities in the country manage to recycle well above 60% of waste collected. Following detailed analysis of the blue bag composition in Wokingham, officers established that approximately 57% of general refuse blue bag contents could be recycled but, due to incorrect disposal by residents, is currently going to general waste instead. This not only costs the Council more to dispose of, as the cost of disposing of general waste is significantly higher than the cost of recycling, but it also reduces the Council's recycling and environmental performance.

The Waste Cross Party Working Group, set up in 2021, sought to review the Council's existing waste strategy, identify financial savings and improve the Council's environmental performance. Currently, WBC provides the following collections to properties:

- Weekly refuse collections in blue single use bags from kerbside and narrow access properties. Larger refuse containers for flats.
- Weekly mixed dry recycling in green reusable sacks for kerbside properties, boxes for narrow access properties and larger recycling containers for flats
- Weekly food waste in 23 litre green caddies for kerbside and narrow access properties, larger food waste containers for flats
- Fortnightly charged garden waste service in brown wheeled bins or brown paper sacks for narrow access properties.

In order to achieve financial savings and environmental improvements the Cross-Party Working Group commissioned a number of different collection scenarios to be modelled by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) consultancy. The outcomes of this extensive modelling work showed that the only way to achieve the aspirations of the Cross Party Working Group is to change the way waste is collected, specifically in relation to how and when refuse is collected.

This was supported by benchmarking that showed the top performing authorities in England have a fortnightly or less frequent refuse collections. Over 257 authorities in the country already undertake fortnightly collection (76%) and eight (2%) undertake three weekly collections. Table 1 (see Appendix 1) highlights those top performers in 2020

and their respective collection methodology. WBC's figures are provided as a comparison. It also shows that WBC recycles around 9% to 14% less than the other council's by operating a weekly refuse/recycling collection.

Wokingham Borough's nearest neighbours already successfully operate less frequent collection models. West Berkshire Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Reading Borough Council and Hart District Council all carry out alternate weekly collections whilst Bracknell Forest Borough Council operate a three weekly collection system. This move has supported all of these authorities to minimise their overall waste and increase their recycling performance.

Options Considered

The modelling work outlined above led to the short-listing of two viable options that would enable savings and environmental performance improvements within the constraints of the existing waste collection contract, which does not end until 2026. The details of both options are listed below:

Option 1:

- Alternate weekly collections of refuse and mixed dry recycling (i.e. refuse one week, recycling the following week)
- Provision of a wheeled bin for the containment of refuse and cease provision of blue bags
- Retain weekly food collections
- Retain paid for fortnightly garden waste collections

Option 2:

- Three-weekly collections of refuse
- Provision of a wheeled bin for the containment of refuse and cease provision of blue bags
- Fortnightly collections for mixed dry recycling
- Retain weekly food collections
- Retain paid for fortnightly garden waste collections

Public Consultation

Whilst WRAP and Eunomia modelling work has been ongoing, the Cross Party Working Group carried out two public consultations to seek resident views on changing the way waste is collected in the borough. In October 2021, the initial consultation was launched to understand high level views on waste collection and recycling in the borough. The results showed that:

- 86% of respondents are willing to recycle more
- 54% of respondents felt that environmental benefits are most important

From October 2022 to December 2022, a more detailed second consultation was undertaken to ask residents their views on the two options outlined above. Over 9,000 responses were received demonstrating that:

- 74% were neutral, accepted or liked the Alternate Weekly Collections proposal
- 78% were neutral, accepted or liked wheeled bins for refuse
- 30% were neutral, accepted or liked three weekly collections

Preferred Option for Approval:

As a result of the benchmarking, modelling and consultation outcome, the preferred option proposed to the Executive for approval is Option 1 - Alternate Weekly Collections (outlined above).

The benefits that are expected to be achieved as a result of a move to AWC include:

- Savings upwards of c.£0.50m in 2024/25 and c.£1.05m to £1.50m in 2025/26 onwards due to waste minimisation, diversion and contractual efficiencies.
- An increased recycling rate of c.64%, up from c.54%, significantly improving the Council's recycling performance, in line with some of the highest performing council's in the country.
- A carbon saving of 2,400t of CO₂ per annum, in line with the Council's commitments to the Climate Emergency Agenda.

The collection frequency under the proposed changes will look as follows:

	Container	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Refuse (Changed collection frequency and container)	*New* wheeled bin	✓		✓	
Recycling (Changed collection frequency)	Existing green recycling bags		✓		✓
Food waste (Unchanged)	Existing kitchen caddy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Garden waste (Unchanged)	Existing wheeled bins or paper sacks	✓		✓	

It should be noted that there are approximately 64,000 kerbside properties in the borough; around 99% percent of these can accommodate a wheeled bin. The c.1% percent of remaining properties will remain on a bag collection. The rest of the housing stock in Wokingham is made up of flats and narrow access properties and these properties are excluded from this proposed change.

Waste and Recycling Operational Policy

To support the proposed changes and in response to the public consultations, a review of the existing operational policy will be undertaken. Many authorities operating an AWC model have specific policies in place to support their commitments to reducing the impact of waste on the environment and the amount of waste that is sent to expensive energy from waste treatment and landfill. The policies explain the actions and responsibilities of the Council and householders to participate fully in the service and to recycle and dispose of their waste, so as to avoid any uncertainty for residents, officers, and elected members. The Council intends to review its existing policy covering matters such as extra waste at the side of the bin, missed collections, contaminated recycling, larger households, assisted collections and exemptions. This will ensure the implementation and delivery of service will be consistent and equitable.

Mobilisation & Delivery

There are a number of key works streams required to successfully mobilise and deliver this project. A robust governance structure, including a project board and individual workstreams reporting into the project board, has been set up to ensure successful delivery and to manage any risks arising throughout the duration of the project. The workstreams include:

- Communication and public engagement including direct ‘face-to-face’ roadshows/events, leaflets/letters to properties and social media campaigns
- Customer Experience – including Customer Services support i.e. visits to residents, Website updates and Customer Relation Management (CRM) functionality
- Procurement – including contract variation, wheelie bin purchase and delivery of bins
- Operational implementation – including storage and roll out of wheelie bins, recruitment and onboarding of temporary staff, and rerouting of collections including day changes

It is expected that mobilisation will take approximately 12 months (see appendix 2) for more detailed timeline proposal). This includes for contract variation, identification and review of bin storage locations, procurement of bins, bin delivery, implementation of the communication and engagement plan, development of the back-office IT system,

recruitment of temporary staff to support the customer contact centre as well as outreach staff to support residents, and rerouting of the collection service based on a new AWC model. Each work stream will have its own critical paths and associated risk, which can impact on the timely delivery of that work stream and the overall programme of works. Therefore, the project board meets on a monthly basis, with fortnightly workstream meetings and regular risk register reviews to ensure that there is oversight of any developing risks and they are mitigated as soon as possible.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial 2022/23 (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year 2023/24 (Year 2)	Cost of £1.50m for purchase a delivery of wheeled bins (Capital) £0.46m one off implementation costs (Revenue) Total - £1.96m	Proposal to fund all costs including implementation costs and wheeled bins from the Waste Equalisation Fund.	Capital Revenue <i>See appendix 3 for breakdown</i>
Following Financial Year 2024/25 (Year 3)	(£0.50m) est.	This is £0.55m short of the MTFP income expectation due to the proposed timeframe of delivery.	Revenue
Following Financial Year 2025/26 (Year 4)	(£1.05m - £1.50m) est.	It is forecast that budgeted saving will be achieved and possibly exceeded.	Revenue

The implementation requires one off funding of £1.96m in 2023/24, which comprises of £1.50m for wheeled bins purchase and delivery, and £0.46m for operational delivery costs. It is proposed to utilise funds from the existing waste equalisation fund to finance all implementation costs. There is currently £5.56m in the waste equalisation fund, utilising £1.96m would leave balance of £3.60m. The £1.96m will be returned to the fund over 13 years at circa £0.15m per year. Further information can be found in Appendix 4.

The savings have been projected through detailed data analysis and there are assumptions associated with these. The following table outlines the expected diversion from 'blue bag' residual waste to recycling and waste minimisation. It is predicted, through the benchmarking/model analysis that overall 'blue bag' residual waste will reduce by 20%.

12% of this residual waste will go to dry recycling (green bags), 5% will go to food waste and 3% will be minimised by residents not generating the waste.

Waste type/activity	Current Service (tonnes)	New Service (tonnes)	Difference (tonnes)	Increase (+) or decrease (-)
Residual waste	28,142	22,596	-5,546	-20% decrease
Dry recycling	27,045	30,505	3,460	+13% increase (12% of current service)
Food waste	6,054	7,366	1,312	+22% increase (5% of current service)
Waste Minimisation	0	-774	-774	(3% of current service)
Total	61,241	60,467	-774	

However, if the diversion rates are not realised or the contractual efficiencies are not achieved then the savings will be less than expected. To mitigate this risk, the project will be carefully managed and it will be supported by a robust communications campaign which will drive the waste minimisation and recycling elements. The communication costs form part of the implementation funding mentioned above.

The MTFP proposed budget includes income expectations of £1.05m in each year from 2024/25 onward. Due to not all the savings being able to be realised in year one and the proposed timing of implementation being part way through the year, the £1.05m income is unlikely to be achieved in 2024/25, with income in the region of £0.50m forecast. It is however anticipated that the £1.05m saving in 2025/26 will be achieved and possibly exceeded by up to £0.50m.

The financial position included in this report are up to 2025/26. The current contract with Veolia expires in 2026 and a retendering exercise will be undertaken. This is likely to result in further financial implications, but these are not yet known.

Other Financial Information

- Currently around 57% of the waste included as general waste is recyclable. This is significant financially because it is up to 6 times more expensive to dispose of general waste than recyclable waste. AWC combined with the communications message is forecast to encourage more recycling and reduce the percentage of recyclable waste in general waste. The figures included in this report take into account this assumption.

<p>Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation</p> <p>Stakeholder consultation and consideration has been fully assessed as part of this report. In 2021 and subsequently in 2022, WBC undertook two waste and recycling consultations which set out to gain insight into resident’s waste and recycling opinions.</p> <p>The first consultation showed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86% of respondents are willing to recycle more. • 54% of respondents felt that the environmental benefits are most important. <p>The second consultation showed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74% were neutral, accepting or liked Alternate Weekly Collections • 78% were neutral, accepting or liked wheeled bins for refuse • 30% were neutral, accepting or liked three weekly collections <p>It is clear from these surveys that there is a desire to improve our recycling and minimise waste as much as possible in the Borough which is possible through Alternate Weekly Collections.</p>
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<p>Public Sector Equality Duty</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken.</p>

<p>Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i></p> <p>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible through leading by example as well as by encouragement. This proposal will help reduce carbon and single use plastic and support the goal of the Borough reaching carbon neutral by 2030.</p>
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<p>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</p> <p>No Part 2</p>

<p>List of Background Papers</p> <p>Appendix 1: Top recycling authorities 2020</p> <p>Appendix 2: Proposed timeline for mobilisation and delivery</p> <p>Appendix 3: Delivery costs</p> <p>Appendix 4: Costs and savings</p>

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Appendix 1:

Top recycling authorities 2020/2021 Based on DEFRA Statistics for English Collection and Unitary Authorities (note the release of 2021/2022 data has been delayed by DEFRA until Spring 2023)

Rank	Local Authority	Household Waste Sent for Reuse, Recycling or Composting (%)	Residual Waste Per Household (kg)	Residual Waste Frequency	Residual Waste Bin Size (litres)	Food Waste Frequency	Dry Recycling Frequency	Dry Recycling Bin Size (litres)	Dry Recycling Scheme Type
1	St Albans City and DC	64.2%	389	Fortnightly	180	Weekly	Fortnightly	240 + Box	Twin Stream: Containers/Fibres
2	South Oxfordshire DC	63.6%	406	Fortnightly	180	Weekly	Fortnightly	240	Fully Comingled
3	Three Rivers DC	63.1%	369	Fortnightly	140	Weekly	Weekly	240	Fully Comingled
4	Vale of White Horse DC	62.6%	376	Fortnightly	180	Weekly	Fortnightly	240	Fully Comingled
5	Surrey Heath BC	61.3%	397	Fortnightly	180	Weekly	Fortnightly	240	Fully Comingled
6	East Riding of Yorkshire	60.8%	532	Fortnightly	180	Fortnightly	Fortnightly	240	Fully Comingled
7	North Somerset	60.4%	466	Fortnightly	180	Weekly	Weekly	Boxes	Multi Stream: All Materials
8	Dorset Council	60.1%	468	Fortnightly	180	Weekly	Fortnightly	240	Fully Comingled
9	East Devon DC	60.0%	326	3 Weekly	240	Weekly	Weekly	Boxes	Multi Stream: All Materials
10	Tandridge DC	59.9%	398	Fortnightly	180	Weekly	Fortnightly	240	Fully Comingled
11	South Northants DC	59.6%	469	Fortnightly	180	Weekly	Fortnightly	240	Fully Comingled
12	Stratford-on-Avon DC	59.4%	471	Fortnightly	240	Fortnightly	Fortnightly	240	Fully Comingled
13	Stroud DC	59.4%	332	Fortnightly	140	Weekly	Fortnightly	240+ Box	Twin Stream: Containers/Fibres
14	Bath and NE Somerset	59.2%	383	Fortnightly	140	Weekly	Weekly	Boxes	Multi Stream: All Materials
15	Cotswold DC	58.9%	449	Fortnightly	180	Weekly	Fortnightly	Boxes and Sacks	Multi Stream: All Materials
71	Wokingham BC	49.5%	411	Weekly	Sacks	Weekly	Weekly	Reusable Sacks	Comingled – No Glass

Appendix 2

Proposed timeline for mobilisation and delivery

Work Area	Date
Executive Decision Agreed	March 2023
Variation discussion with Veolia	March 2023
Procure wheeled bins	March 2023
Finalise communications campaign	March 2023
Website and CRM	January to October 2023
Additional WBC temporary staff	Spring 2024 to Autumn 2024
Wheeled bin distribution	Summer 2024
Go Live	Summer 2024

Appendix 3

Mobilisation costs:

Item (From Waste Equalisation Fund)	Total one-off cost
Wheeled bins purchase and distribution	£1.5m
WBC additional staff costs (3 x Outreach offers, 4 x Customer Service officers - Six months)	£140k
Communications – Design, production and distribution	£100k
IT and Web design	£100k
Site rental and security for Wheeled bins	£70k
Contingency	£30k
Property Survey	£15k
TOTAL	£1.955m

Appendix 4: Costs and savings:

Item (From Waste Equalisation Fund)	Total one-off cost
Wheeled bins purchase and distribution	£1.5m
WBC additional staff costs (3 x Outreach offers, 4 x Customer Service officers - Six months)	£140k
Communications – Design, production and distribution	£100k
IT and Web design	£100k
Site rental and security for Wheeled bins	£70k
Contingency	£30k
Property Survey	£15k
TOTAL	£1.955m

Item	Total Saving (Realised from 2025/26)
Contract Efficiencies	£290k
Re3 – Diversion of refuse to recycling inc waste minimisation	£485k
Ceasing Blue bags	£335k
Repayment of Equalisation Fund per annum	-£150k
TOTAL	c.£1m

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