

## **Report to Overview and Scrutiny Task & Finish Panel**



**Date of meeting: 20 August 2019**

**Subject:** Waste Management Review

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**(1) That the Panel note the initial report findings as required from the Terms of Reference.**

### **Report:**

1. At its meeting on 4 June 2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the establishment of a new Task and Finish Panel to support the forthcoming review of the Council's waste and recycling service. On 16 July the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the Terms of Reference. This report sets out the initial findings as required from the Terms of Reference to facilitate and focus discussion at the first Task and Finish Panel meeting on 20 August.

**That the Panel consider the likely impact of any government decision following the recently concluded Resource and Waste Strategy Consultation.**

2. The Panel has been tasked to consider the likely impact of any government decision following the recently concluded Resource and Waste Strategy Consultation. To date the results of the consultation have not been published and due to changes in the leadership of Government, this may delay the consultation results being published.

**Recommendation:** Officers will keep updated with any progress and changes, and inform the Panel in due course.

**Action for Next Meeting:** No further action until the results of the consultation are published by the Government.

**That the Panel consider the possibility of exploring the introduction of a third wheelie bin to replace the current clear recycling sacks for the collection of dry recycling materials.**

3. The current system of clear sacks for collecting dry recycling materials creates many issues which would be resolved through the introduction of a wheelie bin. There are advantages and disadvantages to a wheelie bin for dry recycling. For example, bins could be more convenient for residents as they will not have to collect the clear recycling sacks from the various outlets throughout the District. The clear sacks can present residents with storage issues, in terms of storing recycling in the sacks before they can be collected. The clear sacks can become bulky to store and may be torn or ripped which can be inconvenient for residents. The clear sacks can become torn when outside of properties ready for collection. This creates

a street cleansing issue for Biffa, as Biffa do not pick up the split materials. The introduction of a wheelie bin for dry recycling materials will also increase the capture of recycled materials and make the recycling process for individual properties simpler, easier and lead to fewer spillages and cleaner streets.

4. The disadvantages of introducing a wheelie bin for dry recycling materials are that you cannot always see what is at the bottom of the bin therefore, recyclable or non-recyclable items may get mixed. Not all properties will have adequate storage space to accommodate a wheelie bin, residents may not be able to accommodate all their recycling within one standard wheelie bin. The operation of collecting the dry recycling materials will be slower than the use of sacks, as the wheelie bins need to be attached to the vehicle and once emptied returned to the property, as opposed to throwing sacks into the vehicle.

**Recommendation:** That the option of introducing a wheeled bin for dry recycling material is investigated further with full costs, resource and service implications ascertained.

**Action for Next Meeting:** A business case to be developed.

**That the Panel consider the future collection of food and garden waste in separate containers and the option of charging for the collection of garden waste.**

5. The Panel has been tasked to consider the future collection of food and garden waste in separate containers and the option of charging residents for the collection of garden waste. Garden waste is currently collected all year round and is mixed with food waste. The collection of garden waste is not required all year round by residents. The current service is costly in terms of both vehicles required for collection of food and garden waste (the service requires freighters as opposed to 3.5-tonne vehicles, freighters do approximately 20 miles to a gallon and HGV driver costs are higher). The use of the current vehicles also results in higher levels of carbon emissions.

6. In terms of charging for the collection of garden waste, this does happen in some areas of the UK and it has also been proposed but not implemented following public consultation by other local authorities. Epping Forest District Council has previously charged for the service and then reverted to a free service on several occasions. It is also important to take note of any recommendations from the Government's consultation on waste and recycling. As previously mentioned it is unclear the direction that the Government will take on this and when any decisions will be made.

**Recommendation:** That the future collection of food and garden waste in separate containers be investigated further with full costs, resource and service implications ascertained. In terms of the option of charging for garden waste, to be placed on hold until the outcome of the Government's consultation on waste and recycling is determined.

**Action for Next Meeting:** A business case to be developed for separate collection of food and garden waste and the option for charging for garden waste only.

**That the Panel consider the possibility of not collecting garden waste in certain months of the year when demand is low.**

7. As residents do not require the collection of garden waste all year round, the garden waste could be separated from food waste which would reduce the cost of the service. Some local authorities collect garden waste between April to end of September. This would require residents to keep food waste separate from garden waste. The Council has operated on a part year basis for the collection of garden waste in the past but this changed when garden waste and food were collected together as an all year service.

**Recommendation:** That the collection of garden waste in certain months of the year should be implemented if the Council decides to separate food and garden waste.

**Action for Next Meeting:** A business case to be developed.

**That the Panel consider the pressure on the waste collection contract due to the issues around the sale of recycling materials after processing.**

8. With the loss of the China market and the lack of infrastructure and manufacturing in the UK to use recycling materials there is liable to be a surplus of recycling materials. The Council has reached an agreement to pay the contractor, to help improve the quality of materials to help with the sale of recycling materials. However, this does not mean the price will stay the same or increase because if there is a surplus of recycling materials or lack of markets it will lead to a downward trend. This will put further pressure on recycling material prices and the monetary difference will need to be picked up by the Council.

9. It should be noted that many south-eastern Asia nations are becoming more stringent in the quality of the materials they accept as well. Also, there is a campaign building about not sending materials across the world to be reused. With the existing legislation and proposed changes in the National Waste Strategy, this could result in a lower collective price being obtained for our recycling materials. The effect of Brexit has not been assessed either in terms of the effect on markets that could be lost or any reduction in price due to World Trade Tariffs (WTO) because of a no deal Brexit.

**Recommendation:** That Epping Forest District Council Officers keep up to date and inform the Panel of the situation and any changes to the recycling market and any financial implications to the waste collection contract.

**Action for Next Meeting:** Update the Panel with any changes.

**That the Panel consider a review of street cleansing arrangements with a view to achieve improvements in cleansing standards.**

10. Epping Forest District Council has one of the highest specifications in the country that fully covers the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) and Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (CoPLAR) guidance. The actual effectiveness of this is restricted by the contractor's ability to cover the work without being constantly monitored by client officers. Street cleansing is divided into various zones according to usage and between detritus and litter. The majority of residents do not take notice of detritus unless it is very bad. Epping Forest District does not have areas that have exceptionally high detritus compared to some of our neighbouring authorities.

11. The main area of complaints from our residents is litter, either thrown by occupants from vehicles or dropped by people. Schools are also a source and in some cases, the Council has targeted walking routes from schools to the local shops for litter bin installation which has clearly helped and made a difference. In other areas, no matter how many litter bins are made available, litter still ends up on the ground. Therefore, one of the effective ways of dealing with litter is to create litter pick routes on the major through roads in the District and reduce full cleansing in residential roads to every other cleanse to create the capacity. The spare capacity that this change will create can be used to introduce weekly litter picks in roads that are identified to have the most litter.

12. These simple changes would not mean a reduction in service but a reallocation of resources to areas that need a more frequent litter pick clearance. This will lead to greater public satisfaction and will help to reduce the build-up of further litter, as it is common for people to litter more when litter is visible. A further area to develop would be holding the public more

accountable through enforcement. Discussions were being held with Enforcement and Waste Officers in respect of dash cameras in officers' vehicles, and the use of relevant footage to issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) to perpetrators of this littering offence. There is also the opportunity to use proactive signage on certain roads in the District to help combat such littering and to site special large bins at traffic lights for motorists to use for their litter.

**Recommendation:** That the proposed changes identified to street cleansing arrangements with a view to achieve improvements in cleansing standards are finalised and Officers explore the option for enforcement and improvements in signage in more detail.

**Action for Next Meeting:** A business case to be developed.

**That the Panel consider improvements in the provision of waste and recycling containers and cleansing operations on the high street, including the segregation of recycling materials.**

13. The Council has been undertaking a limited recycling operation in our high streets with our street cleansing crews. Our contractor Biffa has created separate compartments in their vehicles for recycling materials. In the past a recycling competition between the crews has taken place which has helped with the message to the cleansing workforce of the importance for recycling in all aspects of the work.

14. The current challenges and barriers to increasing the levels of recycling are:

- Lack of funding and resources
- Dangers of collecting recycling from non-separated litter bins
- Lack of incentive for workforce
- No checking of waste or effort by supervisors
- Static sweepers carrying separate sacks and method of supply
- For residents, there is no eye catching conscious prompt for recycling on the streets or simple practical options available

15. A potential solution to mitigate a number of these challenges and barriers is to change the litter containers to encourage residents to place waste and recycling in the relevant containers. The litter bins could be changed to a 50/50 waste/recycling split or if possible a 70/40 waste/recycling split litter bin. The Council would have the option to keep the black colour of the bin and have the recycling part of the lid a bright colour to distinguish from the waste part.

16. There is the option of metal bins and part of the bin could be wrapped with a recycling message. The disadvantage of using metal bins would be that they would be liable to rust and graffiti. However, there are smooth surfaced plastic mixture bins that would have the same effect as metal. This will mean that "themed" litter bins that exist in the District will over time need to be replaced with the recycling litter bins. Those bins that are replaced could be used in residential areas. Further work is required to assess the financial and resources implications to implement these changes.

**Recommendation:** That Officers investigate ways to improve the provision of waste and recycling containers and cleansing operations on the high street, including the segregation of recycling materials. Full costs, resource and service implications to be ascertained.

**Action for Next Meeting:** A business case to be developed.

**That the Panel consider other relevant matters related to the review of the Council's waste and recycling service.**

17. At the last Waste Management Partnership Board, the potential of charging residents for a replacement bin was raised. The Council has the authority to introduce charging for wheelie bins or charging for replacement bins. This is likely to be unpopular with residents and is liable to be politically sensitive but many other local authorities have taken this route.

18. The Council would need to ensure that it can enforce charging for bins and has the right system in place to deliver and recharge. The bins would need to be from the same supplier as existing bin stock and have an Epping Forest District Council logo. A potential problem could be if residents wanted to source their own wheelie bin, which did not have the Epping Forest District Council logo on it. This could lead to unauthorised additional bins as well as inferior quality bins which could lead to increased claims for broken bins. It is recommended to rule this out of the scope of this Task and Finish Panel due to the complexities and timescales for completion by the Panel.

**Recommendation:** That any further work to investigate the option of charging residents for bins be placed on hold until the outcome of the Government's consultation on waste and recycling is determined.

**Action for next meeting:** No further action required.

19. A further item that has been raised to consider was the introduction of a Deposit Refund Scheme (DRS). A one-way DRS for single-use beverage packaging (e.g. beer cans, soft-drink bottles) is a system that incentivises the return of used packaging using a refundable deposit. Consumers pay the deposit when they purchase the beverage and receive it back when they return the container to designated collection points, typically located in retail outlets or other centralised locations. If a consumer chooses not to return the empty container, then they lose the deposit. The containers that are collected are recycled.

20. Introducing a DRS will be problematic for the Council due to the complexity of the systems and the cost of equipment. Commercial organisations are likely to run these schemes and the DRS machines can cost £1,000 each. If commercial organisations take part in this scheme it will most probably lead to a reduced income for that material and we do not have the capacity to compete with such organisations.

21. The Council would need to determine the locations that it wanted to have DRS equipment and look to an outside contract to supply such equipment. It is important to find out what recommendations the Government makes from its consultation on waste and recycling regarding the Deposit Refund Scheme and as previously mentioned it is unclear when the recommendations will be made.

**Recommendation:** That introducing a Deposit Refund Scheme is not pursued further and Officers update the Panel on the recommendations from the Government's waste and recycling consultation once the information is available.

**Action for next meeting:** No further action required.

22. The issue of organised litter picking was raised at the recent Waste Management Partnership Board meeting and that the Task and Finish Panel be asked to review littering in respect of the pros and cons on how to tackle this. Regarding organised litter pickers, most are volunteers around the Epping Forest District. Both the Council and Biffa support this voluntary work by collecting the litter waste afterwards. Therefore, as most volunteer litter picking events were co-ordinated through the town and parish councils, there were no health and safety

implications for the Council. The parish councils usually contact the Waste Management Team, and Biffa provides the equipment and collects the waste afterwards.

23. If the Council wishes to extend this help, then its insurance cover and Biffa's involvement on training and associated costs covering the volunteers, will need to be assessed. Alternatively, the Council could have a policy to limit the level of involvement. There is always the likelihood that other volunteers, who have not received any training, could just turn up on the day.

**Recommendation:** That guidelines around organised litter picking are circulated to town and parish councils.

**Action for Next Meeting:** Epping Forest District Council's Waste Management Team send a letter out to all town and parish councils with advice on organising volunteer litter picking events.

**Resource Implications:**

The introduction of a wheelie bin for dry recycling materials is likely to present the Council with savings, although the finances and details of the contract will need to be considered in more depth by officers and presented to members at a future meeting. All the options that the Task and Finish Panel have been asked to consider require further work in terms of specific costings and the identification of any potential savings and improvements to the service. The cost of implementing any of the above options needs to be weighed against the benefits and impacts that such changes may bring to service delivery. This has not been done due to the short timescales between the development of the Terms of Reference and the meeting on 20 August.

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

The Council's Constitution sets out rules for the management of its overview and scrutiny responsibilities.

Any changes to the collection arrangements or types of materials collected will require a formal contract variation with the Council's waste management contractor Biffa Municipal Limited.

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

The proposals listed in the report will have a positive impact on the street scene in the District.

There are no adverse implications arising from the recommendations of this report in respect of the Council's commitment to the Climate Local Agreement, the corporate Safer, Cleaner, Greener initiative, or any crime and disorder issues within the District.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

Not at this stage. Biffa and other internal and external stakeholders will be consulted once work commences on the recommendations in this report.

**Background Papers:**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee decision on the formation of this Task and Finish Panel.

**Impact Assessments:****Risk Management:**

The Council's Constitution (Article 6) sets out rules for the management of its overview and scrutiny responsibilities.

**Equality:**

There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations of this report.