

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 16 July 2020



Portfolio: Contracts and Technical Services - Councillor N Avey.

Subject: Waste Management Task and Finish Panel Review

Responsible Officer: James Warwick (01992 564350)

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve the following Waste Management Task and Finish Panel recommendations:

- (a) that the proposal for a third wheelie bin to replace clear recycling sacks be reviewed as part of the appraisal options for the extension or re-tender of the waste management contract;**
- (b) that the Officers continue to discuss the future collection of food and garden waste in separate containers with Biffa. Officers will keep informed of further Government guidance to help inform a decision on the future collection of garden and food waste separately. Any future changes to service delivery will be presented to Cabinet for approval;**
- (c) that Officers assess the option of not collecting garden waste in certain months of the year once the Government had conducted further consultation and determined whether the collection of food and garden waste must be done separately;**
- (d) that, through the Waste Management Partnership Board, Officers will keep informed of any changes to the recycling market, and of any financial implications to the waste collection contract;**
- (e) that further work on the street cleansing schedule be done to monitor and measure the impact. It is also recommended that any changes to the street cleansing schedule would need to be approved by Cabinet before being implemented;**
- (f) that high street bins be replaced with a new style bin that allows for the segregation of waste and recycling materials; and**
- (g) that Officers keep Members informed of any potential changes and impact on service delivery as a result of the Environment Bill and any new legislation that Government introduce as a result of Government's Resource and Waste Strategy consultations.**

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. The Panel agreed the following terms of reference for the panel to review:

- (a) 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;
- (b) the future collection of food and garden waste in separate containers and the option of charging for the collection of garden waste;
- (c) the possibility of not collecting garden waste in certain months of the year when demand is low;
- (d) the pressure on the waste collection contract due to the issues around the sale of recycling materials after processing;
- (e) a review of street cleansing arrangements with a view to achieve improvements in cleansing standards;
- (f) improvements in the provision of waste and recycling containers and cleansing operations on the high street, including the segregation of recycling materials; and
- (g) other relevant matters related to the review of the Council's waste and recycling service.

2. The Panel agreed to take a vote on having a third wheelie bin in principle, subject to the caveat for a viable financial and environmental business case. The result of the vote was that a majority of the members were against this proposal. It was recommended that the proposal for a third wheelie bin be reviewed later, closer to the end of the contract with Biffa, which was agreed.

3. The Council had always had a garden waste collection - both as free and chargeable services. However, a considerable element in residual bins was food waste and this had been verified over the past decade by ECC officers' analysis of waste disposal data. However, the Government might make food collections compulsory. Epping Forest District Council, Rochford District Council and Basildon Council attended a meeting in January with Essex County Council (ECC) to discuss the segregation of food and garden waste. On 10 February 2020 Defra said it will "work closely" with local authorities to fulfil the government's commitment to roll out separate household food waste collection across England by 2023. Defra says it will create a framework to help identify where extra support is needed for Local Authorities. It is understood that the Government's consultation on segregation of food and garden waste would not likely to take place until September 2020. The Task and Finish Panel recommend that the Officers continue to discuss the issue with Biffa and keep informed of further Government guidance to help inform a decision on the future collection of garden and food waste separately. Any future changes to service delivery will be presented to Cabinet for approval.

4. The possibility of not collecting garden waste in certain months of the year when demand is low can only be achieved if food and garden waste was collected separately. The Panel recommend to re-visit this once Government had conducted further consultation and determined whether the collection of food and garden waste must be done separately.

5. There was pressure on the Council's waste collection contract with the loss of the China market for recycled materials, unless contamination was under five per cent. The Council had agreed to make additional payments to Biffa to help improve the quality of the recycled material and its sale thereafter. However, this had been compounded by the lack of

infrastructure and manufacturing in the UK to use recycled materials. Consequently, this had led to a surplus of recycling material owing to the lack of market availability. A downward trend in this market would put further pressure on the waste contract. The Task and Finish Panel recommend being kept informed throughout the duration of the task and finish panel of any changes to the recycling market, and of any financial implications to the waste collection contract.

6. The Task and Finish Panel agreed to a pilot project to achieve improvements in street cleansing standards. The pilot project ran from November 2019 to January 2020 to see the feasibility of moving some residential roads from their current two-weekly cleanse to a three-weekly cleanse. This would allow the capacity created in the current street cleansing service to undertake additional cleansing on some of the main through roads in the District to reduce the level and perception of litter.

7. There were no issues with the new street cleansing arrangements and the level of complaints have stayed below the average with 4 complaints. Upon inspection of roads in the pilot there has been no decrease in the overall street scene whereas the additional roads cleansed have reduced the amount of time litter that has stayed in situ. It has led to an additional 2.86 tons of waste collected earlier than if the scheduled cleanse did not change. The amount of waste in pilot roads that had to wait would be under 0.5 of a ton.

8. The new street cleansing arrangements meant that litter on through roads has been reduced. This has a positive visual effect as streets are cleaner and seen to be cleaner. This reallocation of resources has not led to any increased costs to service delivery. The change from 2 weeks to every 3 weeks and reuse of resources per year to create the litter pick through routes will lead to service delivery improvements.

9. The changes will also lead to a reorganisation of how streets are cleaned, there will be a condensed form of cleansing with either larger crews or existing crews all working in one area. This will increase the level of supervision and onsite training to ensure standards are maintained and less downtime travelling from one site to another. The Task and Finish Panel noted the results of the street cleansing pilot and recommend that further work is done to monitor and measure the impact. It is also recommended that any changes to the street cleansing schedule would need to be approved by Cabinet before being implemented.

10. In order to improve the provision of waste and recycling containers and cleansing operations on the high street, including the segregation of recycling materials the Task and Finish Panel recommend that high street bins are replaced with a new style bin that allows for the segregation of waste and recycling materials. The Panel recommend Officers produce a programme of replacing and installing new style litter bin in selected locations throughout the District. The replacement litter bin programme will be accompanied by community litter picks, working with Town and Parish Councils and local communities. A campaign will be developed with positive recycling messages and encouraging residents to take pride in their community. The Panel also recommend that one style of bin may not be appropriate in all areas of the District. In this case, Officers will liaise with Members.

11. The Task and Finish Panel received updates on the Government's Resource and Waste Strategy consultations which aimed to make the country a world leader in resource efficiency and waste reduction. There had been four consultations on reforming the UK packaging producer responsibility system, a plastic packaging tax, a deposit return scheme for drink containers, and consistency in household and business recycling. The Environment Bill was introduced into parliament on 15 October 2019. It was re-introduced to parliament following a general election on 30 January 2020. The Environment Bill 2020 sets out how the Government plan to protect and improve the natural environment in the UK. The Government was also planning further waste strategy consultations during 2020 that would lead to new legislation being adopted. This would impact on local authorities by 2023. The Panel agreed that Officers would keep Members informed of any potential changes and impact on service delivery.

Reason for decision:

The recommendations are a result of the terms of reference identified by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 June 2019.

Other options considered and rejected:

None.

Consultation undertaken:

The result of four Government consultations on the resource and waste strategy as part of the Environment Bill were published during the task and finish panel programme. Government's Resource and Waste Strategy consultations aimed to make the country a world leader in resource efficiency and waste reduction. There had been four consultations on reforming the UK packaging producer responsibility system, a plastic packaging tax, a deposit return scheme for drink containers, and consistency in household and business recycling. The Environment Bill 2019-20 had received its first reading in the House of Commons. The Government was also planning further waste strategy consultations during 2020 that would lead to new legislation being adopted.

Resource implications:

The introduction of a third wheelie bin would have budgetary implications and a detailed business case with full cost implications would need to be developed if Members recommend pursuing the option of a third wheelie bin.

The segregation of food and garden waste collection would also have resource implications that would need to be assessed and discussed in detail with Biffa.

The street cleansing schedule and introduction of waste and recycling bins will be done through existing resources and budget.

The Panel's recommendations are all covered through existing budgets**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 would require a formal contract variation with the Council's waste management contractor Biffa Municipal Limited.

Safer, Cleaner, 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.

Background Papers:

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

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.