



**City of York Council**  
**Changes to Recycling Service 2021/22**  
**Focus Group Research**

**April 2021**



Report prepared by:

Pickersgill Consultancy and  
Planning Ltd (PCP)

Woodlands  
Church Lane  
Welburn  
York  
YO60 7EG

| <b>Table of Contents</b>  | <b>Page Number</b> |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. <i>Introduction</i> .....  | 4                  |
| 2. <i>Background</i> .....  | 4                  |
| 3. <i>Aims and Objectives</i> .....   | 5                  |
| 4. <i>Methodology</i> .....   | 6                  |
| 5. <i>Executive Summary</i> .....   | 8                  |
| 6. <i>Suggested Action Points</i> .....                                       | 11                 |
| 7. <i>Detailed Findings</i> .....   | 12                 |
| 7.1. <i>Environmental Concern</i> .....                                       | 12                 |
| 7.1. <i>Importance of Recycling</i> .....                                     | 13                 |
| 7.3. <i>Current Behaviour towards Recycling</i> .....                         | 15                 |
| 7.4. <i>Behaviour of Neighbours</i> .....                                     | 15                 |
| 7.5 <i>Current Barriers preventing additional Kerbside Recycling</i> .....    | 18                 |
| 7.5.1 <i>Understanding of Items which can and cannot be recycled</i> .....    | 18                 |
| 7.5.2 <i>Satisfaction with current Capacity of Boxes and Bins</i> .....       | 21                 |
| 7.5.3 <i>Range of Items Recycled</i> .....                                    | 24                 |
| 7.6. <i>Attitude to current CYC Recycling Services</i> .....                  | 26                 |
| 7.6.1 <i>Overall Satisfaction</i> .....                                       | 26                 |
| 7.6.2 <i>Collection Arrangements</i> .....                                    | 26                 |
| 7.6.3 <i>Garden Waste Collection Period</i> .....                             | 28                 |
| 7.6.4 <i>Current Containers</i> .....   | 28                 |
| 7.6.5 <i>Mixing of Recyclable Items</i> .....                                 | 30                 |
| 7.6.6 <i>Need for Change</i> .....  | 31                 |
| 7.7. <i>Attitude to proposed Changes to Recycling Service</i> .....           | 32                 |
| 7.7.1 <i>Initial Reaction</i> .....   | 32                 |
| 7.7.2 <i>Three Weekly Collection Cycle</i> .....                              | 33                 |
| 7.7.3 <i>All Year Round Garden Waste Collection</i> .....                     | 35                 |
| 7.7.4 <i>Larger Size Garden Waste Bin</i> .....                               | 37                 |
| 7.7.5 <i>Switch from Boxes to 180L Bin for Glass, Plastics and Tins</i> ..... | 40                 |
| 7.7.6 <i>Additional Box for Paper and Card</i> .....                          | 42                 |
| 7.7.7 <i>Storage of Containers</i> .....                                      | 43                 |
| 7.7.8 <i>Residents of Terraced Properties</i> .....                           | 44                 |
| 7.7.9 <i>Range of Items accepted for Kerbside Recycling</i> .....             | 46                 |
| 7.7.10 <i>Food Waste Containers</i> .....                                     | 47                 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 7.7.11 Cost Implications .....                    | 48 |
| 7.7.12 Summary of Reaction to new Proposals ..... | 49 |
| <br>  |    |
| Appendix One: Discussion Guide.....               | 50 |
| Appendix Two: Presentation Material .....         | 53 |

## 1. Introduction

City of York Council (CYC) is considering making changes to its kerbside recycling service.

Pickersgill Consultancy & Planning Ltd (PCP), a York-based independent market research agency, was commissioned to conduct focus group research to understand the barriers which exist towards recycling, to obtain feedback on the proposals being considered by CYC and to inform and shape both the message and the channel.

## 2. Background

It is proposed that there will be three stages of this project which will involve PCP. This report refers to the findings from the phase 2 consultation.

The phase 2 consultation started on 30 March 2021. During this period CYC ran a quantitative online survey of residents which was promoted through their social media channels. This achieved an exceptionally large response with nearly 6,000 residents completing the survey. The results from this quantitative piece were used to shape the set of focus groups amongst York residents which were conducted by PCP.

PCP will potentially also be involved in phases 3 and 5 of the project. If commissioned, they will involve the following:

- **Phase 3 Warm Up Communications** (Around July 2021) City wide or targeted surveys amongst residents.
- **Phase 5 Implementation Period** (Around March 2022) Door-to-door surveys amongst residents living in areas struggling to meet CYC's recycling targets.

### 3. Aims and Objectives

The objectives for the focus groups undertaken during phase 2 of the project were:

- To understand local residents' overall views regarding the importance of recycling within their household.
- To gain insight into residents' current recycling behaviour including ease of use and any barriers preventing greater use of CYC's kerbside recycling services.
- To further understand attitudes towards, and current satisfaction levels with, CYC's current kerbside recycling services.
- To highlight any desired need for change amongst residents and any suggestions for improvement, including in particular ideas which could increase the amount recycled.
- To gain insight into residents' views of the recycling proposals developed by CYC.
- To evaluate residents' reactions to specific elements of the proposed changes including:
  - The 3 week collection cycle
  - Offering the garden waste service all year round
  - A larger sized garden waste bin
  - The switch of plastic, tins and glass box containers to the standard 180L bin
  - The additional box for paper and card
  - Assessing whether there is a need for an increase or reduction in the number of containers provided for kerbside recycling
- To establish whether there would be willingness amongst residents in the future to use a separate food waste container.
- To understand if there is anything else which is not currently proposed which residents would like to see offered as part of the package of changes to the service.
- To obtain an overall view regarding the value of the proposed changes and their impact on residents.

## 4. Methodology

Six focus groups were conducted between Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> April. In ideal circumstances, the groups would have been convened on a face-to-face basis but due to Covid restrictions the groups were conducted using Zoom.

The discussions lasted approximately 1.5 hours each. Five of the groups were moderated by Peter Pickersgill, PCP's Managing Director, one by Debbie Wynn, a Senior Research Executive.

The original plan had been to conduct five focus groups but a few respondents were unable to attend as a result of technical difficulties on the night so a sixth group was added to make up the numbers.

Six respondents were recruited for each of the first five groups. In normal circumstances, six is believed to be the maximum number which can usefully contribute to a discussion via Zoom. However, seven respondents were recruited for the final group in the hope that at least six would attend on the night.

One group was held specifically for people living in terrace properties or around the Leeman Road area as it was felt that availability of space and recycling needs were likely to be slightly different for these groups. The other four groups originally planned were recruited to provide two discussions with each of two sectors of the York population. The results of CYC's online survey suggest that these two sectors are of approximately equal size. Two of these groups were held with residents believing recycling to be important and who were satisfied with CYC's recycling service, two who did not feel recycling was important and / or were not satisfied with CYC's recycling service (they were either dissatisfied or 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'). In practice, the great majority of respondents felt recycling was important, so the main segmentation was based on level of satisfaction with CYC's service. It should be noted that some respondents expressed different views on satisfaction in the focus group discussions compared with their statement on recruitment.

The sixth group was recruited essentially to provide replacements for the types of respondent who had been recruited for one of the earlier groups but had been unable to attend.

Invitations to attend were extended to any adult member of the household involved in their disposal of waste. In practice, more women than men attended the discussions, reflecting presumably their perceived greater involvement in their household's recycling activities. Respondents were drawn from all over York and were spread across different age groups.

The table below shows the timing and attendance for each of the groups:

| <b>Date</b>                                  | <b>Composition of Group</b>  | <b>Numbers attending</b> | <b>Gender</b>            |
|--|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup><br>April, 8pm       | Those who felt that recycling was important to their household and who were also satisfied with CYC's current kerbside recycling collections.<br><br>Non-terrace properties. | 6                        | 5 Female<br><br>1 Male   |
| Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup><br>April, 8pm      | Those who did not feel recycling was important and/or who were not satisfied with CYC's current kerbside recycling collections.<br><br>Non-terrace properties.               | 5                        | 3 Females<br><br>2 Males |
| Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup><br>April (1),<br>6pm | Those who felt that recycling was important to their household and who were also satisfied with CYC's current kerbside recycling collections.<br><br>Non-terrace properties. | 4                        | 3 Females<br><br>1 Male  |
| Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup><br>April (2),<br>8pm | Those who did not feel recycling was important and/or who were not satisfied with CYC's current kerbside recycling collections.<br><br>Non-terrace properties.               | 5                        | 5 Females                |
| Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup><br>April,<br>6pm  | Group comprising residents from within the Leeman Road area and residents living in terrace properties.  | 4                        | 3 Females<br><br>1 Male  |
| Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup><br>April,<br>8pm   | Additional group to fulfil numbers.<br><br>6 from non-terrace properties, 1 from a terraced property in the Leeman Road area.  | 7                        | 5 Females<br><br>2 Males |

Respondents from the terraced properties were drawn from postcodes YO23 1AZ, YO1 9QQ, YO26 4YP, YO10 4BE and YO10 4DF

The discussion guide used can be found in Appendix One. The presentation material which was shown to respondents outlining the changes can be found in Appendix Two.

## 5. Executive Summary

The key findings from the research were as follows:

- Environmental concern and an understanding of the importance of recycling were high amongst respondents. While the majority agreed that it was important to encourage recycling, some respondents pointed out that the general public should also be encouraged not to use or to reuse whenever possible.
- The majority of respondents actively chose to recycle as much as they could at the kerbside and believed that their neighbours also did the same. However, there were barriers which prevented them from recycling as much as they would like.
- Most respondents supplemented their kerbside recycling with trips to recycling centres. They used these centres for overflow recycling and also for items not permitted in household recycling.
- Key barriers preventing some respondents from recycling more at the kerbside were a lack of understanding of exactly which items can and cannot be recycled there, inadequate capacity in the containers provided at present and a desire to broaden the range of items which can be submitted.
- CYC was felt to provide inadequate information on what can and cannot be submitted at the kerbside for recycling. Confusion over what can be submitted was most marked for plastic items, yoghurt pots and margarine tubs.
- The desire for a greater range of recyclable items to be able to be submitted for kerbside recycling increased when some respondents pointed out that other local authorities do currently collect more types.
- Current capacity of the containers was most likely to be seen as inadequate by respondents with children or teenagers living at home. The capacity of the boxes, and in particular the box for paper and card, was particularly likely to be seen as inadequate. To overcome this problem some respondents had purchased extra boxes; other respondents were unaware that they could do this.
- The boxes were criticised also for the litter which can be created when items blow out on to the street. The lids and nets for the boxes were rarely seen these days and were generally felt to be quite ineffective in any case.
- The majority of respondents were satisfied with the current two weekly collection schedule. In an ideal world most would prefer a weekly collection but it was accepted that this option was probably not realistic.



- Despite the above criticisms, most respondents were satisfied overall with CYC's current kerbside recycling service. No strong feelings emerged that the service required a review.
- Some respondents were frustrated that the effort they put into separating their glass from plastics and tins appeared to be wasted when they saw all these items thrown into the same area on the truck.
- Reaction to the proposed changes to the kerbside recycling service largely depended on whether the current containers were felt to provide sufficient capacity. Those respondents feeling their containers do not provide sufficient capacity felt that the proposals offered a modest improvement and would lead to an increase in the amount they would recycle. To some of these respondents, however, the increase in capacity did not go far enough.

Those who felt their containers offered adequate capacity were generally disappointed with the proposed changes and saw little that would be of benefit to them. However, there is no reason to suppose that they would reduce the amount they recycled, so overall the changes can be expected to increase the amount of recycling carried out by residents as a whole.

- Even after careful explanation, some respondents clearly struggled to understand that the increase in container size would outweigh the reduced frequency of collection. Without the opportunity to explain this point personally to residents as in the focus groups, CYC's task in communicating that there would be a net increase in capacity is likely to be extremely demanding.
- Respondents in the focus groups expressed a different view from those completing the online survey with regards to all year around garden waste collections. The focus group respondents rejected the idea of all year round collection almost unanimously. It was felt that it could even be wasteful in the winter months if very few bins were presented for collection at this time.

A start of the service in March and a continuation until the end of November would be likely to satisfy most residents. Some respondents were adamant that their garden waste collection currently terminates at the end of October.

- Only a small number of respondents felt the need for a larger garden waste bin. There were some concerns regarding the weight and manoeuvrability of a larger bin when full.
- A switch to placing glass, plastics and tins into a 180L bin was received favourably by the majority of respondents. It was seen to help to increase capacity, to save the time spent separating items, and to be more secure. However, the relatively small net increase in weekly capacity for these items was viewed with concern by some respondents.

- The majority of respondents (including those living in terraced properties), felt that they would should be able to accommodate all the new bins, if in some cases with some difficulty.
- Those living in terraced properties generally expressed similar views to other respondents. However, they were very clear that they would not react favourably towards shared facilities, especially if this meant that there would be potential for them to come into contact with rubbish from other households.
- All respondents would have liked the new proposals to incorporate a plan to recycle a wider range of items at the kerbside. The most mentioned items were tetra paks, batteries, yoghurt pots and margarine tubs.
- The majority of respondents would be willing, with some initial reservations, to try separating their food waste. Collection of food waste at least weekly was felt to be essential.
- In summary, therefore, the proposed changes would seem likely to result in a net increase in the amount of kerbside recycling. Given that they would also produce cost savings to CYC, there would seem to be no reason not to proceed with them, if no other options are under consideration. If some of the improvements suggested by respondents could be introduced as well, the net effect would be likely to be even more positive.

However, some respondents remained unclear why a two weekly cycle of collections similar to the current arrangements could not be maintained, especially in view of the cost savings associated with the new fleet of vehicles. The task of communicating to residents that the extra capacity more than outweighs the change to a three weekly collection frequency should not be underestimated.

## 6. Suggested Actions

- More information should be communicated to respondents as to which items can and cannot be placed in the containers for kerbside recycling. Respondent suggestions included a small leaflet to pin on the fridge at home or a sticker to be placed on boxes/bins.
- A review of the boxes would be useful to see whether a better lid could be developed to stop rubbish blowing away or the paper and cardboard becoming wet and soggy. A permanently attached lid would be the ideal solution.
- Greater awareness should be sought that it is possible to have an extra box or bin for an additional charge (assuming that this would still be possible under the new proposals). That would allow those who feel the scheme does not meet their current capacity needs to be able to take steps to overcome the problem.
- A text message service informing residents of which items are to be collected in the current week (as operated by some other local authorities) would be well received.
- The possibility of accepting a greater range of items at the kerbside (again a service offered by some local authorities) should be explored further.
- Other information should be sought on the amount of garden waste produced in the winter months. This would confirm or refute the findings from the focus groups of an apparent lack of need of an all year round kerbside collection.
- It is very important that the net increase in weekly capacity, despite the reduced frequency of collections, is clearly communicated to residents.

## 7. Detailed Findings

### 7.1 Environmental Concern

The environment overall was regarded as a matter of high concern for the majority of respondents. Most felt that the importance of protecting the environment for future generations was self-evident.

“For me it is the number one concern apart from Covid. The environment has got to be number 1 or number 2 because we are all going to feel the effects for generations to come.” **Group 6**

“It makes me think about future generations. We may ruin it for them, for my daughter and grandkids and so on. The more that we can do to help now, the better place it will be for them in the future.” **Group 6**

“I think any help towards the environment is better than no help, so even if one person does it out of ten that in itself is better than nobody doing it so I do think it is important that it is done.” **Group 1**

“I think it is really important, you only have to look at the sea and the wildlife that get plastic stuck around their beaks and it’s killing a lot of animals and should we wish to keep these animals around then there’s got to be some changes on how we reuse and recycle materials and, with that being said, we can only do it if we all pull together.” **Group 1**

“We live on a planet with limited resources and we are using resources at a rate that is faster than they can be produced so at some point they are going to run out.” **Group 6**

## 7.2 Importance of Recycling

In line with respondents' concern over environmental matters, recycling was also regarded as an issue of high importance. As was also evidenced in the CYC online survey the majority of respondents felt it was important that the general population should be able to recycle as much as they possibly can. As well as concern for the environment respondents also expressed a desire for their household waste not to end up in a landfill.

"I believe recycling would save energy as well because if you make products from raw materials, it is much, much more energy use, so if I recycle one can of beans, I can watch TV for three hours more, I know this for sure, so it's more energy. I think it should be a cultural thing, you should feel it, you can't put it in the waste bin because you should feel I just have to not, you know, it should be inside you. It should be in your nature, you should feel it." **Group 3**

"There's me and my daughter here and we recycle everything as much as we can. It's extremely important, yeah. My daughter is at that age, she's a student, and they're bang up to date with the environment and trying to help and do everything like that, so she was the one that actually taught me more about it. It's educational for us both to understand it and where we can go." **Group 4**

"I think that we should recycle as much as we can really and I don't think there is *[too much of]* a big hoo-ha about it. I think it's good to recycle. I think because of the environment and so on it is best to not waste because there is a lot of waste and litter." **Group 3**

"Well plastic, it takes millions of years to degrade and has an insanely long after-life, which means the more it just gets chucked in landfill it's just going to keep piling up, it's not like biodegradable, well some plastics they have managed to make them biodegradable, but on a large-scale plastics are just going to ruin the environment. If plastic is just chucked in landfill it's going to be there forever." **Group 2**

Although almost all respondents did feel that recycling was important, some stressed the greater importance of not using items in the first place, or of re-using them once they had been used. It was felt the re-use of items consumes less energy and fewer resources than the overall recycling process and there should be more emphasis on this point.

"I must say that I think that reusing things is more important than recycling them. Recycling uses energy and if you can reuse things that is even better. So I sometimes have a problem with this encouragement to make individuals recycle as if that is the answer when actually, if there was more recycling, for example a milk bottle that gets washed out and refilled again uses far less energy than smashing up the glass and recycling it."

**Group 6**

"It does make better sense to reuse something and then if you can't do that then you have got that other option of recycling. I agree you should try to reuse it if you can." **Group 6**

"I do think it is important to recycle as much as you possibly can but I think it's maybe not quite as important as to have us not use certain things in the first place, so reducing use of plastic, especially single use plastic in all sorts of shapes and whatever it comes in, and also not using as much energy in all sorts of different ways, like your fossil fuels. That would be at the top of my list of things, we have to just stop using stuff and reduce that massively, but if we do use stuff and we can recycle it then that's brilliant." **Group 5**

"Yeah, absolutely, I think the first thing we can do is use less in the first place, but most of us find it really, really hard to use less and buy less plastic and packaging and everything, so the next best thing is to recycle and there's no excuse for not recycling."

**Group 2**

### 7.3 Current Behaviour towards Recycling

The current behaviour of respondents reflected their belief in the importance of recycling, with the great majority of respondents choosing to actively recycle at the kerbside. Most respondents were happy to spend the time organising their household recycling. It was generally regarded as a task which created little inconvenience and at the same time was felt to contribute towards a very worthy cause.

“It just sometimes feels so much easier just to shove it all in the bin but, I have to say, in our house we’re fairly dedicated recyclers, I mean we use the kerbside recycling as best we can which is paper and card, plastic and glass and all that, so we’re fairly rigorous about that.” **Group 2**

“I don’t mind particularly sorting it. It means it fits into the small boxes we have if it is sorted.” **Group 5**

“I am happy to recycle. It’s one of those tiny little things which we can all do which will make a difference. If the whole country recycled it would make a huge difference.” **Group 6**

“I don’t mind sorting it and my children are all trained up as well to know what goes where.” **Group 6**

Most respondents stated that they use other recycling options, not just the kerbside recycling service. The Hazel Court site was frequently mentioned as somewhere residents visited in order to dispose of either an overflow of recycling or, more often, to take items which it is not possible to recycle at the kerbside, such as Tetra Paks.

“I mean we use the kerbside recycling as best we can, but in addition to that we also try to keep other things which can be recycled in other places so things like the yoghurt pots which can’t go in the kerbside recycling, plastic bags which you have to take somewhere in particular, we even take Pringles packs and crisp packets to the local shop down on Bishy Road which is where St Nick’s collects them from, so we are fairly dedicated. We try to recycle as much as we can, even my teenagers get hassled into doing it!” **Group 2**

"I don't have a car so I can't really take big things far but we do have a car park around the corner, so if I have got an excess of bottles like at Christmas, for example, we'll take a bag over there. I also take batteries to the local Sainsbury's because they usually have a bin for putting batteries in." **Group 4**

"Yes I use James Street for example – the big centre there. I find it quite exciting there! It is good that they are there. I take electrics, batteries, cardboard, wood, Christmas trees and things like that." **Group 6**

Respondents agreed that the more they are able to recycle at the kerbside the better. A few respondents, particularly those without access to a car, were unable or unwilling to spare the time to travel across town to a recycling bank.

"For me personally the problem is transportation, I don't drive, so it's getting to the major supermarkets that have the recycling centres." **Group 5**

"The problem is I don't drive and so I can't carry all my recycling on the bus and I don't really want to pay for a taxi." **Group 6**

"Do you want my actual honest opinion? I can't be arsed dragging it all up to the top of the road. I'm busy through the day, I'm trying to parent and run a house and go to work, I just can't be arsed!" **Group 5**

One group also commented that they were concerned that driving across town in a car would cause pollution and was counteracting the act of recycling.

"I mean I take my Babybel wrapper across town to be recycled but if I go in the car then is it really that good for the environment? I could cycle but then the time and the effort that takes to be honest I can't be bothered." **Group 4**

"That's the only thing, I work as a driver so if I can call at Hazel Court as part of my work that's fine but I get that it's not great to be using separate trips and causing more pollution." **Group 4**



## 7.4 Behaviour of Neighbours

The majority of respondents noted that their neighbours also actively recycle as many items as they can at the kerbside. This was important as it led to a community feeling that everyone is contributing and avoids any feeling that there is no point in behaving responsibly if their neighbours are not doing the same.

“From what I’ve seen when walking to college, everyone pretty much in my area seems to do quite well, there always seems to be a similar amount of waste in those recycling bins pretty much along every door, so it’s quite good from what I’ve seen in this area.” **Group 2**

“Most of my neighbours are quite on top of it with recycling but there are a few that don’t do any and it can be frustrating. It’s frustrating for anyone in general who is recycling and then you look across the way and people are just throwing everything away, but you can only do what you can do, you can’t change other people, you can’t control what other people do.”

**Group 5**

“To be honest I think my neighbours do pretty well because sometimes when the truck is coming down, I remember ‘oh I need to put mine out’ or when I see theirs outside, something like that. For me, I would rate them on a high scale compared to my own commitment so they are doing far better than me, yeah.”

**Group 2**

“I feel like my neighbours are great and I am sneakily hoping sometimes that they don’t fill their tub so I can put my extra things in theirs but then I find that theirs are also full!” **Group 6**

## 7.5 Current Barriers preventing additional Kerbside Recycling

There are a number of barriers which are preventing some York residents from recycling as much as they would like to currently. The key barriers identified were a lack of detailed understanding of what can and cannot be recycled at the kerbside, lack of adequate capacity in the boxes and bins to meet their recycling needs and what was seen as too limited a range of items accepted by CYC for recycling.

### 7.5.1 Understanding of Items which can and cannot be Recycled

Almost all respondents felt they lacked detailed understanding of which items can and cannot be placed within the kerbside recycling boxes. This was particularly the case for plastic items and groups spent some time debating points such as whether yoghurt pots and margarine tubs can be placed in the kerbside recycling. The effect is that some respondents placed items in the box without knowing for certain whether they were recyclable whilst others 'erred on the side of caution' and did not place items which could be recycled; they therefore ended up not recycling as much as they could have done. The focus group findings in this respect differed from the CYC online survey where around 80% said they did understand what can and cannot be recycled at the kerbside. This difference is likely to reflect the ability of the focus groups to probe more deeply into levels of understanding and for respondents to engage in conversation regarding the matter with each other. The online survey could have established simply that respondents knew that paper, card, glass, plastics and tins can be recycled without understanding the specific items which can and cannot be accepted.

"No, I have no idea, I just chuck it in and guess." **Group 5**

"Like I say, I get confused on what I can and can't so I just sling it all in and have done. If it's wrong then it's wrong, but at least I'm trying, I just think it could be made a bit easier."

**Group 5**

"I just don't think it's explained well enough, there's nowhere you can actually...well there might be but I'm not aware of anywhere that I could either Google or look up in the local newspaper, where it has a list of things that you can and can't recycle. It might help younger children to understand as well because obviously we've got to set a good example to the younger ones in our family to maybe make it more fun for them to want to recycle and so that they have a better understanding as well." **Group 1**

“I’m probably like a 7 out of 10 or something on the recycling scale. It’s more like when I look at packaging and I can’t see if it’s recyclable so I’m like oh well I’ll just chuck it in the bin. I think some packaging is really hard to tell and some of it says ‘check your local...’ and I don’t even know how to do that but I try my best and I do recycle things a lot, much better over the years, I think. I still don’t understand some of the symbols and stuff, like shampoo bottles, can you recycle them, I don’t even know? I look at it and I don’t even know if I can recycle it.” **Group 2**

“I agree, there’s so many different types of plastic that you get your food in, you’ve got your yoghurt pots or packs that your meat or your sausages come in, and you just don’t know. Like xxx said, are you really going to spend all that time trying to work out which one you can and you can’t? You just do what’s easiest and quickest, most of us do most of the time, I think. If you have a plastic pot, you put it in the plastic box and hope it works!” **Group 5**

“They send out timetables telling you when the recycling is, at least they do in my area, so one week it’s bins, one week it’s recycling. I think if they are giving that out then they might as well put something on that’s a bit of a guideline that says which plastics can and can’t be recycled and all that kind of stuff, it wouldn’t be that much more effort.” **Group 2**

An important concern for some respondents was the effect that putting incorrect items into their kerbside recycling may have on the whole process. Some had, for example, heard horror stories that a whole truck of recycling may have to be thrown away if it is contaminated by incorrect items. Respondents agreed it would be very useful for them to know and understand the impact it does have if they submit items which are unsuitable for recycling; in addition, they would welcome feedback if they are submitting items incorrectly.

"If there is something constantly being put into the rubbish that shouldn't be recycled, perhaps the people dealing with it at the other end need to tell the people that are putting it in the rubbish."

**Group 3**

"Someone told me and I can't believe it to be actually true, but she said that a whole lorry of recycling can be completely ruined by just one wrong item. I would hate to ruin it for a whole van by putting yoghurt pots in and that would be awful!"

**Group 6**

"I definitely worry about putting things in the bins that can't be recycled and that might cause problems. I used to put everything in— I had no idea you couldn't put yoghurt pots in until someone at work told me."

**Group 6**

The uncertainty over what can and cannot be recycled at the kerbside reflected criticism of lack of guidance from CYC on this point. Some respondents thought they may be able to find information on the website but felt that was quite an effort, especially if they were not able to find the right page. They would therefore prefer a hard copy information leaflet or a sticker to put on the bin or box.

"Does it say on the calendar? I think the list of things is on the calendar, I'm not sure."

**Group 4**

"I think I would just prefer a letter, you know, once a year that you can just pin on your fridge of what you can and you can't."

**Group 1**

"I just have a suggestion. If there could be some labels on the recycling bins, if it could be pictures probably, it could help. Sometimes you forget, you're like 'oh should I recycle this or should I not' and if I can see the pictures clear well then even a child could do it!"

**Group 3**

"Maybe if there was some kind of like a poster on your recycling bins saying what should go in and what shouldn't, that might be a lot better?"

**Group 1**

“I think you can find the information when you look hard for it but I don't think York Council are terribly good at telling us what we can and can't recycle.” **Group 2**

“Yeah, I think it needs to be on the side of the bin, especially for plastics I think it goes by like numbers or something, so if it were just on the bin, I'd know I could recycle what number and you probably use the same things generally most weeks so you'd get to know what can go in and what can't go in but because I don't really know with plastic, I just shove it all in really. If it said on the side of the box “yeah you can do 1, 2, 3, 4” I wouldn't mind looking and getting used to what I can put in but it is too complicated without having to research it yourself.” **Group 1**

Although the boxes have generic explanations of what to place in them, for example 'plastic' no respondents knew of any form of detailed explanation currently shown on the bins or boxes

### 7.5.2 Satisfaction with Current Capacity of Boxes and Bins

The majority of respondents felt the capacity of their boxes and bins met their current requirements. However, a barrier for a minority of respondents was lack of capacity, meaning they were often not able to fit all the items they would like to recycle into them. This was particular the case for households with children or teenagers present.

The CYC online survey showed a slightly higher proportion of respondents (around half) claiming that they had too few containers.

“I think I do as much as I can, sometimes I think there's not enough room for the amount of recycling that we actually produce and that can get a bit frustrating. We've had to fashion our own [containers] to add and luckily, they do take extra ones but it does get quite messy and especially if it's windy, it flies around.” **Group 3**

“Yeah, I agree, I obviously recycle as much as I can but it gets to the point where there's no more room and it's like where do you put it and you end up putting it in bags and they won't take the bags so you just end up with excess recycling and unfortunately it ends up going in the [general household waste] bin as you've nowhere else to put it.” **Group 3**

Perhaps as a direct consequence of the increase in home deliveries and use of companies like Amazon over the past year paper and card were seen as the items where there was the most need for an increase in recycling capacity. A large majority of respondents stated that they regularly have more than will fit into their paper and card box and also that they often struggled to fit larger pieces of card in the box.

“I agree with the paper waste, especially in recent years because everyone’s doing online deliveries at the moment, especially during the pandemic, so you just get a load of waste. Our waste box is usually half full with Amazon packaging so it does get a bit of a problem sometimes.” **Group 3**

“It’s a good service but either [collect] more frequently or bigger tubs to be able to put it in, cardboard especially as it’s our biggest one.” **Group 3**

As indicated above, some respondents had taken steps to increase their household capacity by placing their own additional boxes and bags out with the recycling; others had invested in additional boxes or bins from the Council. Some respondents claimed their collectors took extra unofficial bags and boxes whereas others stated they had tried this without success.

“I’ve got loads of recycle bins because you should get more free from the Council so I just phoned up and asked for more and they just gave me more free, so I’ve got like eight recycle boxes!”

**Group 1**

“Yeah, we always fill our boxes, our main issue is that we have too much recycling for a fortnightly collection, it’s always really, really full and we’ve got four boxes. We also have an overflow box that’s not an official box that they empty as well.” **Group 4**

"I have got three extra boxes from the Council because the number they give you is just not enough for my family. With the children we have a lot to recycle." **Group 5**

"We've got a very large corner garden so we have invested in two garden wheelie bins. You can just get another from the council." **Group 6**

"The thing is, at the moment, the instruction from the York Council is that if you have too much to fit in your black recycling bin, you can put it out to be collected, for example, paper and card. My son does one of the Local Link rounds and sometimes we have extra Local Links that don't get delivered as he always gets too many, so we have a wedge of magazines and they won't fit in the recycling bin, but the instructions are that you put them in a container next to the recycling bin and they will be taken." **Group 2**

One group suggested a possible 'mix and match' type approach for container sizes depending on the needs of specific households.

"It depends on the household doesn't it, some people know that they're going to get through 40 three litre bottles of Coca-Cola and some people are going to get through one small milk carton. [It would be good to be able to choose] if you want a box or a huge bin, as long as the frequency is appropriate." **Group 5**

"I think that would be quite a good idea to be honest. You could specify what size and then you're not left with a great big wheelie bin if you only want one small box, and you're not left with two small boxes if you want a big wheelie bin, so I think it might be quite a good option." **Group 5**

"Well, we currently have the two sizes available, don't we, we have the boxes and we have the green bin, which is coming under recycling, I assume, for garden waste. If we could use a green bin size or a box size maybe that would work for different households?" **Group 5**

### 7.5.3 Range of Items Recycled

Another barrier preventing many respondents from recycling all they would like at the kerbside is that certain items are not accepted by CYC. Batteries, yoghurt containers, margarine packs, carrier bags and tetra paks were all mentioned frequently in this respect.

“Well, I think the Council does the minimum that they should be doing. They provide a kerbside recycling service and that’s about the best thing I can say about it really. I think that they could go, and they should go, a lot further. We should be able to recycle more variety of things at the kerbside in order to encourage more people to do it, it’s as simple as that really.” **Group 2**

“Well, I’d go for a few more options as well, I keep going back to my tetra paks because that’s one thing that bugs me, and maybe plastic bags. If we could recycle both of those that would definitely increase my recycling in our house.” **Group 5**

“Tetra paks are a big one – I really wish they could be recycled at the kerbside.” **Group 2**

“I would really like to see more types of plastic being able to be recycled. I think if I am right you can only do the ones with the number 1 on them and I know that other counties you can do far more than that. I don’t know why we can’t in York and I would also really like to see Tetra Paks recycled if we could.” **Group 6**

Some respondents who had experience of living in other parts of the country felt the York service was less satisfactory than that of other local authorities in a number of respects.



“I remember going on a home exchange holiday in October half-term down to Frome in Somerset and I know that they are a very forward-thinking Council and they recycle all sorts of stuff. I just looked on their Council website and their recycling service is fantastic. For a start, you can put all food waste into a bin and that gets collected which is great isn't it, that's a massive amount of stuff that just goes into people's bins. You can recycle your tetra paks at the kerbside and that is a massive plus I think. They advertise that you can put aerosols in there and you can recycle batteries at the kerbside and small electrical appliances like no longer working kettles and irons at the kerbside. I mean that's pretty good!” **Group 2**

“In Sheffield they have wheelie bins and I think that is the main thing that I have learned that we are missing a wheelie bin [for recyclable items] in York. It is a lot bigger to fill than a tiny little box so that if you are a big family our box fills up so quickly and sometimes if you have an extra box or bag then they don't always take them and I feel frustrated. In Sheffield there is a brown bin for glass and plastic and tins – so it is all combined. There is a thinner blue bin that takes cardboard but they are still bigger.” **Group 6**

“My Aunt and Uncle out near Whitby are the same. I think they have two wheelie bins and they are slimmer than ours and I think they get picked up fortnightly and it works really well and they don't have to think about what they are sorting. There is just one for recycling and one for waste.” **Group 6**

“My parents live in Scarborough and I think they have a slightly different set up to us. They have just two wheelie bins and it seems much more straightforward. They are happy with it.” **Group 6**

## 7.6 Attitude to Current CYC Recycling Service

### 7.6.1 Overall Satisfaction

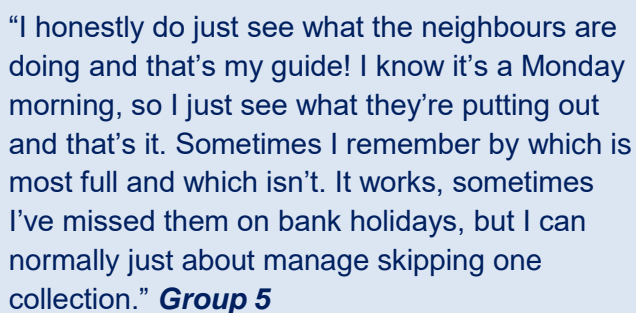
The online survey conducted by CYC showed that just under half of respondents (48%) were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the current kerbside recycling service.

Satisfaction was slightly higher amongst those taking part in the focus groups with almost two thirds (65%) expressing themselves 'quite satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the current service. A further 16% were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', with only 19% 'quite dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'. Those dissatisfied were most likely to be critical of CYC's service in respect of two of the barriers reported above (inadequate overall capacity and inability to be able to recycle certain types of item at the kerbside).


### 7.6.2 Collection Arrangements

On the whole respondents did understand, and were satisfied with, the current two week collection cycles. Some admitted they were occasionally confused as to which week they were on but felt they could normally work out by looking online or at what their neighbours had put out.

Respondents also noted potential confusion when collection dates vary around bank holidays and particularly at Christmas time but most felt that they had adequate notification of these changes and were able to adapt accordingly.



"I honestly do just see what the neighbours are doing and that's my guide! I know it's a Monday morning, so I just see what they're putting out and that's it. Sometimes I remember by which is most full and which isn't. It works, sometimes I've missed them on bank holidays, but I can normally just about manage skipping one collection." **Group 5**



"I'll confess I sometimes have to just rely on what my neighbours do!" **Group 3**

“Normally it is fine. Christmas can be a bit of a pain can't it, if you do miss one or you put it out the wrong day, and we've all got extra stuff at Christmas, so that can be a bit annoying.” **Group 5**

“It's reliable, they do come every two weeks. Rarely, I think once, it didn't come and I rang up and it did come the next day, but generally it's very reliable and even on bank holidays they were collecting as well which I was quite surprised that they do...and thankful!” **Group 3**

“The information is available on York.gov, you can find it via postcode, you can find it with a personalised calendar. It's available there but when it comes down to something like a bank holiday or Christmas you're relying on a sticker on the front of your bin or, fingers crossed, looking at what the neighbours do.” **Group 5**

A number of respondents noted that, particularly in summer when household waste can start to smell and garden waste is greater, a weekly collection would be ideal. However, most respondents appreciated this would be very difficult, and potentially costly, to implement.

“I mean in an ideal world I'd like it to be weekly. Even when you clean plastics up they can start to smell, especially in summer.” **Group 6**

“I do worry a bit in summer about food containers, however hard you wash them they can smell a bit and you don't want those attracting rats or foxes or anything.” **Group 5**

“I think that I'm pretty much always filled up with my boxes even though it is just two people living here but every two weeks seems fair enough to me.” **Group 2**

“For our house, every fortnight is about right because we've got six tubs, we bought extra tubs.” **Group 4**

### 7.6.3 Garden Waste Collection Period

The garden waste service was used by around half the respondents in the focus groups. Most who were using it were reasonably satisfied with it in its current form. In particular, there was very little complaint that the service stops between December and March. However, one group was adamant that their collections stop at the end of October and stated that they would like them to continue to the end of November

Especially during the summer months some respondents struggled with the capacity of their current bin and would welcome a larger bin for over those months of the year.

“Yeah, sometimes, I hardly ever mow my lawn and recently we’ve been building something in the backyard so the lawn has been unattended but when it’s needed, I have used it [the garden waste bin] and, I have to say, having a green waste thing is quite a good thing to have because chucking organic matter into landfill is just unnecessary.” **Group 2**

“I mean, generally, I’m not a big horticulturalist and it’s not one that I use that much really.”

**Group 3**

“I think it’s ok as it is. Obviously it [the garden waste bin] gets very full in the peak summer months but I mean that’s what you would expect.” **Group 6**

### 7.6.4 Current Containers

In addition to the comment by some respondents that the current containers do not have enough capacity to meet their needs, there were complaints about the ease with which paper and plastics can be blown out of these boxes and become strewn across the streets causing an unsightly mess. There was little awareness amongst respondents that lids or nets could be, or had been, supplied for the boxes. Both the lids and nets tended to attract criticism in any case amongst those who knew of them. The lids in particular were felt to be easily blown away, damaged, or even ‘stolen’ by neighbours.

“The lids, they just get broken, they get chucked about, like I’ve seen them they just chuck them around. We get them left on the road and I’ve seen cars just come and drive over them.”

**Group 1**

“I don’t think half my street has lids any more, I haven’t seen a lid in my street for like years now because they just all disappeared.” **Group 1**

“I think that’s a really good point about when sometimes something falls out of the boxes. Of course they [the refuse collectors] are on a tight schedule and I can’t imagine it being a fun job to do, but sometimes where there are things left out like that, they’ll roll around the streets and no one knows whose it actually is and often no one takes responsibility for it. That’s something I’ve noticed can happen quite a lot. There are quite a lot of younger kids that I see running around on the streets and there’s broken glass sometimes because bottles have fallen out and that’s not taken care of at all.” **Group 2**

“There was something when I lived with my parents in Fulford, I remember when we first got the recycling bins, and for some of them they gave you like a netting with it which was really useful as it stopped things from falling out, but I haven’t seen any in this area and also, they get lost stupidly easily and I think if there was some way to improve the boxes that we have currently so we don’t have to replace every single box.” **Group 2**

“Let’s have a laugh at what they did previously with these recycling boxes, the nets lasted one use and then they were discarded and taken or disappeared, maybe one in a hundred has a net left after five uses, and then the lids, very few boxes have lids, they are just stacked on top of each other and the lids have blown away, there’s very few lids still in circulation from what I’ve observed driving around on a morning. It’s not a winning idea is the lids and nets on boxes, it hasn’t worked from my observations so, the 180L wheelie bin with the lid, great, you can’t take the lid off that and it can’t blow away, that’s a good idea but we’re going back to the status quo with the new scheme with lids blowing away and disappearing and getting used as trays for barbecues or whatever, I don’t know why these things don’t exist anymore but they do disappear.” **Group 5**

Respondents also commented that, without lids or nets, the card and paper can become very soggy in rainy conditions and then the boxes become difficult to lift.

“I have had it where the cardboard gets sodden and it’s really difficult and heavy to move. Our lids just disappeared; I don’t know where they went. We did have the netting but that didn’t stop water getting in and making it really heavy. It’s all right if you’re capable of manoeuvring the things.” **Group 3**

“You know you get a couple of Amazon deliveries, and let’s face it we’re all get lot of Amazon orders at the moment and you’ve got loads of cardboard and you can’t fit it all into your box.” **Group 6**

“Whenever you get a large delivery, you’re faced with stuff that you just can’t fit in [the box] and, of course, if it rains, it just turns into a big pile of mushy wet cardboard.” **Group 4**

### 7.6.5 Mixing of Recyclable items

A significant number of respondents were frustrated at having seen different types of recycling material all placed into the same part of the truck. They questioned why residents were being asked to separate their recycling items if they are all ultimately thrown in the same bin.

“We’ve had the same issue where we’ve seen them [refuse collectors] putting it all together and it’s like well why do we bother spending our time separating it all out when you’re just going to shove it all back together again? Even if it does get sorted in the wagon at the other end, why do we need to separate it then?” **Group One**

“I actually wrote to the Council a couple of days ago when we had our recycling done because, obviously, we split it down into glass, tins, cardboard and the other day a lorry came down with a big orange bin and emptied all the recycling bins into one big bin and then just poured that into the back of the wagon, and it was just like I’ve just spent two weeks separating all my recycling for you to empty it into one bin. **Group One**

“I think there’s a kind of disheartening feeling when I see the recycling get taken out when I’m on my way to college and sometimes they’ll just chuck it, all the stuff that you’ve spent time sorting out is just chucked into the same thing.” **Group Two**

“I think it’s probably more often...and they just throw it all into one tub at the moment so we spend the week separating everything and they’re just throwing it into one, so it makes me feel like why do I bother separating it myself.” **Group Four**

“What annoys me with it, is that they encourage us to make it all separate and put it all in boxes, yet they just sling it all in the van! It makes me think, well what’s the frigging point in making me separate it all then? It’s so frustrating because you’re there thinking ‘what box can this go in?’, I’m sorry but I can’t be bothered thinking about stuff like that, I just want to sling it in a box and it get recycled. You separate it all and make sure it’s all done and then they come along and just heave it all into one thing and you think, well what’s the point? It’s well annoying to be honest.” **Group 5**

### 7.6.6 Need for Change

Although respondents certainly did not object to the council reviewing the current provision of recycling services they did not see it as being a critical matter and it would not have been at the top of their list of desired improvements. Those satisfied with the current service were particularly likely to feel this way.

“I mean I wouldn’t have put it at the top of their list of priorities.” **Group 1**

“I guess it’s good they are reviewing it but I didn’t see a huge need to.” **Group 4**

## 7.7 Attitude to Proposed Changes to Recycling Service

A presentation summarising the proposed changes to the services was shown to respondents after attitudes to the current CYC service had been discussed. A copy of the presentation can be found in Appendix Two.

### 7.7.1 Initial Reactions

The majority of the discussion prompted by the presentation related to the increased volume of recyclable waste which could be taken from the combination of additional capacity from the boxes and bins but less frequent collections. Respondents' views on whether the proposals represented an improvement compared to the current services depended largely on whether they felt their bins and boxes provide adequate capacity for their recyclable waste at present.

Those that currently do not require additional capacity for their recycling waste felt the changes offered them little improvement compared to the current services. Several of these respondents were disappointed that the opportunity had not been taken to enhance the service in other respects. Those who currently wanted additional capacity felt the new proposals represented a step in the right direction, although some felt they would still not have providing sufficient capacity.

"It doesn't look like a bad proposal, increased capacity for recycling, lower frequencies but larger capacity, it may work."

**Group 5**

"I like it as well, it's going to be a lot easier. I'm thinking that at the moment everyone's doing the cardboard, which we're getting twice as much, is that going to be enough for the two boxes? The other ones for the garden waste and then the plastics and things, I think is fantastic, it's just more the cardboard one that worries me. **Group 4**

"It's more just about an increase in capacity and the durability of the stuff that you store it in, like a bin would make things so much easier because of the lid. I think it's needed for paper as that's the big issue for us, it just ends up absolutely everywhere so I think something needs to be done about that." **Group 1**

"I would say it doesn't allow me to do any more than what I'm currently doing. It's not adding those extra bits [elements of the service] that I think I need. I manage with the capacity that I've got so I don't think it's going to help me particularly. Unless I get a garden waste bin!"

**Group 5**



“Quite frankly I think it’s utterly pathetic, I don’t see any advantage in that whatsoever. I would say what the heck do York Council think they’re doing? It’s nothing like what I’d like them to do. I mean, great, give us one bin to put plastic and glass in, yippee-do.” **Group 2**

### 7.7.2 Three Week Collection Cycle

Most respondents understood after it had been explained that the combination of larger bin / box capacity and less frequent collection would result in a net increase in weekly capacity for paper, glass, plastics and tins. However, a significant minority (including all members of one group) apparently failed to appreciate the point and were critical of the proposals for this reason. This failure to understand that net weekly capacity would increase, despite having been taken through the material prepared by CYC and despite several attempts to correct the misunderstanding by the moderator, underlines the difficulty of the task facing CYC to communicate the point when they would not have the benefit of personal contact with individual residents.

The respondent quotations below demonstrate the confusion over capacity on a three weekly cycle which was still apparent even after detailed discussion.

“I think the opportunity to recycle more is good but less often collections does it make that much difference? Maybe the issue just carries on but every three weeks.” **Group 6**

“I still think you’re going to run out of space every three weeks.” **Group 6**

“I think the mixing is good in the wheelie bin, that’s fine by me but I think the problem with the three week cycle is that even now if you have a party or a barbeque and your box is overflowing it can hang around for a week if you rearrange things and squash them down you can but if you have two more weeks to wait it is quite a long time actually to wait.” **Group 6**

For the most part, however, the switch would not seem likely to cause major concern as long as the net increase in weekly capacity could be clearly communicated.

“The first view is I think that it is great that they’re increasing the capacity for us to put more recycling in, I don’t think that the three-week cycle is going to make a difference, I think it is going to be the benefit with it.” **Group 1**

“I think for the capacity that it has increased, I think we would get used to a three-week cycle, we’d get to know which bins were which so I don’t see it being an issue it being over a three-week cycle.” **Group 1**

“I don’t think the three-weekly thing is an issue at all and I think everybody would cope, well personally I would cope with that, that’s not the issue.” **Group 2**

“I still really would prefer a weekly collection, but if we’re going to get them on a rotation for the different recycling types and there’s less confusion over which types go in which box, then yeah.” **Group 5**

“I think with the plans being to have more space for the tins and glass and things, I think three weeks would be sufficient.” **Group 1**

Two relatively minor concerns were raised about a switch to a three weekly cycle.

- Several respondents expressed concern that it would be difficult to remember what item was being collected each week. If it was feasible to introduce a reminder system such as a text message service (as operated by some local authorities), that would be warmly welcomed and would almost certainly overcome the concern.

“It’s just going to be confusing, like xxx said, it’s having to remember a complicated timetable. I’m not going to lie. I would have to experience it before I could make a decision on that.” **Group 2**

“I just think the three-weekly recycling of it all could sometimes get a bit confusing when you’re thinking, well hang on a minute which one’s coming this week, which one’s coming next week and it’s getting into that.” **Group 4**

“Can we sign up to a list where somebody will send us a text message and say ‘don’t forget to put your recycling out, it’s glass this week’?” **Group 5**

“I might struggle to remember, that’s the only thing, I’d have to have a nice little grid because I currently have the piece of paper from the Council on the fridge so I can check what week it is, but I think I might struggle at first to remember which week is which.” **Group 4**

- Some concerns were also raised that especially in the summer months there could be traces of food left even if items had been washed out prior to recycling,. The three weekly cycle might then increase the risk of unpleasant odours and would potentially attract more vermin.

“Like I said earlier you have got to be careful with food packaging that you might attract rats and that is going to be even worse only collected every three week.”  
**Group 6**

“The thing for me is what if you accidently miss a week, or put the wrong stuff out one week, especially when you’re getting used to it. Then you’ve got stuff sat around for six weeks. It could stink!” **Group 6**

### 7.7.3 All Year Round Garden Waste Collections

Only a small number of respondents were currently using the garden waste bin at present and only a small minority of these felt there was any need to have all-year round collections.

Respondents raised concerns that there is very little need for the service during the winter months and therefore there would be very few bins to empty on a street. It could be argued that these few bins do not justify the effort of a full collection.

“I don’t feel we need it (all year round). Our garden waste bin at the moment, I must remember to put it out actually as it is collected tomorrow, but that’ll be the first time since November or whatever, it’s full but it soon sinks down.” **Group 2**

“Yeah, I’m not bothered, I only use it in the summer months when I’m gardening.” **Group 2**

"Surely it doesn't make financial sense to send a truck around in winter for garden waste when hardly anyone will have anything to put in it?" **Group 2**

"I just find it a very wasteful idea. You haven't got garden cuttings in the winter months and to send a collection truck round to check the streets when one, maybe two people have put a bin out just seems a bad idea to me and not good for the environment either."

**Group 6**

"We do have a big garden bin sat there empty doing nothing for most of the year which seems a bit wasteful sometimes, but really you stop most of your gardening after autumn." **Group 3**

"In December, January and February everything stops, it's mainly the hedges at our house and they mainly grow in summer so we don't need the collection in winter really but other people might I guess." **Group 4**

"I just kind of feel that for garden waste, yeah sometimes it might be needed, but certainly not all the time all year round. It feels like we're going to end up paying for it for the few people that are going to keep using it all year round when I feel they're the few rather than the many. We're going to be charged extra for it in our council tax." **Group 1**

One group was adamant that their garden waste service finished at the end of October; this group suggested that an extension of the service to include March and November was all that was really necessary.

"No I am certain ours stops at the end of October for sure. I mean I would like it to go into November actually for leaves and stuff like that." **Group 6**

"No it definitely stops before November I'm sure. I wish it would run into November!" **Group 6**

"I want garden waste to be collected in November and for them to start again in March." **Group 6**

"An extra month either side is all I need, so maybe up until the end of November and then start again in March. I don't have anything in January except maybe the Christmas Tree!" **Group 6**

The findings from the focus groups in this respect differed from the online research in which nearly two thirds said they would like their garden waste collected all year around. This is a surprising difference, but similar findings emerged from all the focus groups and the conclusions appeared clear-cut. It would appear that the opportunity offered by a focus group to consider the issue in depth, and in the context of other changes which could be made to the service, is what produced the different reaction.

#### 7.7.4 Larger Size Garden Waste Bin

The majority of respondents felt that there was no great need for a larger sized garden waste bin. However, a few agreed that it would be useful during the summer months.

A small minority of respondents who currently needed more space for garden waste had ordered a second garden bin and felt this was an adequate alternative to a larger size. Many also had the ability to compost in their garden and this helped reduce the need for them to use the kerbside services to remove all their garden waste.

"I'm not that keen on the larger bin idea. I don't think we need it as much as we do space for other items." **Group 4**

"I guess in summer it would be useful but we also have compost bins we can use." **Group 6**

"We have quite a big garden, my parents are very keen gardeners, but we never really had a point where our green bins are overflowing or anything like that, so I think a larger one isn't really a necessity for us. It would be bigger and get more in the way so I agree with xxx and I don't think it would be a big deal for us really." **Group 1**

"People would probably rather have a bigger green one for other waste and keep the smaller green one for the garden waste I think." **Group 3**

"I'm a bit surprised why they're going for an even bigger green waste garden bin so it's not just the same size bin you've got to fit in, it's an even bigger one that you're going to get when there's not been that many times that, you know, we really can't wait for the bin to be emptied. It's literally the middle of the summer, so such a small period, and they're giving you a bigger bin to use all year round. I just can't see that that many people in York have complained about needing a huge new garden bin, especially when you can pay extra to have a second green bin anyway." **Group 6**

"I'd say I've got quite a biggish garden with quite a lot of green area that I do need to cut down a lot but I definitely don't need a bigger bin. I cut it down at the moment every couple of weeks and manage to fill it but that's plenty I would say." **Group 1**

Some respondents also raised concerns regarding the weight of a garden waste bin this size and whether they, or elderly people in particular, would be able to manoeuvre it safely to the kerbside. Storage was also raised as an issue.

"The other thing is the green bin. When it is full I can barely move it so I worry that if it got bigger I just couldn't move it and I am 6ft tall and able bodied. How is an elderly person going to haul these bins out? I worry about that." **Group 6**

"For some houses there just isn't space to store them and there isn't room on the pavements. It can block the way for wheelchairs and pushchairs." **Group 6**

"I'm fortunate to have a gate through to the side of my garden so space isn't an issue for us luckily but I do think, as was touched on, I think for a lot of people they won't necessarily have that space and if they don't have a freeway to their garden then that is going to be difficult for a lot of people and it isn't exactly aesthetically pleasing either." **Group 1**

There was some confusion over whether the bin would be for garden waste only or could also include items such as potato peelings. This possible extension would be well received and it was accepted that, if implemented, it could help to justify an all year round collection.

“Can I just ask, are they keeping it as garden waste with the increased bin size or are they going to let your vegetable peelings and things be able to go in it because I know in other places you can recycle those things?” **Group 1**

“Definitely, I would love to put that [vegetable peelings] in. I think you’d certainly need it all year round then.” **Group 1**

“With those garden rubbish ones you could put your vegetable peelings and stuff like that, it’s more than just garden rubbish that can go into there.” **Group 4**

“I’d find it of a much higher value if it was food waste that was included in that green waste bin. If it was food waste then having that all year round is worth it.” **Group 2**

The group consisting of those living in terraced properties stated that they were not entitled to a green bin currently even though some of them have gardens with a lawn and trees. Some of these respondents would find it useful to have a bin for garden waste and hoped that they would be entitled to one under the new proposals. The current 180L bin would be more than adequate for these respondents.

“We’d like one if we could have one because we’ve got a garden but we just don’t have a garden bin.” **Group 5**

“Even if we request one, we cannot have a collection of garden waste because we don’t have, according to the zoning, a garden.” **Group 5**

"I think that's correct, yes. The last time I enquired they just said yeah, it [a garden waste bin] wasn't available." **Group 5**

"But maybe more of us could have a garden waste bin who want one? That would be a nice option to have. We're a terraced house on a main road so we don't get one, but we do have a garden with grass and trees in it and it would be nice to have a green bin." **Group 5**

### 7.7.5 Switch from Boxes to 180L Bin for Glass, Plastics and Tins

The proposal to switch glass, plastics and tins from two 55l boxes to one 180L bin was seen as an improvement.

As spontaneously mentioned by respondents, the boxes can easily lead to rubbish blowing on to the streets and lids can often become lost, detached or damaged. A bin with attached lid would be far more secure in this respect.

"I think, for me, the increase in space and the change from boxes to a bin for the glass, plastic etc are the two things for this household that would be the biggest advantages." **Group 1**

"For me, I think the three weeks is fine and it's the putting the plastic and that in something more so it doesn't get blown over the street every week because every week it's just all over our street is the plastic. That's important for me because it just looks terrible." **Group 1**

"It makes it a little easier, I guess. It also means there won't be as much spilling with the glass on the road because it's not in a box and it's all in the bin that you can close." **Group 2**



Respondents also commented that there would be a small saving in time from not having to separate their items anymore and that it would alleviate the current bad feelings when they see refuse collectors putting glass, plastics and tins into the truck together.

“I think a bigger bin, now that I know there is a plastic and glass sorting facility, that’s better to have one big bin for that. I know xxx was saying she didn’t like the idea of having an extra bin but I think having one bin for the plastic and glass would make it a lot easier for people just to chuck it all in the same place.” **Group 2**

“I feel like the bigger bins will encourage more recycling, especially when you’re not having to sort anything out. I’m one of them who can’t really be bothered doing it, I’d rather just chuck it in the bin and let it be recycled. I feel like a lot of people like me feel the same, so I do think it’ll encourage a lot more recycling. It makes it easier to store instead of it flying all over the joint and, when it’s windy especially, it gets blown all over, at least if it’s in a bin with a lid it’s in there.” **Group 5**

“They all get mixed anyway so you might as well put them in a big bin and mix them because they do when they get put in the truck anyway, don’t they?” **Group 2**

“Well, I think the changing the container that you put glass and plastic into, as xxx just said, if you put it into a wheelie style bin then that, hopefully, is going to make it more effectively tipped into the van so, yeah, that is a positive.” **Group 2**

However, some of those seeking additional capacity for their recyclable waste noted with concern that the net weekly increase for glass, plastics and tins / cans was relatively small.

“But it’s not giving much more space though, is it? If you think, if you had two 55L boxes collected every two weeks and then they’ve gone for 180L bin every three weeks, that’s only giving you 15L. You’re only getting a bit more for the three weeks aren’t you, you’re not getting a huge amount, you’re getting more card and paper but you’re not really getting much more for your tins and plastic.” **Group 1**

“I think that plastic and tins is more of an issue, because once you fill up a box full of paper you can usually squish it down, but once you fill up a box full of tins and plastic, which we do every fortnight, you can’t really fit any more in. I’d say ideally, to be safe, probably a 50% increase in both of those from what it is now would probably be comfortable.” **Group 3**

### 7.7.6 Additional Box for Paper and Card

As previously mentioned paper and card were the items for which current capacity was most likely to be seen as inadequate. Therefore, the increase to two boxes was seen as an improvement. If boxes were to continue to be used for paper and card, however, it was hoped that some sort of permanent lid solution could be found to help prevent paper blowing around and also the items in the box becoming soggy when it rains. Most would prefer one 180L bin over two 55L boxes if that were a feasible option.

“I think if the paper wasn’t in a box and in something substantial that would be a massive advantage as well.” **Group 1**

“I think it [*a wheelie bin*] is needed for paper as that’s the big issue for us. It just ends up absolutely everywhere so I think something needs to be done about that.” **Group 1**

“On the paper front it obviously addresses our need for more paper recycling currently even if it isn’t as much as we’d like at the moment.” **Group 3**

“It would just be easier if they were all wheelie bins rather than your boxes, just get rid of your boxes and just have the wheelie bins because it’s the same thing with card, isn’t it, your lids don’t always go on and then your card’s flying about all over the place when it’s windy.” **Group 4**

“A wheelie bin for the cardboard would be so much better.” **Group 4**

### 7.7.7 Storage of Containers

A minority of respondents felt that storage of the new containers would be a problem. However, the majority did not see this as an issue, especially as the two boxes could be stacked on top of each other. Even those living in terraced properties were mostly relaxed about their ability to store the containers, though it should be borne in mind that only one such group was conducted. However, some concerns were raised, particularly in terms of the broader garden waste bin. It was also noted that it is increasingly common for households to have bin stores built and it would be very frustrating if the new bins and boxes no longer fitted into them.

“My only issue is where do they think I’m going to store all these bins? I mean, at the minute, I have my green waste bin, my general waste bin and my three recycling small tub bins at the front of the house. If I’ve now got to increase that to another 240L bin - where’s it going to go? I’m in a semi-detached so that’s fine but for people that are in smaller areas it’s going to be very tight about where these bins are going to go. You’re losing a box but you’re gaining a 240L bin so it’s not really a one for one swap space wise.” **Group 1**

“I manage ok, luckily, I’ve got the space outside for them, I would have enough space for a bigger recycling box as well. Not everyone’s got that space though, so I’m quite lucky.”  
**Group 5**

“Yeah, I mean if you have quite a small yard like we have, our three boxes fit quite nicely in our shed at the moment and if we got another one, we’d have to put it outside but, it’s not really that big of a deal as it’s for recycling so there’s probably worse things you can put in your garden!” **Group 3**

“I think you might get some annoyed people who have had specialist stores built for their bins, a lot of people do that nowadays, and if the new bins don’t fit they’d be really annoyed.”  
**Group 6**

### 7.7.8 Residents of Terraced Properties

Whilst it should again be kept in mind that only one group was held with residents of terraced properties, it appeared that reaction to the proposals by these respondents differed very little from the other groups. Their desire to have the option of a garden waste collection has, however, been noted above.

These respondents did, however, react very unfavourably to the possibility of sharing containers with their neighbours. These opinions appeared to be heavily influenced by the pandemic. Respondents were very concerned about the health and safety implications and did not want to have any contact with other households' rubbish items. Concerns were also raised that on many streets there isn't room for a larger shared container, as they could potentially block pavement access for wheelchairs and pushchairs and road access for emergency vehicles.

"It's a lovely idea, and lots of blocks of flats and maisonettes do, they have a bin store, especially in the newer properties, and the residents come down and put them in, but who would be responsible for maintaining them is a question that comes up every time I talk to people about that. You get one or two unreasonable residents that just throw the bags in and it's up to the one or two nice people in the block who will go out of their way to tidy it up because the Council staff won't take the bags that are on the floor next to the bins so they get left there and with them being in plastic bags we're back to the vermin! It's a difficult thing unless there was someone dedicated to maintaining the bins that were put there for the community." **Group 5**

"Personally, if it was a garden waste communal bin then I'm up for it, any other, then no. I don't want to have anything to do with anybody else's rubbish, I'm sorry but you don't know who's going to be touching it or washing their hands after picking dog poo up, no, not for me thank you." **Group 5**

"I think that's a fair point, given what we've been though in the last year, everybody likes to keep their own things to themselves and we're a lot more aware of that. It's probably not the right time to be thinking of bringing communal storage of waste and recycling in right now, I don't think." **Group 5**

“That’s not something I’d want either, no. I’d like to keep my own [bin] separate and be in charge of my own and not have to worry about it being a mess, cleaning up after other people, and also touching things that other people have touched.” **Group 5**

### 7.7.9 Range of Items accepted for Kerbside Recycling

Respondents expressed some disappointment that the proposals had not incorporated the possibility of recycling a wider range of items at the kerbside.

Suggested additional items included:

- Tetra paks
- Batteries
- Small electrical appliances
- Specific plastic items primarily yoghurt pots and margarine tubs
- Aerosols
- Plastic bags
- Crisp packets
- Pringles tubes

“If a box is freed up, I want to use it for something like tetra or yoghurt cartons or something which most households don’t recycle. What does everybody do with their tetra, does it go in the bin? We collect ours and we take it to Hazel Court every now and then.” **Group 2**

“I would like more plastic to be recycled because a lot of it can’t be, like yoghurt tubs.” **Group 1**

“I think even if we could have a little extra thing for batteries, like xxx was saying down in Frome.” **Group 2**

“Batteries would be good actually because I always forget to take them to the boxes in the shops that you can put them in so, that would be quite helpful.” **Group 5**

“I keep going back to my tetra paks because that’s one thing that bugs me, and maybe plastic bags. If we could recycle both of those that would definitely increase my recycling in our house.” **Group 5**

“I think that’s fundamental to the environment and the climate crisis is making sure that as many people as possible recycle as much as possible and as many diverse things as possible. So I don’t mind taking my crisp packets and my Pringles packets to Bishy Road, I don’t mind taking my tetra to Hazel Court but we shouldn’t need to be doing it. I make that journey to Hazel Court with my tetra, but if you could put your tetra... most households use tetra surely, if that could go in a bin outside your front door and be recycled it would vastly increase the uptake.”

**Group 2**

### 7.7.10 Food Waste Separation

The possibility of recycling food waste in the future was met with moderate approval by those in the focus groups and this broadly reflected the responses from the CYC online survey. However, the focus groups allowed respondents to express some reservations regarding the practicalities of storing food waste separately and the potential for smells and the attraction of vermin.

Some respondents mentioned that this service is already available in other parts of the country and can be made to work quite effectively. Respondents did, however, state that this sort of collection would need to be made at least weekly.

“I hate it when I have to chuck food in the bin because I feel terrible for doing it and if it could go into some kind of recycling thing I’d be much, much happier.” **Group 2**

“I suppose when it’s mixed in with other things...I don’t know, you kind of imagine that it would attract more vermin perhaps and flies and things if it was all in one, but I’m not entirely sure and would need to know more about how that would work, like the kind of containers they would use.” **Group 3**

“I’d have quite a collection of bins if we did get an extra bin for it [*food waste*], I don’t think you could use a box for food waste, because it would all be rotting whilst it’s sitting there, you’d want something like a wheelie bin that closes properly. I guess you could put the lid on it if it was just the containers, but I think I’d one hundred percent likely to use something like that.” **Group 3**

“I would like to have food waste recycled. I would give it a go.”  
**Group 1**

“When I lived in Wales, they already do the food one. It stops your waste bin absolutely stinking from it, so they have a food one with a proper sealed lid and it was collected weekly. It’s obviously still going to smell because you know what food is like when it goes rotten, but it works so much better. It was a bit like the little boxes we’ve got now but it was blue with a sealed lid, it’s really hard to explain, like an ice cream box lid, so it was sealed down and not really easy to get it off. The other thing we had was a twisty lid so as to keep it in and secure so that pets and cats and things aren’t trying to get into it.” **Group 4**

“It sounds good and probably more than 50% of food waste could be composted but can you imagine on a hot summer day this bin smell, it would be a disaster, even once a week is not enough for a collection.” **Group 3**

### 7.7.11 Cost Implications

One group in particular was concerned about the cost implications of implementing the proposals. There was surprise when it was pointed out by the moderator that their implementation would actually result in cost savings for CYC, importantly as a result of the introduction of a new fleet of vehicles. This produced some reaction that CYC was interested only in saving money and not in increasing recycling. Respondents appeared to be unclear why it would not be possible to achieve the cost savings whilst still keeping to a two-weekly collection, alternating between the recyclable items.

“I’d like to talk about the money situation because if there’s more recycling and they recycle more, is that going to mean there’s more Council tax because the money has got to come from somewhere?” **Group 2**

“How does it save them money?” **Group 2**

“So that’s why they’re going to do it then, to save money! It’s not to give us more recycling, it’s so the Council can save money.” **Group 2**

“You could suggest that they’re trying to cover up money saving with ‘oh aren’t we doing amazing new recycling collections’, which they’re not!” **Group 2**



### **7.7.12 Summary of Reaction to new Proposals**

Respondents can be divided into two groups, of approximately equal size, in terms of their reaction to the proposals:

- Those who were enthusiastic about the increased capacity they would bring (even if, to some, the increase did not go far enough). This group also saw some other, less significant areas of improvement and had no serious concerns in any other respect. The effect of the proposals would almost certainly result in this group carrying out more recycling. The increased weekly capacity of the containers, particularly that for paper and card, would allow them to submit more for kerbside recycling and this would almost certainly more than offset any small reduction in the amount of garden waste they submitted during the summer (as a result of the net decrease in weekly capacity).
- Those who saw no real improvements in what was offered, mainly because they did not have capacity problems with their current recyclable material. Other changes proposed were of no great interest to this group and there was some disappointment that the opportunity had not been taken to introduce what were seen as more positive changes, such as the introduction of collection of a wider range of recyclable items. However, this group would be likely to continue to submit at least as much paper, card, glass, plastic and tins using the new containers and at most only marginally less garden waste during the summer months.

On balance, therefore, the changes would seem likely to result in a net increase in the items put forward for kerbside recycling. Given that they would also produce cost savings to CYC, there would seem to be no reason not to proceed with them, if no other options are under consideration. If some of the suggested improvements could be introduced, the net effect would be likely to be even more positive.

The task of communicating to residents that the extra capacity more than outweighs the reduction in collection frequency should, however, not be underestimated.

## Appendix One: Discussion Guide

Time allowed: 1.5 hours

| Time   | Discussion Topics   |
|--|---|
| 5 mins<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>6 mins | <p><b>PCP Introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PCP introduction and explain procedures</li> <li>- Explain confidentiality and recording</li> <li>- Key objectives of the focus group</li> </ul> <p><b>Respondent Introductions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where live, time lived in York, type of property, size of household, concern for environment.</li> </ul>   |
| 5 mins   | <p><b>Importance of recycling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discuss respondents' views on importance of recycling and reasons why it is seen as important or unimportant.</li> <li>- We're using feedback from the quantitative study we have been running to help shape this group today</li> </ul>   |
| 10 mins  | <p><b>Current recycling behaviours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discuss respondents' current behaviour in respect of recycling, in particular kerbside recycling.</li> <li>- Consider what could be done to increase amount of own household's kerbside recycling. What are the current barriers preventing greater use of the kerbside recycling services?</li> <li>- Do respondents believe neighbours think and act in the same way as themselves towards kerbside recycling?</li> </ul> |
| 5 mins   | <p><b>Understanding and Ease of Use of Current Recycling Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How easy do respondents find it to understand what can and can't be recycled and what the collection arrangements are for their area?</li> <li>- Is lack of understanding a barrier preventing greater use of kerbside recycling?</li> </ul>   |

| Time       | Discussion Topics   |
|------------|---|
| 10 mins    | <p><b>Attitude to Current Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attitude to the current kerbside recycling service provided by CYC.</li> <li>- Current frequency feedback. What they think to the current collection calendar</li> <li>- Specifically ask about garden collections ending in November and starting in April</li> <li>- What do they think about the current containers we collect recycling from? (too many, too few?)</li> <li>- Is there a need for change?</li> <li>- What works well, what could be improved? Discuss in detail any suggested improvements.</li> </ul>  |
| 5 minutes  | <p><b>Presentation of proposed changes</b></p>  |
| 10 minutes | <p><b>Spontaneous Reactions to proposed Changes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discuss spontaneous reactions to these proposals, distinguishing between changes which would enhance service and any which are seen as unnecessary or counter-productive.</li> </ul>   |
| 20 minutes | <p>Using feedback from the quantitative research as an indication of opinions prompt for thoughts on the following:</p> <p><b>Prompted Reactions to proposed Changes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prompt to discuss in detail any of the following items which have not been mentioned spontaneously: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 week collection cycle</li> <li>• Garden waste collections all year round</li> <li>• Larger size garden waste bin</li> <li>• Switch of plastic, tins and glass box containers to standard 180L bin.</li> <li>• Additional box for paper and card</li> <li>• Whether there is a need for an increase or reduction in the number of containers for kerbside recycling items.</li> <li>• Willingness to use separate food waste container if provided.</li> <li>• Anything else which could be offered as part of changes to service.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

| Time   | Discussion Topics   |
|--------|---|
| 8 mins | <p><b>Value of Individual Changes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consensus view on value of each of above from most to least useful. Summarise with score out of 10 for each where 10 is extremely useful and 0 is of no value / prefer current arrangement. [Use a Zoom poll to vote anonymously and then discuss results]</li> </ul>  |
| 4 mins | <p><b>Overall Reaction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overall assessment of proposed changes (assuming offered as package). Score from 1 to 5 (a big improvement to no changes necessary). [Use a Zoom poll to vote anonymously and then discuss results]</li> <li>- What would have to change before the proposals would represent a big improvement compared with the current service?</li> </ul> |
| 2 mins | <p><b>Close</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final thoughts. Thanks and close.</li> </ul>   |

## Appendix Two: Presentation Material

### Proposed Kerbside Changes

CYC propose to:

- Keep boxes for paper and card (will be 2 boxes rather than 1).
- Utilise the current garden waste wheelie bin for plastic tins and glass utilising the new sorting technology at Harewood Whin to separate after collection.
- Provide a larger wheelie bin for garden waste (240L rather than 180L).
- Work to a cycle of a different collection each week:
  - Paper and card one week;
  - Plastic, tins and glass the week after;
  - Garden waste in the third week.

This would give the opportunity to deliver the garden waste service all year round.

Proposals would result in an increase of 33% per week for paper and card and 9% for plastic, tins and glass. Although there would be a small reduction in garden waste capacity each week (-9%), there would be a third more capacity per annum.



## Waste collection calendar example

| Week   | Waste Collected | Recycling Collected     |
|--------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Week 1 | Household waste | Paper/card              |
| Week 2 | -               | Glass/tins and plastics |
| Week 3 | Household waste | Garden waste            |
| Week 4 | -               | Paper/card              |
| Week 5 | Household waste | Glass/tins and plastics |
| Week 6 | -               | Garden waste            |
| Week 7 | Household waste | Paper/card              |
| Week 8 | -               | Glass/tins and plastics |
| Week 9 | Household waste | Garden waste            |

Please note the recycling collections could be in any order (i.e. week order) but the principle is the same

Reduce. Reuse.  
**RECYCLE**