

**Executive Member Decision Session**

**3 March 2021**

Report of the Corporate Director of Economy & Place  
Portfolio of the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change

**Waste Report Update as requested by Executive October 2019**

**Summary**

1. This report considers how the council can go even further in the amount of waste the city recycles. It sets out some high level approaches and what is and isn't in scope and seeks to establish the criteria by which any review of resident recycling should be evaluated.
2. The council has made the investment to replace its fleet of refuse vehicles and this includes 2 all electric vehicles, which were delivered in January 2021.
3. The council now needs to purchase a replacement fleet of recycling vehicles which are beyond their serviceable and economic life.
4. Before the recycling vehicles can be replaced the council needs to confirm the collection methodology for recycling.
5. City of York Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. Although increasing recycling alone will not reduce the city's carbon output, it will establish a clear expectation that the council will, in partnership with residents, take every step possible to reduce our impact and leave the environment in a better place than we found it.
6. Engaging with residents, and taking them with us on this journey as we carefully consider changes to the waste recycling collection methodology, will be a key part of this project. This will be managed as a project with a communications and engagement plan to ensure all residents understand the change and the rationale for the change.

## Recommendations

7. The Executive Member is asked to:
  - 1) Note the Government's waste and resources strategy, in particular the uncertainty over food waste and how collections would be funded which is therefore food waste would be considered as a future development once the government have clarified the national position.
  - 2) Note the Government's waste and resources strategy, in particular the suggestion of a deposit scheme for plastic which is likely to change the way plastics are used and recycled. Therefore considering the recent expansion of plastic recycling agreed by Executive further increasing the range of plastics would be considered as a future development once the government have clarified the national position.
  - 3) Note the environmental concerns with fully mixed recycling that mixes glass, plastics, paper and card and the fact this has been in a number of high profile cases shipped around the world illegally. Also the lack of local outlets for fully mixed recycling is an issue and therefore exclude fully mixed recycling from this review.
  - 4) To accept the recommended options and criteria outlined in the report and request officers to develop a series of different recycling collection methodologies.
  - 5) Request E&P Scrutiny to consider the options developed by officers against the criteria and identify a preferred option to be developed further.
  - 6) Delegate the decision to consult more widely on a preferred option to the Assistant Director of Transport, Highways and Environment in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change.

Reason: To ensure York takes the opportunity to increase its recycling rate.

## Background

8. As part of this review there are no changes proposed to residual waste (black bin) and recognises the administration's public commitments to the first green waste bin being free of charge.
9. The Executive committed to a review of recycling methodology in 2019. At Executive in October 2019 the Council increased the range of plastics collected, the impact of which would be kept under review.
10. The move to source separated recycling in boxes significantly increased the rate of recycling and whilst the council performs well and just above the regional average, our recycling performance has not changed significantly in recent years. See the table below

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Household waste sent to reuse, recycling or composting	CYC 44.9% Yorkshire and Humberside 42.4%	CYC 43.6% Yorkshire and Humberside 42.9%	CYC 43.6%

11. Another factor to be considered from the performance reporting is our resident panels views and the % of panel who think that the council and partners are not doing well helping to reduce amount of household waste. This is now over 50% and increasing.
12. The replacement residual waste vehicles (fitted with bin lifts) have been ordered and are starting to arrive including two all electric waste collection vehicles which have arrived and are now primarily working within the Clean Air Zone of the city centre.
13. The recycling vehicles are now beyond serviceable and economic life and replacement is overdue. However, before an order for these vehicles is placed a review of the recycling collection methodology has been requested by Executive and the outcome dictates the type of vehicles to be ordered.

14. The Government has a national waste and resources strategy that the Council will need to be mindful of. Embedded within the strategy is the Government's ambition to mandate separate collections of food waste.
15. Previously Central Government has indicated that any mandating to councils of food collection would be funded. (The cost for York could be several million pounds)
16. Currently food waste is recovered at Allerton Park as all organic matter is processed through the Anaerobic Digester, gas is captured and the residue incinerated. Both the gas and residue are used, through energy recovery, to produce power for 40,000 homes. . This is an integral part of our multi million pound 27 year waste disposal contract.
17. However, should separate food waste collection be mandated then models have been developed that would allow that to be incorporated with associated significant investment.
18. There currently remains no clarity on whether the government would accept that the Allerton Park plant delivers against the strategy's requirement to treat food waste or whether the Government will legislate to ensure food waste is to be separately collected.
19. It is worth noting that separately collected food waste would still be treated in an anaerobic digester to capture the gas, but it could potentially be used as a compost material rather than incinerated.
20. A separate food waste collection service would place extra fleet requirements on the Council.
21. For the above reasons it is proposed that Food Waste is not modelled as part of the future collection methodology until the government's position is clarified.
22. The Governments national waste and resources strategy also details that it will develop specific policies around plastics such as deposit schemes, this will fundamentally change the way plastic is used and how it is recycled. For this reason increasing the range of plastic is not proposed at this time until these proposed changes come into effect and are better understood.

23. Historically some councils have mixed all the recycling materials together. Mixing all recycling materials (often call comingling) significantly devalues the materials collected. This lower value means is often shipped around the world as an unwanted commodity.
24. However, it is worth noting that in 2020, and as a result of the covid pandemic, recycling collections have needed to flex to facilitate social distancing of our staff when collecting waste. The card and paper have been kept separate. The plastic, tins and glass have been mixed but then separated at Harewood Whin using technology at the site since the introduction of the boxes. This change has had minimal cost impact and the recyclate produced has strong UK markets and is a viable option for the future.

## **Options**

25. In terms of increasing recycling there are a number of options that could be considered.
  1. The council could focus on programmes to help encourage residents to recycle more.
  2. Maintaining the weekly collection principle changes could be made which increase capacity by supplying new containers, enabling residents to collect more of their recycling.
  3. Maintaining the weekly collection principle, changes could be made to increase the range of materials collected.

## **Analysis**

26. The vast majority of residents do participate in recycling at some level. The driver for change in recycling is often a very personal one.
27. Option 1 - Whilst programmes of education would support residents it is unlikely to lead to a step change in recycling.
28. Option 2 – By increasing capacity for residents it would enable those who want to recycle more to do so, the choice of container configuration is key to success for residents as making recycling easier is a proven driver of recycling rates.

29. Option 3 – by increasing the materials that can be recycled the rate may increase, however, the streams are not proven and uptake may be low. Additional materials require markets for recycling, possibly additional containers which is not always supported and will increase cost.
30. Each of the options outlined would need further development. In terms of analysis
31. Therefore the three options could be developed further tested. But would need to be analysed against the following criteria.
  - i. Cost, the council faces unprecedented times. Any change to recycling collections must be made within the financial constraints the council faces.
  - ii. Environmental Impact, any change to recycling should increase the proportion of waste that is recycled. In addition, future collection methodologies should support the Councils ambitions to be Carbon neutral by 2030. This is about reducing carbon emissions where possible from our own operations but also from the onward processing of the collected materials. The opportunity to move to a year round garden waste collection service should be considered.
  - iii. Number of containers - York is incredibly fortunate that most of its residents support the recycling effort of the city by separating the recycling to maintain the value of the products that are collected and minimise the costs of onward separation. However, the boxes do cause frustration for some residents. Getting the right balance of containers is to a certain extent dependent on the nature of the property and the storage space. Therefore getting the balance right to maintain resident support for a new collection methodology is an important factor.
  - iv. Service resilience; this has been an issue for York with an aging fleet of differing specialist vehicles for recycling which on occasion compromise vehicle availability for collections.
  - v. Health and safety, to ensure the Council can protect its workforce and offer members of the public appropriate receptacles in managing their waste

## Council Plan

32. The Council Plan has Eight Key Outcomes:

- Well-paid jobs and an inclusive economy
- A greener and cleaner city
- Getting around sustainably
- Good health and wellbeing
- Safe communities and culture for all
- Creating homes and world-class infrastructure
- A better start for children and young people
- An open and effective council

33. The proposal clearly support the greener cleaner city outcome. By setting the criteria which the options will be considered the council is further demonstrating its commitment to being an open and effective council.

## Implications

34. The following implications have been considered.

- **Financial:** The council budget for domestic waste collection totals £4.5m per annum with primarily expenditure relating to staffing and vehicles. There has been additional investment in waste agreed in recent budgets including £1m to introduce a new waste and street environment service as well as £6.6m capital for new waste vehicles. It is essential that the service is provided as efficiently as possible and this review will give the opportunity to consider collection methodologies that reduce overall costs. There are also opportunities to increase income and reducing processing costs as additional recyclates are taken from the waste stream.

There are additional costs incurred retaining the older recycling vehicles as repairs become more regular and expensive. This potentially leads to additional vehicle hire.

The one off costs of consultation and communications can be contained within the current budget including additional growth agreed in the 2021/22 revenue budget.

- **Human Resources (HR):** Changes to collection methodology may impact on the resourcing requirements for the service. This would be managed through the relevant processes.
- **Equalities:** As the models are developed specific equality impact assessments will need to be developed;
- **Legal:** Under section 45A(3) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended) (“EPA”) the Council is required to collect “at least two types of recyclable waste together or individually separated from the rest of the household waste.” Recyclable waste is defined in section 45A(6) as “household waste which is capable of being recycled or composted”.

The Consistency in recycling collections in England: executive summary and government response (“Response”) was published by DEFRA in July 2019.

Regarding consultation on mandating the collection of a core set of materials there was strong support and so the government will seek to amend legislation to require all English local authorities to collect at least the following dry materials from 2023:

- glass bottles and containers – including drinks bottles, condiment bottles, jars
- paper and card – including newspaper, cardboard packaging, writing paper
- plastic bottles – including clear drinks containers, HDPE (milk containers), detergent, shampoo and cleaning products
- plastic pots tubs and trays
- steel and aluminium tins and cans

Regarding the consultation on the proposal for the collection of separate food waste to be mandated the Response states the following: “Given the support for separate food waste collection government will legislate to ensure that every local authority provides householders with a separate food waste collection. Government’s preference is that this should be a separate weekly collection of food waste and not mixed with garden waste. However, it is clear that further consideration is needed with respect to local circumstances. We will work with LAs and others to consider how best to deliver this requirement to take account of local circumstances.”



The Response stated that further consultation and guidance would be taken forward over the remainder of 2019 and that more detailed proposals would be taken forward in early 2020, with any changes coming into force from 2023. There has been no further information published.

- The Council's current recycling collection methodology meets the Council's duty as set out in the EPA and the options outlined within this report seek to build on that methodology and incorporate the outcome of Central Government's proposals in respect of consistency in recycling collections once they are known.

## **Risk Management**

35. The development of options will need to be considered carefully, should members be minded to change waste recycling collection methodology it will need to be managed as a project with a communications and engagement plan to ensure all residents understand the change and the rationale for the change.
36. Members are reminded that the delivery timeframe on new waste and recycling vehicles is approximately 7 months from order through to delivery and this will need to be incorporated into any decision.

## **Contact Details**

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**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 29.01.21

Neil Ferris  
Corporate Director – Economy & Place

**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 23.02.21

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** List information for all

**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

**All**



**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Background Papers:**

Waste Collection Methodology – Executive 24 October 2019

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MId=11111>

**Annexes**

None