

Delegated Decisions report



23 March 2021

WASTE COLLECTION SYSTEM

Name of Cabinet Member **Councillor Emily Darlington**
(Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Housing Services)

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Exempt / confidential / not for publication	No
Council Plan reference	Council Plan Commitment 29 Review the outcome of the wheelie-bin collection trial, protecting weekly residual waste collections, increasing recycling and reducing waste being sent to landfill.
Wards affected	All wards

Executive Summary

Driven by Milton Keynes Council's ambition to become the Greenest City and the Sustainability Strategy 2019–2050, the Environmental Services Programme is reviewing its future service provision, which includes waste collection. A motion was put forward to Full Council on 17 July 2019, which was referred to Cabinet on 3 September 2019, to explore pilot schemes for waste collection to replace the use of plastic sacks. This included the use of wheeled bins and other waste management solutions that could address the different challenges faced by different estates.

A waste collection pilot commenced on 26 October 2020 to c. 3,000 properties and continuation is subject to recommendation in this paper. A boroughwide waste consultation has been undertaken for 12 weeks from 2 November to 24 January 2021. This included questions on wheeled bins, improving the quality of recycling, increasing recycling and preferred future communications methods.

The report reviews both the pilot satisfaction findings and the waste and recycling collection consultation to consider the future option for waste collection for residents in Milton Keynes. The decision will have implications on the future waste collection service in terms of Greener, Safer, Cleaner and also implications on the future budget.

1. Decisions to be Made

- 1.1 That the future waste collection system for kerbside properties be approved, in accordance with **Annex A** to the report.
- 1.2 That the pilot be extended until the future borough wide collection scheme commences to enable a continuous improvement programme.
- 1.3 That further considerations be made for the waste collection system for special kerbside properties that cannot accommodate the universal waste collection system set out in **Annex A** to the report.

2. Why is the Decision Needed?

- 2.1 The current waste collection system includes black sacks (provided by the residents) for waste that cannot be recycled (residual waste); clear bags for recycling (60 bags provided annually allowing tops ups by an online service); a 45L blue box for glass; and a green 140 litre bin for food and garden waste. There are variations with flats, communal and special kerbside.
- 2.2 Milton Keynes currently has a higher residual waste volume per person (460kg per person per year with England Local Authorities averaging 410kg). The current collection system in sacks means that there is the potential for commercial waste leaks into the household waste stream which are undetected. The current recycling rate is 59.1% which is ranked first out of councils who provide a weekly collection service and 14th out of 364 local authorities. However, the contamination rate in the recycling sacks is above 20% and it is a priority for the council to improve quality of recycling inputs.
- 2.3 In advance of the Waste Collection Pilot a cross-party working group, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Public Realm, considered options for the future collection system. Details of the pilot are included within **Annex A**, Waste Collection System.

- 2.4 The introduction of two recycling wheeled bins was chosen to allow additional volume for recycling and improve quality. Paper is particularly prone to contamination from glass (especially when it shatters) and oily and greasy food packaging. Improving the quality of paper will assist the Council's efforts for recyclates to be recycled within the UK. This links with the outcome from the Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee in October 2019 (MKC Recycling Management Audit) to ensure that waste from Milton Keynes was dealt with as close to source as possible. To achieve this access to UK markets, the quality of the recyclates needs to be improved.
- 2.5 The Council is aware that having sufficient volume to contain waste and recycling is important to residents. The pilot collection system has been designed to allow sufficient capacity for refuse and recycling to be put out by residents in MK whilst enabling the benefits of containerisation to keep the materials dry and separately collected where best to do so. Feedback was sought during the trial on the question of volume (see **Annex C**, Waste Collection Pilot Satisfaction Findings).
- 2.6 A boroughwide survey to determine the suitability of residential properties to accept wheeled bins was completed in January 2020. Where a determination was made on those properties (special kerbside) not suitable to receive four wheeled bins, further considerations are made.

Waste and Recycling Collection Consultation

- 2.7 There is a requirement in common law to carry out a public consultation on large-scale changes to waste collection. This is part of the Council's overriding duty to act fairly in the exercise of its public functions. A consultation was carried out for 12 weeks from 2 November 2020 to 24 January 2021. 4,484 residents and six parish and town councils responded. A summary of the results and findings of the waste and recycling collection consultation relating to wheeled bins can be seen in **Annex B** to the report. The full report of the consultation will be included on the waste and recycling website shortly.
- 2.8 The findings from the formal consultation demonstrate that 76% of residents are in favour of moving towards using containers such as wheeled bins, with 74% of 4,484 respondents willing to accept more bins to improve quality and increase recycling. Should the Council move towards implementing a wheeled bin collection system, the qualitative responses demonstrate that there is a need for information to be shared more widely to ensure that all residents are aware of Assisted Collections. This is a scheme that provides support to people who are not physically able to move bins without support. There is a strong desire from respondents for more education and communications to be made available to support residents to recycle more effectively.

Waste Collection Pilot - Satisfaction Findings

- 2.9 A summary of the satisfaction findings from the pilot can be seen in **Annex C**. Engagement rates with residents, parish and town councils and ward councillors within the pilot area remain high. There has been significant interest in the pilot. Before the pilot started, there was some concern from residents about the change. Once the pilot was implemented, residents did adapt very quickly, particularly to the alternate weekly arrangement for the collection of recycling.
- 2.10 Two satisfactory survey postcards were sent to each household in the pilot. The first one four weeks after they had been using the containers and the second one after the Christmas period, which evidence demonstrates generates higher levels of waste. Overall, satisfaction rates are high for the majority of residents using wheeled bins within the pilot area, remaining constant at over 80%. The response to the use of boxes has been more mixed and further work is required to understand other options.
- 2.11 From responses received, 42% of residents are recycling more, as was part of the intent behind the pilot. On average, 60% of respondents feel that the streets have become cleaner using bins, with less sacks and spillage on the streets.

Waste Collection Pilot Operational Monitoring

- 2.12 A summary of the operational monitoring of the pilot can be seen at **Annex D**, Waste Collection Pilot Monitoring.
- 2.13 The operation assessment monitoring included:
- Number of accidents /incidents.
 - Time and motion study.
 - Miles travelled.
 - Number of logs of exceptions logged (e.g. contamination, “not out”, blocked access).
 - Number of replacement bins boxes lids requested.
 - Number of missed collections.
 - Number of assisted collections.
 - Bins out / not out (set out).
 - Participation monitoring.

- Side waste placements.
- Clustering incidents (residents).
- Pre-pulling / advancing incidents (Waste Collection Contractor).
- Lids not fully closed.
- Reports of bins not returned.

2.14 The quality assessment monitoring included:

- Tonnage of refuse collected.
- Tonnages of recycling, including glass, collected.
- Contamination in incoming recycling sack materials.
- Contamination in incoming fibre stream.
- Contamination in incoming containers stream.

2.15 The high-level results are considered in the paragraphs below.

2.16 **Number of Properties Collected (Productivity/ Time and Motion)**

It is seen that collection efficiency with some properties is lower than the current system, but overall, 100 properties were collected per hour compared to the current system of 150 properties. The Waste Collection Pilot are commensurate with similar wheeled bin services and the assumptions are that approximately 1.5 crews would be required to collect 2 wheeled bins weekly compared with the current OnePass system where sacks (refuse and recycling) and boxes (glass) are collected weekly on the same vehicle.

2.17 **Set out and Participation (Bins Out)**

There was some initial confusion around the correct week to present recycling and many participants on the trial put all 3 bins out for the initial collection cycles. Compliance has greatly improved over the course of the trial as residents have become familiar with the split weekly system.

2.18 **Additional Waste**

Sets of larger 240L wheeled bins were available on request after the initial 4-week term of the trial. Only a handful of requests have been made to date possibly indicating that the volume (e.g. bin size) provided has been sufficient. An assessment has been made at a street level of “bin lids left open” and additional waste presented for collection so called “Side Waste”. The number of bins reported as overfull during the street level monitoring was 5%.

Presenting alongside the wheeled bins is termed “Side waste”. A study by WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) has found that *“the Council’s residual waste yield compares poorly to authorities with the same rurality, primarily as a result of a service that has no limitations on the amount of residual waste that can be presented by householders for collection”*. This suggests that reduction of the residual waste yield could be attainable through service and policy change. The average number of recycling sack side waste present per property was 0.18 sacks (equates to about 9L of capacity) suggesting that 180L of recycling capacity per week is manageable with a little extra “washing and squashing”. Based on a feedback session held with the waste collection pilot crew, the number of properties presenting side waste impacted not only on their productivity but also was exposing them to unnecessary risks where a wheeled bin has been provided. As the pilot continues waste should only be collected from the containers provided.

2.19 Assisted Collection

Despite the initial concerns with regards the difficulty of wheeled bins over sacks and the fact that direct communication stipulated how to get assistance with waste collections, there have been no additional Assisted Collection requests in the Waste Collection Pilot Area.

2.20 Waste Minimisation

The current system does not encourage waste minimisation in that unlimited refuse and recycling sacks can be presented by each household. The lack of containment, unfettered access to recycling sacks and the non-provision of refuse sacks may contribute to poor quality recycling received at the Materials Recovery Facility which ranges between 25-30% non-target or prohibited items. As with paragraph 2.18 as the pilot continues waste presented should only be collected from the containers provided.

2.21 The Volume of Refuse

Collected from the non-pilot kerbside rounds was 10.1kg per household per week (525kg per household of refuse per year). The volume of refuse collected from the pilot round was 9.1 kg per household per week (473kg per household of refuse per year). This equates to a 10% decrease in the volume of refuse collected on the pilot indicating that containerisation can reduce the residual volume. An effective side waste policy could reduce this further, drive up recycling and save money.

2.22 The Volume of Recycling (including contamination)

Collected from the pilot round was 3.1kg per household per week (160kg per household of recycling per year). This equates to a 23% increase in the volume of recycling collected on the pilot.

2.23 Contamination

Recycling deposited at the MRF from the waste collection pilot has been sampled to assess the quality of the material. During the same period 10.4 tonnes of non-pilot recycling was sampled to allow a comparison of the quality over the same period. Taking the recyclable materials as a whole, the net contamination of the incoming loads across the pilot was 13.8% (equates to a 58% reduction in contamination).

2.24 Crew Satisfaction

Two interviews took place with the pilot crew: at the start of the pilot; towards the end of February; as well as additional informal feedback whilst on their round. Side waste collection was raised as the biggest issue and was impacting on crew productivity. The individual members also commented that they sustained no injuries and had less physical toll on them by moving wheeled bins as opposed to sacks.

Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee

2.25 The Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee met on 3 March to carry out a pre-decision scrutiny on the findings of the waste collection pilot and the results of the boroughwide waste consultation. The committee asked that the following are taken into account:

- (a) That residents should not be forced to accept a wheeled bin if they had a good reason not to.
- (b) The importance of ongoing communication and engagement with residents to ensure the appropriate changes in behaviour.
- (c) That the impact of any service change on those with mobility or disability issues were addressed.
- (d) That clarity was provided as to what will happen with side waste.

2.26 Within the pilot of 3,000 properties, there have been around 18 requests to change from boxes to bins after the four-week period that officers asked residents to work with the containers they had been provided with. There have been 11 requests to change from bins to boxes. Two requests relating to boxes have been changed on the basis of space and access to be able to wheel the bins to the front of the property. There has been a total of 6 properties that have requested larger bins. These have been reviewed with the residents and 4 properties have been given a 240-litre bin based on the number of people at the property. There have been no requests for assisted collections.

2.27 The borough wide survey in paragraph 2.6 (above) assessed the suitability of properties to accommodate up to 4 x 240 Litre wheeled bins (note the proposed waste collection system in **Annex A** is to supply 180 Litre bins as standard). The surveyors assessed the properties against the criteria below. For the purpose of the pilot, local Waste Service Officers undertook a further assessment to confirm the results of the initial survey and provide a definitive decision on whether bins should be supplied (e.g. active participation in the existing green wheeled bin scheme or confirmation of suitable rear / side access).

Reasons deeming properties unsuitable for wheeled bins within the survey

- No rear, side access or front area.
- No point of collection.
- Impractical to pull wheeled bins out.
- Inadequate space to store a wheeled bin.
- Dangerous to move bin from storage to presentation point.
- Bin would have to be wheeled down steps / steep incline.
- No suitable presentation point at property boundary.
- Collection crew would have to wheel bin more than 50m (e.g. via a service alley).
- No access to property boundary for collection vehicle.
- Collection crew can't collect bin from property boundary and return the bin safely.
- Communal property with insufficient space for required bins.
- Bins would be kept outside windows at all times.
- Bins would present a security risk due to storage location.

2.28 Of the 93,028 properties assessed, 87,171 properties were deemed suitable for 4 x 240 litre wheeled bins (93.7% of properties assessed). Further work will be carried out to consider the waste collection system for special kerbside properties and this will include considerations of households with mobility concerns.

2.29 Side waste issues have been addressed within the report under 'Waste Collection Pilot Operational Monitoring'. It considers that waste presented should only be collected from the containers provided. The recommendation

at 1.3 states that the pilot will be subject to continuous improvement which will consider the operational collection policies.

2.30 It also asked: that all innovative schemes from around the UK and further afield that may have provided solutions to some of the issues raised as part of the consultation and pilot be explored; that a timeline for procurement and mobilisation, including any key decision dates is provided; the 'Cost Benefit Analysis' for the proposal to introduce wheeled bins; and the Interim Director of Planning, Strategic Transport & Placemaking be asked to give consideration to the need to develop planning policies that will take account of the introduction of wheeled bins.

2.31 Further assessment of special kerbside properties will be carried out and the future timeline of the implementation is under consideration. The financial considerations of wheeled bins are contained with the 'Financial Implications' with section 3 of this report.

In Summary

2.32 The waste consultation, pilot satisfaction findings and monitoring inform and support the decision for the new waste collection system to provide:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLEANER 	<p>Benefits of cleaner streets due to decreased bag ripping from animals, spillage and windblown litter, general detritus which has also led to a reduction of food source for vermin.</p> <p>Satisfaction findings from the pilot demonstrate that residents' perception of the streets is that they are cleaner.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GREENER 	<p>Evidence from the pilot area has shown us that there is an increased level of recycling. The quality of recycling is improved due to the separation of paper and card from other recyclables. There is less contamination of the recycled waste. There has been a reduction of residual waste.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAFER 	<p>Existing evidence has already demonstrated that the use of wheeled bins leads to fewer musculoskeletal injuries for the collection crew and residents compared to other alternatives such as sacks. It is dangerous to store some items in sacks rather than wheeled bins such as broken glass and needles as it can lead to injury. The pilot crew have not sustained any injuries since the pilot started.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RESIDENTS 	<p>Engagement levels with residents boroughwide has been high. Results from the consultation show that 76% of residents are in favour of waste containers such as wheeled bins. Satisfaction rates in the pilot area have consistently been in excess of 80% for wheeled bins.</p>
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Pilot Extension

- 2.33 The pilot has been extended to take account of this decision until the end of March. If the recommendation at 1.1 is approved, then a decision will be required to continue until the new borough wide collection scheme commences.
- 2.34 It is recommended that the pilot continues to allow for further operational learning and further considerations are made for special kerbside properties that cannot accommodate the universal waste collection system set out in **Annex A**.

Roll Out

- 2.35 The new collection system will be rolled out on the expiry of the current contract.

3. Implications of the Decision

Financial	Y	Human rights, equalities, diversity	Y
Legal	Y	Policies or Council Plan	Y
Communication	Y	Procurement	Y
Energy Efficiency	Y	Workforce	Y

(a) Financial Implications

A decision to move to wheeled bins has financial implications for both the capital cost of the purchase of the bins but also the future specification and cost of the waste collection contract.

Modelling from external advisors has indicated that whilst the annual cost of replacing receptacles will be lower than the current distribution of clear sacks, the impact of different productivity rates from using wheeled bins compared to sacks, is likely to result in a net revenue pressure of approximately £850k pa from 2023 onwards which will need to be included in the Council's future budget decisions. Additional storage space for replacement bins, after the initial roll out, will also be required. The cost of infrastructure works to the depot to accommodate this has not yet been determined.

The estimated capital cost of wheeled bins and other receptacles, including the initial delivery is estimated at £5m and would be required during 2022/23. This capital cost, together with any capital investment in the Waste Services depot, will need to be internally reviewed prior to approval being sought in the 2022/23 capital programme. As part of the internal review, financing options of this project will be explored, however if prudential borrowing is required, estimated annual revenue costs for £5m investment over an assumed 20 year life of the bins would be £448k pa based on the average loan pool borrowing rate.

It is proposed to extend the current trial up to the start of the service contract, which is planned for Spring 2023. The cost of this extension is £330k pa, to cover the hire of different specification waste collection vehicles required for wheeled bin collection, additional crew due to loss of productivity compared to the current service, together with the costs of monitoring the trial. The costs of the trial can be funded from grant funding previously awarded for the retention of weekly collections.

(b) Legal Implications

The Council has a duty, under section 45(1)(a) of the Environment Protection Act 1990, to arrange for collection of household waste from premises.

Under section 46 of the EPA 1990, the Council may by notice require occupiers to place the waste in receptacles of a kind and number specified.

Section 89 of the EPA 1990 makes MKC responsible for keeping the land within our control clear of litter and refuse and our highways clean as far as is practicable.

(c) Other Implications

(i) Policy

This decision supports the Council Plan Commitment 29 to review the outcome of the wheelie-bin collection trial, protecting weekly residual waste collections, increasing recycling and reducing waste being sent to landfill. This decision will also support the emerging Environment Bill, which considers improved recycling.

(ii) Communication

A dedicated communications plan will be prepared and will play an important role in engagement, education with residents with

the new service. We will work with Ward Councillors and Parish and Town Councils. Parish and Town Councils have continued to demonstrate their willingness to be involved.

(iii) Energy Efficiency

There will be resource efficiency with improved recycling and the reduction of single use plastic sacks.

(iv) Human Rights, Equalities and Diversity

An equalities impact assessment will be carried out and will be considered in the protocol to ensure no groups are disadvantaged. Findings from the consultation show that more work needs to be undertaken with residents to ensure that they are aware of the assisted collection scheme.

(v) Workforce

Additional training will be identified for the waste collection crews.

(vi) Procurement

Procurement of the waste receptacles will follow the Council's procurement procedures.

4. Alternatives

4.1 Option 1 - Do Nothing

Milton Keynes would remain one of the 16% of councils left in England that do not use wheeled bins. It would continue to impose potential health and safety risks for the collection crews and not meet the preferred options for residents which is a move towards wheeled bins. The pilot has shown that recycling rates and quality have improved, and it would be a lost opportunity to improved recycling and quality of materials for Milton Keynes.

4.2 Option 2 - Consider Alternative Options

We could consider alternative systems. However, this will impact on the timescale for service change required from the end of the current contract and consequently this would affect the renewal of the aging fleet. We will need to understand what the system is to be implemented before we change the current fleet. A new waste pilot may also be required to test any variants of the system.

4.3 Preferred Option - Waste Collection System (as **Annex A**)

That the universal waste collection system is rolled out boroughwide. The alternative solution for special kerbside properties continues to be reviewed. This meets the Council Plan priority and meets the principles of Cleaner, Greener, Safer and what the residents want (see paragraph 2.25 above).

5. Timetable for Implementation

5.1 The new collection service will commence in April 2023.

List of Annexes

Annex A Waste Collection System

Annex B Waste and Recycling Collection Consultation Summary

Annex C Waste Collection Pilot Satisfaction Findings

Annex D Waste Collection Pilot Monitoring

List of Background Papers

[Wheeled Bin Survey Report 2019/20](#)

[Delegated Decision - 11 February 2020: Waste Collection Pilot](#)

[Delegated Decision - 13 October 2020: Waste and Recycling Collection Consultation](#)