

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE ORGANISATION POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE OF MEETING: 9TH OCTOBER 2018

SUBJECT OF REPORT: RECYCLING & WASTE SERVICES CONTRACT UPDATE

TOWN OR PARISH: DISTRICT WIDE

OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: COLIN RUSSELL, RECYCLING & WASTE SERVICE MANAGER

KEY DECISION: NO

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel receives the contents of this report which provides an update on the recycling and waste contract which has been in operation for 18 months and had a major re-route in June of this year. The report further details the overall performance of the contract to date and provides a summary of the West of England joint procurement for a non-landfill residual waste contract post 1 April 2020.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report provides an overview of the recycling and waste contract since the last CCO Scrutiny Panel in March 2018 and provides details of contract performance issues post the re-route of 4th June 2018 and how these are being resolved.

The report details the high-level performance of the contract which shows a recycling rate which continues to exceed the level expected.

Finally the report provides an overview of the WoE non-landfill residual waste contract which commences on 1 April 2020.

2. POLICY

- 2.1 One of the aims of the Council's Corporate Plan is to protect and improve the environment. A key priority included within this is to reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill

- 2.2 The Municipal Waste Strategy 2013-17 was approved and adopted by Council in February 2013. This Strategy is in the process of being updated.
- 2.3 One of the shared priorities in North Somerset Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy is 'living within environmental limits'. One of the aims of this priority is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reducing landfill is a key component of this.

3. DETAILS

- 3.1 The new recycling and waste contract commenced on 1st March 2017. During the first 15 months of the contract it failed on occasions to perform, operationally, to the levels expected. This was due to several factors including lack of staff, poor supervision and ICT systems (PDA's) not being used by crews effectively to log round issues.
- 3.2 This poor performance was recognised and a number of measures, including an improvement plan was put in place by Biffa to resolve the various issues identified. These had limited impact, as the main issue identified to improve contract performance, was to carry out a comprehensive re-route. This would equalise out the rounds and see crews working in their same designated area throughout the week rather than the whole service working in different areas each day.
- 3.3 The re-route impacted on 80% or around 80,000 properties, where there was a change in day or week of collection. This was the largest re-route ever carried out by Biffa.
- 3.4 Prior to the start date of 4th June 2018, there was a comprehensive publicity campaign to advise residents of the forthcoming change. The publicity included:
- North Somerset Life
 - Social media
 - North Somerset website
 - Bin hangers placed on every household residual waste bin
 - Banners on vehicles
 - Banners at the recycling centres
 - Letters to Town & Parish councils
 - Briefing sessions to councillors, contact centre, the Gateway and all North Somerset staff through 'the hour' sessions

Lastly, in mid to late May a letter was sent to all households which included information on changes to their collection day, a collection day calendar for the year, a leaflet and set of recycling box stickers which outlined how to separate out the different materials in their recycling box.

- 3.5 To prepare for the increase in calls to the contact centre, an additional 10 staff were employed for the period of mid- May to end of June to deal with these.
- 3.6 Biffa also employed additional staff and vehicles in the first 2 weeks from 4th June to deal with the changes and synchronisation of collections from the previous, to new collection days, and to collect any recycling and waste missed.
- 3.8 Although it was anticipated by Biffa that the collections would settle down over 2 complete collection cycles (2 weeks for recycling and 4 weeks for residual and garden waste), this was not the case and although the majority of residents received a good service, there was a large number where collections were delayed or missed. Those

residents impacted were very patient to begin with, as there was an understanding that there would be teething troubles and crews needed time to learn their new rounds.

- 3.9 After this initial period, there continued to be problems with collections in some areas and this was exacerbated by the M5 closure on 26th June, which gridlocked Weston and caused significant lost time for crews. Prolonged high temperatures during the summer, which saw the hottest July on record, caused crew fatigue which prolonged collection times. These events also made it difficult to gain accurate performance information from individual crews, which would have allowed for minor equalisation of rounds and to deal with the expected small anomalies which occur during a re-route exercise.
- 3.10 To deal with the missed collections during the week, Biffa brought in 2 additional recycling rounds and also crews on a Saturday (and once on a Sunday) to catch up. Although this reduced the numbers, this failed to completely clear the backlog from the previous week and so these rolled into the following week. Crews were also not familiar with the rounds which resulted in more missed collections than normal.
- 3.11 Due to the amount of delayed and missed collections, the contact centre retained 5 additional staff to deal with the complaints. These complaints were mainly about repeat missed collections, assisted collections not completed and the inability to log a missed collection online.
- 3.12 Minor adjustment to rounds following a re-route is normal, but on this contract was significantly delayed due to the issues outlined above. Biffa did complete their analysis and put together a plan for how rounds needed to be further modified, this was intended to deal with the collection issues being experienced by some residents. The adjustment work would have impacted on around 8,000 households and some communication was prepared outlining this. This was planned to be implemented during late October.
- 3.13 In September, Biffa had a staff change at a senior management level and a new Regional Operations Director, Simon Crook, took over responsibility for this contract. Very soon after, Biffa changed their strategy on the minor adjustments to the re-route and decided, instead, to invest further money into the contract and to employ additional drivers and loaders who would staff 4 additional 'mop up' crews. These crews would go out daily and assist with those rounds who, they knew, struggled to complete on a particular day. They also employed an experienced supervisor from Manchester who was able to monitor crews from tracker and camera information and engage with these crews where needed.
- 3.14 This revised philosophy of having additional resource also allows for more accurate and clean crew data to be established which, in turn, will provide the required information for round adjustments at a later date.
- 3.15 These revised arrangements commenced, in earnest, during week ending 23 September and immediately had a positive impact with all rounds being completed (with Saturday work) by the end of that week. This was the first time this has been achieved since the commencement of the re-route. In the week following, all work was completed on the allotted day.
- 3.16 The positive impact of this arrangement has seen a large reduction in complaints, escalations to councillors and calls to the contact centre.

- 3.16 Although still early days, this dramatic improvement in service has been very encouraging and is backed by a further timetable which outlines how the service will become more reliable and efficient over the coming months. It also takes into consideration Christmas/New year catch up, improved supervisor and crew responsibility, better communications and some campaign work which will deliver better segregation within recycling boxes. Any decision on further major adjustments to the re-route is unlikely until summer 2019. This will allow for all the other timetabled work to be completed and ensure a reliable and effective collection service.
- 3.17 Though operationally there have been performance issues which has impacted on quality and performance of service, the underlying reductions in residual waste and improved recycling percentages achieved have been excellent and above that expected or forecast for our key performance indicators. These include:
- The headline recycling rate at the end of Qtr.1 is 61.78%. This compares with 59.48% for Qtr.1 in 2017-18. The target for 2018-19 is 58% so we remain well above this.
 - Kerbside green box recycling has increased compared to last year with an increase on 163 tonnes, with plastics (149 tonnes up) having the largest rise.
 - Residual waste collected from kerbside has only risen slightly over the period, up by 31 tonnes. This is encouraging given the extra housing growth in the period.
 - Garden waste collected from households has greatly increased with a rise of 838 tonnes compared to Qtr.1 last year. This is due to more properties registering for the garden waste service.
 - Garden waste taken to HWRC's has decreased slightly and is 136 tonnes lower than the same stage last year.
 - Residual waste taken to HWRC's continues to fall and is 84 tonnes less than the same period last year. It seems likely that the continuing HWRC permit scheme plus the enhanced checks around commercial waste is having a positive impact here.
 - Recycling at HWRC's has increased over the period by 810 tonnes. This is mainly due to a large increase in wood (604 tonnes) being taken to HWRC's.
- 3.18 All the corporate key performance indicators for the waste service remain as GREEN and we expect to keep on target for the remainder of the year.
- 3.19 The West of England contract for non-landfill residual waste is presently out to tender. The existing contract ends on 31 March 2020.

The new contract will see additional quantities of North Somerset residual waste being diverted from landfill with the option that this will include bulky items disposed of via the three recycling centres.

Contractors have now been shortlisted and it is expected the contract will be awarded in February 2019.

4. CONSULTATION

The Waste Management Team has worked in close consultation with the Waste Scrutiny Steering Group and the CCO Policy and Scrutiny Panel throughout the contract procurement and mobilisation stages of this contract and will continue to do so throughout the term of this contract.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The contract includes mechanisms to increase reuse and recycling and reduce waste. This has the potential of saving in excess of £1m per annum from the Council's annual budget.

6. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment was completed prior to approval of the North Somerset Municipal Waste Strategy.

7. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

The reduction in waste sent to landfill will have significant implications for the council's service delivery, both in terms of reputation and mitigation of financial penalties.

AUTHOR

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Award of Contract for Recycling and Waste collection and Household Waste Recycling Centres – report to Council on 19th July 2016
- Briefing to Councillors from the Executive Member for Environment on 21st February 2017