

North Somerset Council

Report to the Executive

Date of Meeting: 7 February 2024

Subject of Report: Public consultation for introducing 3-weekly residual waste collections

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Councillor Annemieke Waite, The Executive Member for Climate, Waste and Sustainability

Key Decision: Yes

Reason: Impacts on more than 2 wards.

Recommendations

1. To carry out public consultation on 3-weekly residual waste collections commencing in March 2024.

1. Summary of Report

Context

To consider the introduction of three weekly residual waste collections for environmental and financial reasons. The rationale for this change includes:

- NSC's response to the declared climate emergency by reducing carbon.
- Reducing vehicles and road miles travelled by collection vehicles.
- Reduced service, treatment/disposal costs and an increase in recycling income, contributing to MTFP savings.
- Improved efficiencies and reliability of service through the re-route of collection rounds and taking account of areas of housing growth.
- Encouraging behaviour change by restricting capacity of residual waste bin and increasing recycling.
- Other local authorities who have introduced 3-weekly collections in the south-west area (Somerset, East Devon, Mid-Devon) have seen this accepted by residents with the benefit of reductions in residual waste, increased recycling and financial savings.
- Based on available data, authorities who have introduced 3-weekly collections typically see a reduction in residual waste of around 10-20%, an increase in recycling of 5-10%, a 5-10% financial saving on their budget and a carbon saving of 15-25%. Options modelling will allow analysis of these impacts specifically for North Somerset, utilising benchmarking data (from Local Partnerships, 2024).

2.

- 2.1 North Somerset Council has an excellent track record of high performance in recycling with the council regularly being in the top 10 performing authorities nationally for the percentage of waste materials recycled. Many residents are supportive and enthusiastic about recycling as much waste as possible and actively participate in a wide range of recycling initiatives. Furthermore, the council's recycling collection methodology enables a high quality of recycling material, meaning that the materials can be sold and converted into future products.
- 2.2 However, North Somerset's recycling rate has remained at a fairly static rate at around 60% (rather than showing improvement) in recent years, and now residual waste tonnages have started to increase. Analysis of the waste in the residual (non-recycling) bins in recent years have shown us that 46% of this waste could be recycled and therefore could be removed from the residual waste stream.
- 2.3 North Somerset offers an extremely comprehensive recycling offer which is regularly reviewed and improved where possible. Currently, an engagement campaign is being developed which will help residents to identify further recycling opportunities.
- 2.4 In recent years, a number of other authorities have reduced the frequency of residual waste collections in order to boost recycling rates and reduce the environmental impact and cost of dealing with residual waste. Feedback from these authorities makes it clear that in order to change the collection frequency of residual waste, a high-quality recycling system needs to be in place, and excellent communication and engagement will be needed. 3-weekly collections have been introduced by other authorities in the south-west including Somerset, East Devon and Mid-Devon and all have benefitted from increased rates of recycling, decreasing residual waste tonnages, and a corresponding decrease in the cost of disposal of residual waste.
- 2.5 Other benefits include a positive contribution to the climate change action plan through reduce vehicle use and movements (and therefore reduced fuel use) as well as the climate benefits of a reduction in residual waste to dispose of.
- 2.6 North Somerset Council is in an ideal position to explore a change from 2-weekly to 3-weekly residual waste collections. This report proposes to commence a public consultation in March 2024 on 3-weekly waste collections in order to understand the feasibility of this from a resident perspective, any concerns from residents about storing and dealing with waste, and understanding more about any circumstances where 3-weekly waste collections may not work (for example, in certain locations which lack storage, or where a household has a high level of clinical or other sensitive waste which needs more frequent collections).

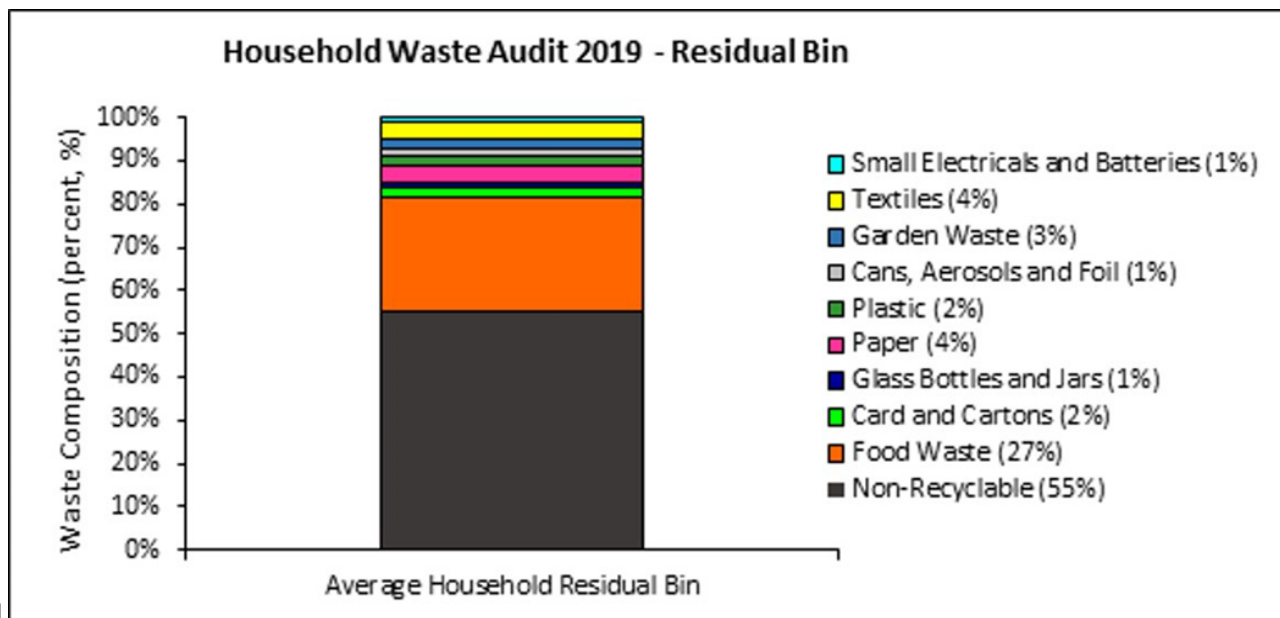
- 2.7 The council will work closely with ward members, the Transport, Climate and Communities (TCC) Scrutiny Panel, Town and Parish Councils and other local groups to promote the consultation widely to all residents and to offer opportunities for engagement so that as many stakeholders as possible have the opportunity to input. The council is committed to using this feedback to ensure that proposals that are developed can achieve the best outcomes for local neighbourhoods and communities.
- 2.8 Full proposals, including and considering the feedback from the consultation, will return to the Executive in the summer 2024 for final approval.
- 2.9 It should be noted that there are two times of year that are most suitable for changing collections frequencies; Spring (Mar-April) and Autumn (Sept-Oct) and that the lead in time for a re-route and change of frequency is at least 3-4 months. The timescales proposed in this report are based on the change in collection frequency becoming live in Mar/April 2025.

3. Policy

- 3.1 The introduction of 3-weekly collections will make a positive contribution towards the council's declared climate emergency and help close the budget deficit being faced by the council and support the on-going provision of services for the people of North Somerset.
- 3.2 [Waste and recycling strategy 2021-2030](#)
- 3.3 [Corporate plan](#)

4. Details

- 4.1 North Somerset is a high performing authority for recycling rates (10th highest in 22/23), but like many other councils these recycling rates have stagnated, and residual waste volumes are increasing. In the same time period, the national picture shows that of 333 councils, 268 saw a decrease in their overall recycling rate with only 65 showing an increase.
- 4.2 In the first 6 months of this financial year, our kerbside residual waste has increased by 1%, our recycling has reduced by 3.25% and food waste recycling has dropped by 1%. This together with increased housing and high inflation on contracts, has put a budgetary pressure on waste of circa £1.25m for this year.
- 4.3 Waste analysis in 2019 shows 46% of residual waste has potential to be recycled using our existing services. Of this total, 27% consists of food waste.



4.4

4.5 North Somerset have entered into a new contract with Codford Biogas for treatment of our food waste, commencing 1 March 2024. This has seen a fundamental change in the financial mechanism, where instead of the council paying the contractor for processing food waste (£65 per tonne), the contractor now pays the council. In addition to the carbon benefits of treating food waste via anaerobic digestion, there's a huge financial incentive and opportunity to divert more food waste from households and businesses.

4.6 Simpler Recycling (Environment Act 2021)

4.7 On Saturday 21 October the Government announced its long-awaited response to their Environment Act 2021 consultation on consistency in household and business recycling in England. The full response can be seen here: [Government response - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/government-response-to-environment-act-2021-consultation-on-consistency-in-household-and-business-recycling-in-england).

4.8 The summary of the positive changes being introduced are shown in the table below. North Somerset should be proud that, with the exception of flexible plastics, they already provide these services or, in the case of food waste collections from flats, will have completed this by the end of this financial year (except where there is no viable solution – some Town Centre areas).

4.9 Flexible plastic collections could be introduced during 2025 to coincide with the introduction of 3-weekly collections and the purchase of new recycling 'kerbside sort' vehicles, which will be configured to allow for these collections.

Timings	 Households	 Non-household municipal premises	 Micro-firms
Dry materials to be collected for recycling 	by 31 March 2026	by 31 March 2025	by 31 March 2027
Food waste to be collected weekly for recycling 	by 31 March 2026 <small>unless transitional arrangement applies</small>	by 31 March 2025	by 31 March 2027
Garden waste to be collected for recycling 	by 31 March 2026		
Plastic film to be collected for recycling 	by 31 March 2027	by 31 March 2027	by 31 March 2027

4.10

- 4.11 Other measures being introduced via the Government’s consultation response include the introduction of the Deposit Return Scheme, for plastic and metal drink containers (commencing April 2025), and an intention by Government to introduce Statutory Guidance for a minimum collection frequency for residual waste of fortnightly.
- 4.12 Following the Government’s response to the consultation, there was a further 4-week consultation, ending 20 November, subject of letter (defra.gov.uk) inviting comments on Simpler Recycling, this included the opportunity to respond on their intention to introduce Statutory Guidance on a minimum fortnightly collection frequency for residual waste. North Somerset along with many other local authorities and trade organisations have responded to the consultation, that mandatory weekly food waste collections and a comprehensive weekly recycling service reduces the amount of waste produced and allows for less frequent residual waste collections. We are continuing to engage with Government and will provide an update to the Executive as part of the next report on 3-weekly collections.
- 4.13 Where other authorities have introduced 3-weekly collections of residual waste this has promoted the necessary behavioural change to reduce waste and increase recycling and, subject to consultation, it should be for the local authority to decide.
- 4.14 The consultation process will be supported by colleagues in Marketing and Communications using an existing member of the team who is currently designated to Climate Emergency. Their workload will be redistributed to cover both areas.

Timescales for delivery

4.15 Table 1 – Indicative timescales for delivery

Indicative dates	Action or activity
7 Feb 2024 Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve principle of exploring 3-weekly waste collections and commencing consultation
Mar-Apr 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 weeks consultation process
Apr-May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of consultation responses
Summer 2024 - Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve fully developed proposal for 3-weekly waste collections informed by consultation
Jul-Dec 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operational development of re-routes and infrastructure required to deliver change in collection frequency• Ongoing updates and engagement with residents
Jan 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full public engagement on changes to collection frequency and any other changes
Mar-Apr 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement 3-weekly waste collections

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Initial consultation with Transport, Climate and Communities Scrutiny members, 22 January 2024.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that consultation and engagement work will commence in March 2024 on a change of collection frequency of residual waste to 3-weekly collections. This will include an online questionnaire on eConsult, hard copies being made available, and engagement sessions across the district.
- 5.3 The project team will undertake a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise to ensure all key groups are consulted with and informed of any proposals. These will include: (please note this isn't an exhaustive list).

Internal

- Senior leadership team
- Equalities and Diversity team
- Environment and Community Safety Service
- Executive Member for Climate, Waste and Sustainability
- TCC Scrutiny Panel
- Ward Members
- All Members briefings
- Climate Emergency team
- Wider staff

External

- Residents
- Local business community
- Town and Parish Councils
- Local BID groups
- Disabled Access Group

- North Somerset Together
- Community groups
- Local transport groups

5.4 It is anticipated that there will be a dedicated communications resource to support the design and delivery of the engagement and consultation process.

6. Financial Implications

Costs

6.1 There will be costs up to £10k to cover consultation communication material and facilitation of meetings with stakeholders.

Funding

6.2 The consultation costs will be covered by the waste reserve.

7. Legal Powers and Implications

7.1 Section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires each waste collection authority to arrange for the collection of household waste in its area.

8. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

8.1 The introduction of 3-weekly collections will make a positive contribution towards the council's declared climate emergency by reducing vehicle movements, fuel usage, the amount of residual waste collected and sent to Energy from Waste and increase the amount of recycling collected, thereby reducing energy usage required for processing raw materials.

9. Risk Management

Risk	Lead officer	Inherent risk	Inherent risk treatment	Mitigating / exploiting actions	Residual risk
Lack of participation in the consultation	Colin Russell	HIGH	MITIGATE	Actively promote the online consultation and in-person consultation events to ensure that residents are aware of the consultation and have the opportunity to give their views.	LOWMED
Residents are negative about the proposals	Colin Russell	MEDHIGH	MITIGATE	The consultation will be designed to glean a range of information about current behaviours, barriers to recycling and waste collections, concerns that might be expressed regarding the proposed changes. Experience from other authorities can be utilised to pre-empt some of the concerns which may be raised by residents and stakeholders. All feedback will be reviewed and analysed for inclusion in the consultation report.	LOWMED
People may not be aware of the consultation taking place	Colin Russell	HIGH	MITIGATE	The consultation and engagement events will be widely publicised to raise awareness and ensure that residents have the opportunity to respond. A communications plan will be developed to ensure that all groups and areas across N Somerset will be communicated to in a range of ways, such as social media, publications, via their Town & Parish Councils, posters and hard copies available in libraries etc.	LOW
Budget for the consultation	Colin Russell	MEDHIGH	MITIGATE	Funding has been identified to cover the costs of running, promoting and analysing the consultation.	LOW
Comms resource to support the consultation	Vanessa Andrews/Colin Russell	HIGH	MITIGATE	Resource has been identified to help with this. Other Waste Team and Project Management resource has also been allocated to ensure that a comprehensive and thorough consultation is carried out.	LOWMED
Accessing the consultation	Colin Russell	MEDHIGH	MITIGATE	The consultation will be available online via eConsult, and hard copies will also be made available in all libraries across the district. There will also be a series of in-person engagement events where residents can give feedback about the proposals.	LOW
Change in government guidance	Colin Russell	MEDHIGH	MITIGATE	Determine weighting of Statutory Guidance if introduced and consider getting Counsel opinion. Bristol & South Glos interested in procuring this jointly. BaNES interested if cost can come from WoE budget contingency. Nick Brain has advised to wait until there's a follow up government response to the Oct-Nov consultation before seeking further advice. The Simpler Recycling guidance may be revised.	MED

10. Equality Implications

3-weekly collections were included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan Initial Equality Impact Assessment of Budget Proposal 2024/25 under 'waste collections frequencies and optimisation of rounds' (Directorate Reference PD07).

The summary of the changes for this section was as follows:

Waste collection frequencies and optimisation of rounds Recycling and waste collection rounds were last routed over 5 years ago by the previous waste contractor, Biffa. There are opportunities to rebalance the rounds to improve efficiency and to take account of property growth. The re-route will provide a more efficient delivery model where a number of crews work in the same geographical area and are able to assist each other if required. This will lead to a more efficient and reliable service and will reduce vehicles and mileage travelled.

It will have a positive climate emergency impact and reduce carbon. The frequency of recycling and food waste collections will continue on a weekly basis to allow smelly waste to be collected at this frequency. Consultation is proposed to commence on collecting residual waste every 3 weeks across North Somerset, with the intention to use the consultation results to propose a new collection frequency.

The Customer equality impact summary for this theme (PD07) was:

Will the proposal have a disproportionate impact on any of these groups?

Budget Proposal	Equality Impacts – Please consider any potential equalities impacts based on the protected groups below. Please answer High (H), Medium (M), Low (L) or None (N)										Positive (+) or Negative(-)	
	Disabled People, including neurodiversity	Race	Men or Women, including those who are pregnant	Sexual Orientation	People on a low income	Age	Religion or belief or none	Marriage or civil partnership	Gender reassignment	Other, for example parents, carers or the Armed Forces.*		
1. PD07	L	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	L	Negative

11. Corporate Implications

The waste team will work closely with colleagues in corporate services including communications, consultation and customer service colleagues in order to ensure that the consultation is delivered in a coordinated way.

The waste team will also work closely with North Somerset Environment Company (NSEC), the council's wholly owned environmental services company, who will ultimately deliver any service change, keeping the shareholder informed on any key issues within their remit.

12. Options Considered

- 12.1 One option considered was to simply re-route the collections on existing fortnightly frequency for residual waste. This would be unlikely to deliver a step change in recycling rates or a reduction in residual waste volumes so is not recommended as an option at this point. This will remain a possible option should the consultation raise fundamental issues that undermine the case for a change in collection frequency.
- 12.2 Another option considered was to consult on both 3-weekly and 4-weekly waste collections. 3-weekly collections are being taken forward as the most pragmatic approach based on the availability of benchmarking and operational information to help implement a change in collection frequency.

Author:

Colin Russell
Head of Environmental Services and Community Safety

Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

[Waste and Recycling Strategy 2021-2030](#)