

**BRIEFING REPORT**

Garden Waste Service



## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is proposed to change the Council's Garden Waste Collection Service by issuing wheelie bins to replace the bags that are currently used by residents. The use of wheelie bins is considered industry good practice as it aligns with the Health and Safety Executive's guidance and the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 by changing the nature of the manual handling task ie. reducing the manual lifting by crews associated with bags.

Over 38,000 households are registered for the service in 2020. The Coronavirus Pandemic has had a significant impact on the garden waste collection service delivery which has hampered the intended intelligence gathering on participation. However, the registration process at this point has provided an improved picture of how the Service is utilised. Associated with the transition to wheelie bins is also the requirement to review the delivery model and ensure sufficient Refuse Collection Vehicle (RCV) fleet availability. This investment will ensure we offer the safest working conditions practicable for our staff and help us improve the reliability and efficiency of the Service to meet the expectations of our residents.

The project value is £1.899m which is made up of £0.847m for the purchase and roll out of wheelie bins, £0.860m for the purchase of five RCV's, and the remaining £0.192m is a combination of contingency, project management costs, the expansion and integration of the Street Services Information Management System (Mayrise) and resident communication and promotional costs. The majority of these amounts will be capitalised, only with the exception of communication and promotion costs which will be wholly revenue.

As in Section 4 the service will consider the operating options based on take up which may reduce the need to replace all or some of the dedicated fleet vehicles for this service which will reduce the actual capital spend accordingly. The fleet replacement programme will be adjusted to enable 2021 to run with dedicated fleet by retaining older vehicles that were due to be replaced. The decision point for fleet will be July 2021 which will also be informed by resident participation.

## 2. DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

### Health and Safety.

The extensive use of bags has a physical impact on our staff from the repeated lifting from the ground to shoulder height, and the associated twisting manoeuvre, which increases the risk of musculoskeletal injuries occurring. Measures have been implemented in recent years to reduce the risk to communicate and enforce the terms of service including ensuring appropriate content is placed in the bags, the number of bags that can be presented and their weight.

The Manual Handling Operations Regulation 1992, Regulation 4, clearly states that Employers hold duties to avoid manual handling and reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable. The receptacle (container) design achieved through wheeled bins for waste collection is an industry standard as part of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance and the recognised waste industry safety and health (WISH) forum. A benchmarking exercise for garden waste collections across 21 Local Authorities<sup>1</sup> in our family group, and our neighbours, demonstrated that 95% (20 out of 21) use wheelie bins as either the sole or main form of container. Moving to wheelie bins reduces the risk of injury and specifically meets the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance that pushing or pulling a load is preferred to lifting, as is lifting by mechanical means.

### Missed Collections.

Previous data on service performance shows that has been a high proportion of missed collection reports. This is in part due to the sporadic nature of participation, gardening activity varies and can create significant peaks in volumes, as well as crews having to literally search the streets for presented garden bags. On this basis, service improvements have been underway with investment in digitisation of routes and in-cab devices as part of the opt-in registration

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<sup>1</sup> Southampton, Cornwall, South Hams, West Devon, East Devon, North Devon, Blackpool, Bournemouth, Bristol, Calderdale, Coventry, Darlington, Derby, Dudley, Gateshead, NE Lincolnshire, North Tyneside, Redcar & Cleveland, Sefton, Sunderland, Wirral

service for 2020. Covid-19 has impacted the 2020 service but early indications show that missed bin reports have significantly reduced. The 2021 wheelie bin service will be routed based upon registered participants only which will achieve further efficiency and reliability improvements.

The reliability of the existing dedicated vehicles, which are significantly beyond their operating life, has also impacted upon service delivery, with regular instances where vehicles are unavailable for crews due to the requirement for unscheduled maintenance.

An additional disruption to scheduled routes can arise from safeguarding the statutory collection services in the event of insufficient driver numbers due to unplanned absences. The operating model for 2021 will review the established Driver FTE.

### **Vehicle age and specification.**

The current garden waste vehicles are 2008 registrations and are therefore beyond a standard operating life. The vehicles can suffer significant downtime and are costly to maintain. Bag collection requires a dedicated vehicle specification, with bin lifts removed in order to reduce the well height and the associated lifting action. This means that there is no resilience in the fleet to support downtime i.e. the domestic collection fleet cannot currently be used for Garden Waste and so in the event of a vehicle fault or breakdown requiring unscheduled maintenance there is no ability to maintain service delivery for the effected route.

### **High replacement costs for bags.**

There is a significant cost associated with the provision of bags from loss, poor durability and misappropriation, £21k was spent in FY2018/19. Since the 2019 season the majority of container stocks including bags have been Capitalised. Furthermore demand has reduced greatly in 2020 due to the impacts of Covid-19 on service delivery and restriction to delivery only.

### **Environment.**

The migration to the latest Euro vehicle emissions standard will contribute to lower air born particulates and carbon emissions.

The adoption of wheelie bins with a ten plus year life expectancy is anticipated to be preferable to bags with their high churn rate over the period and the fact that garden bags cannot be recycled. Broken wheelie bins are recycled and are made from recycled materials. The wheelie bins are made from up 90% recycled materials, dependent upon the colour chosen and the supplier.

## **3. THE PROPOSAL**

This business case sets out the proposal to transition from a bagged service to a wheelie bin service for the City ready for the 2021 season. This will require the investment in circa 45,000 bins and the replacement of up to five Refuse Collection Vehicles as part of the Council's ongoing fleet replacement programme.

Residents will need to continue to opt-in by registering for each season and in doing so accept the terms of service and the requirement to receive a wheelie bin. It is proposed that bins will be delivered free of charge for those who register within a defined period of time.

The life expectancy of a wheelie bin will be in excess of ten years if properly used and looked after, and depending upon the choice of bin they can be made of materials which are up to 90% recycled helping the Council meet its Climate Emergency objectives.

The existing Street Services Information Management System (SSIMS) will be further expanded to integrate more comprehensively with the customer and crew reporting. This will provide valuable data which can help further service improvements and efficiencies be delivered.

A robust communications plan will be developed and delivered which sets out the requirements for residents including the registration process, registration cut off points, wheelie bin deliveries and later any changes to collection days etc.

## 4. VEHICLE OPTIONS

The current dedicated fleet without lifting arms will be disposed of as they will be thirteen years old in 2021 and are beyond their useful life.

The intention for all or part of the 2021 season will be to keep utilise other general refuse vehicles within the fleet that were due to be released as part of the first phase of the Fleet Replacement Programme. They will therefore be retained for a year longer than planned.

RCV's have an effective lifespan of between six and eight years, beyond which they suffer from increased breakdowns and require greater levels of reactive maintenance, which impacts upon service delivery and increases costs.

There will be a robust assessment to determine the best and most efficient way to operate the Service for 2022 taking account of the lead in time for replacement RCVs of about eight months. A particular area for consideration is whether shift times outside of the traditional operating hours can be undertaken, which will reduce the number of new vehicles required therefore optimising the fleet. Notwithstanding this opportunity, there are constraints to fleet optimisation to consider, particularly with regard to permitted operating hours for disposal. At this stage this decision and associated business case includes provision for the option of a full replacement of the current dedicated fleet of five RCVs.

The vehicle options for the 2022 season will be:

- 1) Full replacement of the five Garden Waste RCVs as per provision made within this Business Case.
- 2) Partial replacement of the Garden Waste RCVs by altering the operating hours of the current service so other existing RCVs can be utilised, or due to lower than anticipated demand, and associated route efficiencies.
- 3) No replacement of the Garden Waste RCVs by successfully delivering the service completely outside of existing operating hours, thus fully utilising other existing RCVs.

TO NOTE. There may be an impact upon employee terms and conditions and also additional revenue implications which would arise from extending or altering operating hours including additional staffing and supervision and associated extended or altered garage capacity and operating hours. Detailed analysis of the costs and benefits will be undertaken of the operating options to inform decision making.

Making financial provision now for the decision to replace all or some of the fleet makes practical sense and will avoid any delay to procurement in 2021 in readiness for 2022. The final decision will be made by the relevant Cabinet Member in 2021.

Ultimately, the move to wheeled bins, new vehicles and the ongoing requirement for a registration will result in a better service for residents due to increased efficiency and reliability, they will also reduce maintenance costs and the impact upon the environment.

## 5 PROJECT MILESTONES

The table below sets out the key milestones associated with successfully delivering this project.

Key Activity	Date
Cabinet Decision	13-Oct-20
Communication campaign for residents launched	Early Nov-20*
Online Registration portal opens	10-Nov-20*
Contract award to successful tenderer	Oct-20*
Initial supplier order placed (based on estimated participation)	Oct-20*
Initial Registration period closes	7 Jan 21
Secondary registration process commences	8 Jan 21
Supplier order updated based on registration and container choices	14 Jan 21
Bin distribution commences by supplier	25-Jan-21
Bin distribution completed for those registering before 7 Jan	Wc 22-Mar-21
New Garden Waste Service 2021 commences	05-Apr-21
Review complete to determine vehicle requirement for 2022 season	01-Jun-21
New vehicles ordered, subject to requirements	01-Jul-21

\*Dates subject to any call-in of decision.

## 6 RECOMMENDED DECISION

**It is recommended that Cabinet:**

- Approves the Business Case
- Allocates £1.874m for the project into the Capital Programme funded by
  - £1.014m Corporate Borrowing
  - £0.860m Service Borrowing
- Authorises the procurement process
- Delegates the award of the contract to the Strategic Director of Place.