

INTRODUCTION OF SEPARATE FOOD WASTE COLLECTION

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the early adoption of a weekly food waste collection service in Autumn 2023, and the associated changes to the Council's waste and recycling services, in advance of the expected legislative requirements from 2024.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The current collection is comprised of three streams of waste: household refuse; mixed recyclables; and compostable (combined food and garden waste).
- 2.2 The current compostable waste collection service collects from approximately 35,000 households in the district. The compostable waste collection is undertaken throughout the year on a weekly basis. Presently the collection consists of two streams of waste: garden waste and food waste, deposited into a single 140 litres green bin for collection.
- 2.3 There are, at present, a number of key drivers to give consideration to in determining how the collection of food and garden waste will be collected in the near future.
- 2.4 **Key Drivers for Change to Service**
- 2.5 Legislation
- 2.6 The Environment Act 2021 makes amendments to the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requiring a separate weekly food collection service to be introduced for Waste Collection Authorities in England by 2024.
- 2.7 To facilitate this change Government are proposing to make capital funding available in 2023/24 for the introduction of a separate food waste collection service for those Councils that have not already done so. However, where food waste collections are already provided by a local authority, no additional capital funding will be provided. Therefore, as it currently stands, the funding that is to be made available for the introduction of a separate food waste collection would apply to this Council.
- 2.8 However, there cannot be an expectation that government will meet all additional expenditure by local authorities, to introduce the service, regardless of value for money, or that any of the funding will be available in future years.

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- 2.9 Essex County Council – Waste Disposal Authority
- 2.10 Essex County Council (in its capacity as the Waste Disposal Authority) allows for the collection of food waste to be mixed with garden waste and presented for disposal as a single compostable waste stream.
- 2.11 Due to the introduction of the new Environment Act, and that many other Essex authorities already collect their food and garden waste separately (10 out of 12 Essex Authorities), local treatment facilities for composting mixed food and garden waste are unlikely to exist in the near future. Therefore, this Council may well face increasingly long distances to dispose of mixed food and garden waste.
- 2.12 Early conversations with Essex County Council (ECC) have established the possibility of a one-off contribution, approximately £250,000, to be made available for the introduction of a separate food waste service - subject to a fully costed business plan.
- 2.13 Although any decision on this by ECC will be subject to additional financial analysis to demonstrate an 'invest to save case, which will require the submission of a full delivery proposal from the Council, early signs regarding such support are positive. ECC have confirmed their continued commitment to work closely with the Council on this proposal.
- 2.14 This financial incentive is available due to the saving Essex County Council can generate through diverting the garden waste away from the separate food waste treatment system. It is unlikely, that this financial incentive will be available in future years due to existing waste disposal contracts for food and garden waste currently up for renewal.
- 2.15 ECC has confirmed that the open windrow composting and anaerobic digestion treatment capacity has been secured to ensure any food waste garden waste separately collected by RDC is treated in line with good practice. These treatment outlets will be available for RDC to access from September 2023.
- 2.16 Waste & Recycling Strategy 2021-2028
- 2.17 The proposed changes to the waste collection service align with Council strategic aims as set out in the *Waste & Recycling Strategy*. The Strategy was agreed by Council in December 2020. A key deliverable (p.7 Deliverable 1): *Anticipate statutory changes to waste collection by introducing weekly food collection*.
- 2.18 A target of introducing separate waste collection by 2023 was further set out (p.11).
- 2.19 Previous modelling as set out in the December 2020 report, estimates that the collection of a separate food service will yield an approximate 3% increase in the recycling rate for the District.

- 2.20 By separating the food and garden waste, approximately two-thirds of the combined waste stream (the garden waste) will be able to be diverted to a composting treatment rather than as a combined food and garden 'in vessel' treatment process. This will reduce the carbon emissions for the disposal of the garden waste stream, in line with *Objective 5: Reduce Carbon Emissions* of the Strategy.
- 2.21 Vehicle Purchase
- 2.22 Should the existing weekly co-mingled food & garden waste service remain, a decision on further fleet purchases will still be required. At present, a commitment for a further £400,000 for two 26 tonne Refuse Collection Vehicles has been set aside. The purchase of these two vehicles has been delayed to allow time to review the food and garden waste collection service as there may be opportunities to rationalise the garden waste collection service once a separate collection service for food is operational.
- 2.23 Any further future change to the service could render the two vehicles redundant. Therefore, any alterations to the service may result potentially in redundant vehicles that the Council will own and have the responsibility of disposing of.
- 2.24 **Summary Of Current Position:**
- 2.25 The Council will have to introduce a separate food waste service, by 2024, to comply with the Environment Act
- 2.26 New Burdens Funding will be made available, in the 2023/24 financial year, by government, to provide capital funds for initial set up of service - the amount and detail are not presently known.
- 2.27 The Council are seeking to secure an additional one-off contribution from Essex County Council of £250,000, providing the service change is introduced by Autumn 2023.

3 OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Council could delay the implementation of the food waste service until it is mandatory, however, this will not assist with the Council's commitment to climate change or assist in increasing the Council's recycling performance.
- 3.2 The risk in delaying, is that demand for specialist food vehicles and food caddies will increase, as the statutory deadline for delivery of a separate food collection service gets nearer. The increased demand for vehicles and caddies will result in longer lead-in times for delivery and implementation, and possible increase in cost of purchasing.
- 3.3 Further, a delay in the roll-out of the service will result in withdrawal of the current offer of financial support from Essex County Council.

4 PREFERRED OPTION

- 4.1 It is proposed that a commitment is made to roll-out a separate food waste collection service in Autumn 2023. This will require an order for suitable food vehicles and food caddies to be placed as early as possible so that lead-in times are factored into the delivery plan.
- 4.2 Under the new scheme, food waste would be collected in a 23 litres food caddy, and garden waste would continue to be collected in the existing 140 litre green bins currently supplied. The food waste would be collected in a new vehicle, specifically designed for collecting food within a sealed collection chamber, lined with material resistant to the food acids, that would corrode a standard collection vehicle.
- 4.3 Mobilisation
- 4.4 It is proposed that food caddies will be distributed to all households for the weekly collection of food waste, no charge will be made to the residents for the supply of a food caddy, or for the collection of the food waste.
- 4.5 Collection would occur weekly, on the scheduled collection day for existing bins. This would minimise any potential disruption to residents. Residents are already familiar with separating food from other waste, where previously this would have been disposed of in the 'green bin', it will now be placed in the food caddy.
- 4.6 **Scheme Cost**
- 4.7 Capital Expenditure
- 4.8 The table below, sets out the capital expenditure required. Of note is the estimated one-off capital investment of £635,000 for the purchase of 4 x 11 tonne food vehicles.
- 4.9 A further capital investment of £275,000 will be initially required for the purchase and distribution of the food caddies.
- 4.10 Table 1 – Capital Expenditure – Separate Garden Food Waste

	Initial Project	
Capital Expenditure		
<i>4x 11tonne RCV</i>	£635,000	
<i>Food Caddy Purchase and Delivery</i>	£275,000	
Total	£910,000	

4.11 Revenue Expenditure

4.12 Table 2 – Revenue Expenditure -Separate Garden Food Waste

	2023/24	2024/25 (Full Year)
Revenue Expenditure		
<i>Replacement Caddies</i>	£10,000	£21,000
<i>Norse JV</i>		
<i>Staffing</i>	£176,000	£352,000
<i>Fuel & Running Costs</i>	£29,000	£57,000
<i>Overheads</i>	£20,000	£40,000
<i>One off mobilisation Costs</i>		
<i>Communications Strategy</i>	£40,000	
<i>Temporary Staffing Resource</i>	£15,000	
Essex County Council Contribution		
<i>Composting Credits Income</i>	-£250,000	
Total Net Expenditure	£40,000	£470,000

4.13 Further to the initial capital investment, an ongoing revenue budget (set out in table-2) of an additional estimated £470,000 per year will be required, from 2024/25, to specifically oversee delivery of the new service. Additionally there is a one-off revenue contribution, in 2023/24, of £55,000 for communications, and additional temporary staffing resource to ensure successful delivery of the project plan.

4.14 It is anticipated that the initial 6-month period of expenditure in 2023/24 will be off-set by a £250,000 contribution from Essex County Council.

4.15 It should be noted that the financial forecast set out above presumes that the Council does not receive any New Burdens funding from government to off-set the capital expenditure. This rather conservative approach is prudent, given that the formula and amount of funding that the Council will receive is undetermined at present.

5 PROCUREMENT

5.1 Discussions have taken place with manufacturers of food caddies regarding options for delivery of 35,000 food caddies for the roll out. A suitable procurement framework has been identified and would enable an effective and value for money approach to undertaking the tender process.

5.2 The 4 specialist food vehicles would be purchased through the Rochford Norse Joint Venture, due to the company having access to a procurement framework established by Norse that is compliant with UK procurement law.

Once an order has been placed, a 6-month lead in-time for delivery has been stated.

6 COMMUNICATIONS

- 6.1 A Communications Strategy and Key Messages Timeline is to be developed. This will be approached in a very thorough manner as it is acknowledged that the success of the implementation of the new collection scheme will be dependent on the extent to which residents have received the information about it and understand what is required. The Communications Strategy will consist of the following themes:
- 6.2 Early Communications: Message on social media to highlight how much food is being wasted in Rochford and the associated environmental impacts, linking this to the Council's commitment to tackle climate change locally. Early messages also to include that the Council has agreed to introduce a food waste service in Autumn 2023.
- 6.3 Pre-service roll-out: Consisting of an information leaflet delivered to households approximately one month before the start of service. The pre-service communications will be followed up with a further instructional leaflet delivered alongside the caddies.
- 6.4 Post-service roll-out: ongoing messages to remind residents of the food waste service and encourage its use.
- 6.5 To manage this, it is planned to increase the number of customer service staff for a short until the service beds in. The cost forms part of the one-off staff costs identified in Table 2.

7 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The legal arrangements between the Council and the Waste Disposal Authority
- 7.2 Essex County Council, in its capacity as the Waste Disposal Authority, with reference to the agreed Essex recycling plan may object to the Council collecting food as a separate waste stream where ECC has already made arrangements to dispose or recycle that waste.
- 7.3 The Council will need to submit an ad-hoc review stating changes to its collection service. The ECC or parties within the partnership are able to raise an objection. However, it is considered to be highly unlikely that the ECC or parties within the partnership will raise an objection, as there is no obvious impact upon any of the other Waste Collect Authorities. Of the 12 waste collection authorities in Essex, 10 already operate a separate food waste collection service.

7.4 Finance

- 7.5 There is an additional on-going cost pressure relating to the cost of running a separate food waste collection service which is estimated at approximately £500,000. This will be off-set in the 2023/24 financial year by the one-off contribution from Essex County Council for early introduction of the food waste service. However, in future financial years the additional cost will need to be addressed by the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 7.6 The Council will be implementing changes to its waste collection service prior to the release of the details of the New Burdens funding from Government. The details of the funding arrangements for Councils to apply for implementation cost is not guaranteed. Therefore, the Council will be funding these changes in full with an uncertain position on Government funding.
- 7.7 To ensure that the financial burden of the proposed changes to the waste collection service are considered in future budget setting years. It is proposed that a consultation with residents will be undertaken to explore potential changes to the waste collection service that may assist in reducing the overall cost of the waste collection service. The results of the consultation will be presented to Council in the summer.

8 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 It is proposed that the new refuse collection vehicles will be diesel rather than electric. These will have an estimated useful vehicle life beyond 2030 – the Council's target for achieving Net-Zero Carbon emissions. The purchase of these vehicles may hinder the ability of the Council to achieve this target. However, the vehicles will still be of an age and condition, where retrofitting an electric replacement to the diesel engine, could be cost-effective. Any new vehicles purchased would be able to function normally on replacement bio-diesel, as a low-carbon alternative should it be required.
- 8.2 At present the existing depot does not contain an infrastructure capable of providing a sufficient electric supply to charge and run an electric fleet of refuse collection vehicles. The location and suitability of the existing depot is to be reviewed, with a view to relocation and modernisation. Therefore, investment in the existing depot infrastructure needs to be tempered against the potential future plans.

9 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Funding for the proposals in this report have been factored in to the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy, which will be presented for Council approval on 21 February 2023.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Environment Act 2021 amends the Environmental Protection Act 1990, including section 45A with a number of conditions regarding the separate collection of household waste.
- 10.2 The first condition is that recyclable household waste must be collected separately from other household waste. The second condition is that recyclable household waste must be collected for recycling or composting. The third condition is that recyclable household waste in each recyclable waste stream must be collected separately, except that recyclable household waste in two or more recyclable waste streams may be collected together where it is not technically or economically practicable to collect recyclable household waste in those recyclable waste streams separately, or collecting recyclable household waste in those recyclable waste streams separately has no significant environmental benefit (having regard to the overall environmental impact of collecting it separately and of collecting it together). The fourth condition is that recyclable household waste which is food waste must be collected at least once a week.
- 10.3 The proposals contained within this report allow this council to fulfil the obligations contained within the Environment Act 2021, section 45A.
- 10.4 The approach to financing does not include any New Burdens funding, which should be forthcoming, but amounts are not known at this stage.

11 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Equality Impact Assessment, identifies potential negative impacts for households with physical low mobility if the preferred option is pursued. This impact would be mitigated by the Council ensuring that the existing policy for assisted collections is replicated for the food waste collection service.

12 RECOMMENDATION

- 12.1 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES**
- (1) That a weekly collection of food waste be introduced in autumn 2023.
 - (2) That the containers provided to households for food waste are 23 litre kerbside food caddies.
 - (3) That £910,000 be drawn down for the capital expenditure, as outlined in this report.
 - (4) That an additional net £40,000 revenue budget be provided for the delivery of the food waste collection service in 2023/24.

- (5) That a consultation be undertaken seeking the views of households on options for change to the future waste collection service.
- (6) That authority be delegated to the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, to finalise the business case and consequent agreement with Essex County Council regarding the introduction of a separate food waste service.
- (7) That authority be delegated to the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, to undertake contract negotiations with Rochford Norse Joint Venture to finalise the necessary changes to the collection service.



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Background Papers:-

None.

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