



**Rochford District
Council**

REPORT TITLE:	Introduction of Separate Food Waste Collection Service
REPORT OF:	Executive Lead Member Environmental Services, Cllr Chris Stanley

REPORT SUMMARY

The Council on February 15th 2023, agreed to the introduction of a separate weekly food waste collection which was originally scheduled for introduction in Autumn 2023. However, the introduction of the service has been delayed for reasons set out in 2.3 to 2.7 in the report below.

The Environment Act 2021 now requires a separate weekly food collection service to be introduced by March 31st 2026, revised from the previous March 2025. In addition, the latest guidance from DEFRA suggests the existing arrangement of a weekly comingle collection of garden and food waste may also now be compliant.

The introduction of the new service cannot progress without funding being secured either through Essex County Council or government's New Burdens Funding that covers the cost of the running of the service – approximately £400,000 a year. Until this short-fall in the required Council budget to deliver the service has been addressed, any further progress on the separate food waste collection service will be delayed - critically, the commitment to purchase and deliver food caddies to every household in the district.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1 - That the Director of Environment Services secures external funding through Essex County Council and DEFRA to address the shortfall of revenue funding required.**
- R2 - To delegate to the Director of Environment Services and S.151 Officer in consultation with the Lead Member for Environmental Services/Leader of the Council (or Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Committee) authority to implement a separate weekly food waste collection once the necessary funding outlined in R1 has been addressed.**
- R3 - To delegate to the Director of Environment and S.151 Officer in consultation with the Lead Member for Environmental Services /Leader of the Council (or Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Committee) authority to award contracts for the purchase and delivery of food caddies once the necessary funding outlined in R1 has been addressed.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION**1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 Council on February 15th 2023, had previously agreed to the introduction of a weekly separate food waste service, this aligns with the Council's Waste & Recycling Strategy 2020.
- 1.2 The introduction of a separate food waste service is the preferred collection system of Defra and will provide the greatest certainty of addressing the requirements of the Environment Act 2021.
- 1.3 The introduction of the new service cannot progress without funding being secured either through Essex County Council or government's New Burdens Funding to cover the cost of the running of the new service – approximately £400,000 a year.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The current waste collection service is comprised of three streams of waste: household refuse; mixed dry recyclables; and, compostable (combined food and garden waste). The service collects from approximately 35,000 Household.
- 2.2 The Council on February 15th 2023, agreed to the introduction of a separate weekly food waste collection. The garden waste stream would also be collected weekly, in a separate bin, as opposed to the current co-mingled arrangement of

food and garden waste in a single wheeled bin. It was noted that this service would cost an estimated additional £400,000 per year to run.

Delay to Proposed Change to Service

- 2.3 Originally the change to the waste collection service was scheduled for introduction in Autumn 2023. However, the introduction of the new service has been delayed for reasons set out below.
- 2.4 The original Council decision was guided by the 2021 Environment Act, stating that food waste should be collected separately from other household waste by 2025. Additional guidance was anticipated from the government outlining further detail of the required scheme.
- 2.5 As part of the roll-out of the new service, new vehicles designed for collection food waste would be required. In March 2023 an order with Dennis Eagle was placed for the required specialist food waste vehicles. However, such was the demand for these type of vehicles (driven by the introduction of the Environment Act 2021) by local authorities across England, that the originally stated 6-month delivery time by the supplier, extended to approximately 12 months.
- 2.6 As stated above, additional guidance was anticipated from the government outlining further detail and would also set out the level of New Burdens funding the Council would receive for the initial set-up cost of the new food waste collection service. Further additional New Burdens funding was also anticipated to support with the revenue cost of the on-going delivery of a separate food waste collection.
- 2.7 Frustratingly, this advice was delayed, and therefore created uncertainty around the level of New Burdens funding likely to be received. Therefore, it was felt prudent to delay the introduction of the service whilst the level of New Burdens funding and detail of the Act was being confirmed. Originally an announcement was expected last spring (2023), but in fact was not announced until this year in January 2024.

DEFRA Current Position

- 2.8 The Environment Act 2021 now requires a separate weekly food collection service to be introduced by March 31st 2026, revised from the previous March 2025. In addition, the latest guidance from Defra suggests the existing arrangement of a weekly comingled collection of garden and food waste may also now be compliant.
- 2.9 The capital funding made available in January 2024, through New Burdens funding (a £103,000 contribution) to the Council for the roll-out of the new service, was significantly less than required. Of greater concern is that

government has softened its stance on the need to collect a separate food waste service, with Defra suggesting an exemption can be applied to those authorities choosing to collect co-mingled garden and food waste. That is to say, the Council may already collect its waste in a way compliant with the new Act. It remains unclear what level of revenue funding, if any, will be provided by the government for the running a separate food waste collection and whether that funding would be equally applicable to a co-mingled collection.

- 2.10 The transitional funding is now being calculated by Defra and will be available from 2024/25, with councils to be notified of these allocations early in 2024/25. Ongoing new burdens funding for all authorities is expected from 1st April 2026. However, it is unclear whether that it will be available for authorities that continue to co-mingle garden & food waste. It would also be prudent to presume that the New Burdens funding is unlikely to fully cover the on-going costs of a separate food collection.

Latest Progress on Separate Food Waste Collection

- 2.11 A revised high-level project plan is appended to this report. The plan is based on the assumption that the additional funding required to allow the running of the new service is secured before the end-of-March.
- 2.12 The Council recognises the environmental and recycling benefits of introducing a new separate food waste service in line with the Council's 2020 Waste & Recycling Strategy and remains committed to the introduction of a separate food waste service.
- 2.13 The Council has now taken delivery of 4, 12 tonne refuse collection vehicles specifically designed for the collection of food waste. These are now registered at the South Street depot and included upon the Operational Licence and can now be made available for use on the road.
- 2.14 Originally when the separate food waste service was planned to be introduced in 2023, Essex County Council (ECC) indicated that they were willing to provide a financial contribution towards the introduction of the new service. The possibility of a similar funding arrangement, this year with ECC is currently being discussed with County Officers. It is anticipated that Essex County Council will be willing to contribute approximately £400,000 in 2024/25, to off-set the additional running cost for the introduction of a separate food waste service, However, this proposed arrangement has yet to be finalised.
- 2.15 A further order for £275,000 for the purchase and distribution of the food caddies has yet to be finalised, with a view to placing an order in March 2024. The capital

funding, specifically earmarked for the purchase of food caddies, is available within the Council's existing capital programme.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 The Council may consider not to proceed with the introduction of a separate food waste service and continue with the existing service. This approach would provide certainty over the cost of the service, broadly the costs would remain the same due to no change in service being introduced.
- 3.2 The recently purchased food-waste vehicles could either be sold or kept in the depot if the Council minded to revisit the introduction of a separate food waste in the near future. Certainly, it would be advised that if vehicles disposal is to be considered, that any sale is delayed until further detail from Defra on the New Burdens fundings has been finalised.
- 3.3 Essex County Council in conversation have confirmed that they will be able to secure waste disposal facilities to continue to handle co-mingled food and garden waste in the short-term. However, there is significant additional cost to ECC (and hence the tax-payer) for the use of this disposal method (In conversation with ECC Officers -an additional £600,000 per year). There is a possibility that Essex, in the medium term will instruct the Council to divert to land-fill, reducing the County Council disposal costs. This would result in Rochford's recycling rates dropping by approximately 10%.
- 3.4 It should be noted that Rochford District Council, along side Epping District Council are the only remaining collection authorities in Essex that collect a comingled food and garden waste stream. Epping have indicated that they plan to introduce a separate food collection service in the near future.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 4.1 The introduction of the new service cannot progress without funding being secured either through Essex County Council or government's New Burdens Funding to cover the cost of the running of the service – approximately £400,000 a year. Until this short-fall in the required Council budget to deliver the service has been addressed, any further progress on the separate food waste collection service will be delayed - critically, the commitment to purchase and deliver food caddies to every household in the district.
- 4.2 The purchase and delivery of the food caddies is a key dependant, and therefore determines the critical path of the project plan. Suppliers, have at present suggested a lead in time of 8 weeks for the delivery of the food caddies. However, with an increasing number of local authorities placing orders for food

caddies as they seek to introduce a separate food collection service, the lead in time are set to significantly increase as demand outstrips available supply. Therefore, should the decision to purchase food caddies be delayed, the project delay may be in excess of the original slippage due to the timing of orders being placed.

5.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

5.1 None.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The introduction of the new food waste collection service is estimated to cost approximately £400,000 a year to run. The Council has recently set its budgets for the new financial and would be unable to meet the significant cost as in-year budgetary pressure. Therefore, the Council are unable to fund the introduction of the new service, unless external funding can be secure that covers the entire costs of the new service.

7.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Any legal and governance implications are covered within the body of the report.

8.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are not any direct equality or health implications arising from the report.

9.0 ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

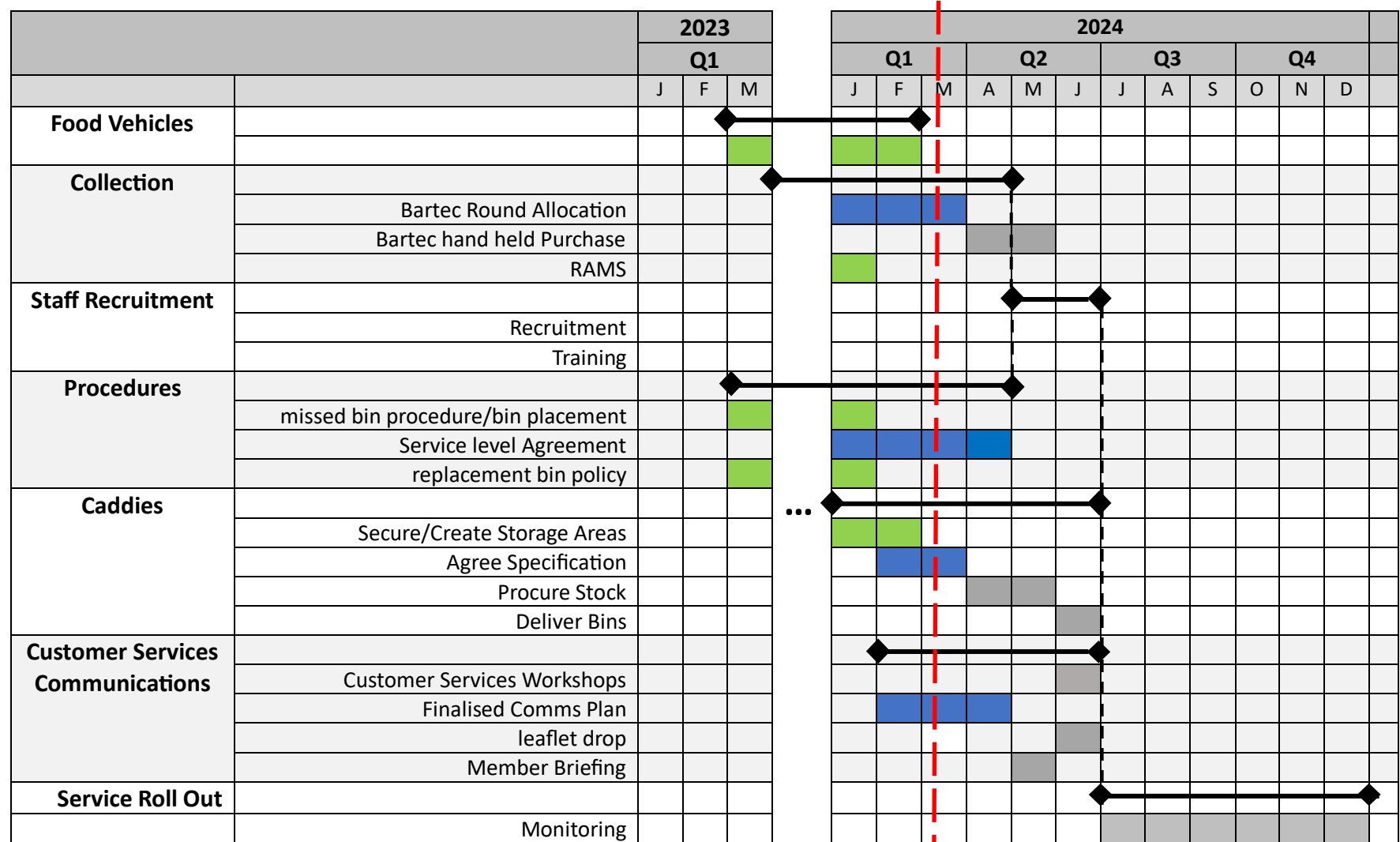
9.1 Any environmental implications are covered within the report.

10.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are not any economic implications arising from this report.

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APPENDIX 1 – High Level Project Plan – (Assuming Funding is secured in March 2024)



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