

<b>14 December 2017</b>		<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Waste Service Route Optimisation – 6 Month Update</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All		<b>Key Decision:</b> Report for noting
<b>Report of:</b> Claire Harvey, Environment Front Line Services Manager, Environment and Highways		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Not Applicable		
<b>Accountable Directors:</b> Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways		
<b>This report is</b> public		

## **Executive Summary**

This report provides an overview of domestic waste collections following the implementation in May 2017, on the new methodology of a sweep system and new waste collection rounds (route optimisation), which impacted 79% of residents across the borough.

The report provides an update on performance and challenges from the first 6 months of implementation of the new service and is forward looking in relation to the ongoing service provision.

## **1 Recommendation(s)**

### **1.1 That Cleaner, Greener and safer Overview and Scrutiny consider and note the report.**

## **2 Introduction and Background**

2.1 On the 8th May 2017, the optimisation of the waste collection operation was implemented. This included moving to a West to East sweep across the borough and rebalancing routes and operational capacity. Another objective of the change was to provide a degree of increased resilience to the collection rounds, reducing the impact of seasonal variations in workload and allowing additional domestic properties coming on stream to be absorbed.

2.2 The new system of collection impacted 79% of residents in the Borough who now have a different day of collection. All three bins (refuse, dry recycling and

kitchen/garden waste) continued to be collected from each property on the same day.

- 2.3 Specialist software, which is used by many local authorities, was used to generate a proposed new round process. The software runs complex algorithms that identify the most efficient routes to travel to ensure that all properties in the area have a collection service for each stream, each week. Before going live on the 8th May, all rounds were reviewed and tested by the Waste Collection Supervisors and Drivers to utilise their local knowledge, ensuring as far as possible, that the implementation of the new rounds were achievable as far as practically possible.
- 2.4 The end of October marked 6 months since the new rounds were implemented. The last time the waste collection routes were reviewed on this scale was in 2013. At that time the implementation of the new rounds were linked to changes in the terms and conditions of the waste collection staff. The impact of combining the changes resulted in significant disruption to the waste collection service. At that time the percentage of bins collected on schedule dropped to as low as 89%, in the month that new routes were introduced. The number of complaints received in that year was 542 (81% being upheld). The team ensured that the learning from the changes in 2013 were considered and implemented to minimise any negative impact on residents.
- 2.5 The lessons learned from the 2013 route review, which were addressed prior to the 8th May, are:
  - Limiting the level of change to the daily rounds only; and
  - Engaging effectively with staff to ensure their understanding and support for the change.

### **3. Issues Options and Analysis of Options**

#### **3.1 Current Performance**

- 3.1.1 Immediately after the implementation of the new rounds, the levels of missed bins decreased. Indeed, performance figures for the beginning of May were positive. However since May, there have been a number of months when performance has fallen below the 98.5% target of collections made as scheduled. The cumulative target as at October 2017 shows the service has not currently met its Key Performance Indicator target for the year to date. In real terms, the service is below target by less than 1% and it is anticipated that at year end the outcome for this indicator will be at or very near the set target of 98.5%.

The table below provides an overview of monthly performance for the year to the end of October. It includes figures from the 2013-14 waste service change, to provide context.

- 3.1.2 The main reasons for missed collections between the end of June and October are not directly linked to the new round structure, but rather to a number of issues that arose concurrently.

		<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
<b>2017-2018</b>	<b>Bins to be collected</b>	801,756	922,019	881,932	841,844	922,019	841,844	881,932	6,093,346
	<b>Monthly Missed Bins</b>	16,137	5,054	27,623	11,763	25,194	38,342	14,654	138,767
	<b>% of Collections Made (Target = 98.5%)</b>	98.0%	99.5%	96.9%	98.6%	97.3%	95.4%	98.3%	97.7%
<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>Bins to be collected</b>	843467	881,806	766,788	881,806	805,127	805,127	881,127	5,865,928
	<b>Monthly Missed Bins</b>	8,528	12,406	87,090	54,865	36,853	34105	35919	305,975
	<b>% of Collections Made (Target = 98.5%)</b>	99.0%	98.6%	88.6%	93.8%	95.4%	95.8%	95.9%	94.8%

The reasons for the disruptions relate to a range of operational matters. A number of actions have been taken and continue to be planned to address these, including:

- Recruitment has been ongoing this financial year and continues to ensure that we have a well-resourced and stable workforce. Since January 2017 we have recruited 34 long term agency front line members of staff into permanent posts. This represents 38% of the total front line workforce;
- A programme of work is in place to improve communication with front line staff. Each crew covers approximately 1,500 properties per day. Crews become so familiar with their rounds, they know where subtle changes apply, e.g. assisted collections, houses that are hidden from view, bin store challenges etc. When staff changes take place, it takes some time for crews to familiarise themselves and for them to reach their normal speed of operation. Where crews are covering sickness/annual leave this is also a challenge. Crews have been consistently supported to manage the change;
- Active engagement with a number of local providers to recruit sufficient agency drivers during peak summer months July to September. This was a challenge due to the shortage of licenced, qualified HGV drivers across the country;
- The procurement of 28 new waste collection vehicles are scheduled to be delivered from March 2018, along with 4 refurbished existing vehicles. This will provide increased reliability and flexibility. The fleet will then consist of 32 good quality vehicles;

- Close monitoring of the current fleet continues with maintenance of refuse freighters as a priority for the Fleet Division; and
- The Bartec system (back office scheduling and reporting tool) is being renewed and re-implemented to ensure accurate and timely information relating to bin collections. This will enable a quicker response to residents querying non-collection.

3.1.3 Due to the challenges outlined in 3.2 of the report, there was an impact on Friday collections which meant more residents who were receiving a Friday service saw a drop in performance. To address this issue, the service has reallocated workload to existing crews, with all changes due to be completed by end December.

3.1.4 The other area of focus for the service is communal bin stores. Complaints in this area again are not directly linked to route optimisation, although the perception of residents is that these collections have been affected by the change in collection regime. The issues with bin store collections are linked to excess waste, blocked access and contamination. The service is engaging with managing agents who have some influence and control over these matters, in particular where large accumulations of excess waste is blocking access for the waste crews to clear. In these circumstances it is the responsibility of the managing agent to arrange clearance, prior to collection services resuming.

These issues are directly linked to the level of household waste that is re-used, recycled and composted.

3.1.5 Work is underway to increase recycling rates includes:

- A Comprehensive communication plan reminding residents of the items that should be disposed of in each stream, including re-introduction of the bin tagging system will be communicated within the next six to eight months;
- A Review of the Waste Strategy to ensure a clear and consistent approach is being taken. It has been agreed that recycling side waste will be accepted as usual over the Christmas period. Additional recycling bags will be made available for this purpose at local libraries and community hubs;
- A programme to review the recycling receptacles available at sites of multi-occupancy;
- Engagement with managing agents of communal bin stores to encourage, educate and enforce appropriate bin usage in their buildings; and
- A targeted education and engagement programme (See Appendix A) for all residents, including an opportunity for schools to participate in naming the new refuse collection vehicles.

3.1.6 The number of complaints and service requests have been closely monitored over the period of the route optimisation project. The service did experience an increase in contacts in May, as a result of the new collection methodology. However, overall the number of complaints remained at a similar level to that received for this period last year. The new route optimisation did not result in a significant increase in resident complaints over the same period last year.

The table below provides a summary of the number of formal complaints received each month. As before, the figures for the same period in 2013-14 have been included for context.

<b>Corporate Complaints</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Year to Date</b>
<b>2013-14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>463</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>135</b>
2017/18	8	24	17	22	29	30	26	156

### 3.2 Issues for consideration

- 3.2.1 Since route optimisation commenced in May, there has been an uplift of 300 domestic properties, which equates to an increase of 900 collections across the three waste streams each week.
- 3.2.2 There has also been significant and successful growth of the trade waste business which has also started to have an impact on domestic collection rounds. Due to the success of the growth of trade waste and the forecasting going forward, we are introducing an additional dedicated trade waste round from January 2018. This will bring further opportunities to improve the communal bin store collections, as a result of freed up capacity in the domestic waste stream. The costs of the additional trade waste collection are recovered from the income generated. The service continues to regularly review the level of trade collections and the configuration of resource to ensure the most effective collections for both trade and domestic customers. One of the objectives of route optimisation was to ensure that planned new properties could be absorbed within the collection structure.

Further forecasting has highlighted ongoing pressures for the service as growth and development in Thurrock continues over the coming years, however this is being considered as part of the medium term planning.

### 3.3 Summary

- 3.3.1 Despite a number of operational challenges, the implementation of the sweep system has been successful, and overall, the service provides an improved method of domestic collection across the borough. Given the scale of the changes to the collection service the current performance relating to missed bins, which is 0.8% below target is a significant achievement, even more so when compared with performance following the optimisation programme in 2013-14.
- 3.3.2 The Waste Collection team are aware of the current issues relating to collections on Fridays and the ongoing issues in relation to some communal bin stores. As detailed above, actions are underway to address these issues and the improvement in performance in October reflects this. This includes re-

allocating some of the Friday work amongst the rounds to ensure that they are completed as scheduled and inspecting communal bin stores that have had missed collections to identify specific issues and propose solutions.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 The shift to a sweep system continues to offer the service the most efficient configuration of collection rounds.

#### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 This report is a review of service performance over the past 6 months. No consultation was required or undertaken.

#### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 This report is a review of service performance over the past 6 months and as such all performance impacts are fully addressed. There is no impact on corporate policies or priorities.

#### **7. Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**  
**Management Accountant (Environment and Highways)**

This report is for noting and there are no actions that will be taken out of it that will have an immediate financial impact for the Council. However, it is clear in the text of the report that it is anticipated that the funding required for both waste disposal and collection budgets in future years will have to be reviewed to ensure that they are taking account of the demographic growth within the Borough. A provision, subject to affordability, is currently within the MTFS for 2018/19.

##### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**  
**Monitoring Officer**

There are no direct legal implications arising from the report

##### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**  
**Community Development Officer**

There are no implications for equality and diversity. All residents receive a waste collection service appropriate to their needs with special collection arrangements available on request.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None applicable

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Members Briefing regarding Route Optimisation, not shared on the Council's website.
- Monthly Corporate KPI reports.

9. **Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1 - Recycle It

**Report Author:**

Claire Harvey

Environment Front Services Manager

Environment and Highways