

Ref: DS

Date: 20 April 2020

**I refer to the agenda for the meeting of the Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee to be held on Tuesday 21 April 2020 at 3.00pm and attach report as undernoted which the Sub-Committee may wish to consider as an additional item.**

GERARD MALONE  
Head of Legal & Property Services

**UNDERNOTE:**

**ADDITIONAL ITEM:**

**Environmental Services – Service Update**

Report by Corporate Director Environment, Regeneration & Resources

Enquiries to – **Diane Sweeney** - Tel 01475 712147

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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Policy &amp; Resources Executive Sub-Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>21 April 2020</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Corporate Director Environment, Regeneration &amp; Resources</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>PR/12/20/SA</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Scott Allan</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712762</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Environmental Services – Service Update</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Executive Sub-Committee on the current operational situation in Waste and Environmental Services and the plans to restore recycling services.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Following the directions from central Government in respect of self-isolation and as advised to the Policy and Resources Sub Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> April, Waste Service experienced a very significant reduction in employees. This coincided with the failure of our contractor who processes dry recyclates (blue bin waste) for similar reasons. Consequently the service was reduced to residual collection only as an emergency and temporary response. This residual collection was increased however to a weekly service and uplifted Garden Waste for those who had purchased permits. Blue bins ceased to be collected, any recyclable material from Blue Bins from the point of contractor failure required to be treated as residual waste.
- 2.2 Recycling Centres were closed following the combination of the government advice on travel, social distancing and resources. Current advice precludes a trip to a recycling centre as non-essential.
- 2.3 Officers have been working on a service delivery model which anticipates available people resource and accommodates new working practices around social distancing. It is considered feasible to restore Garden Waste collections within the next three weeks. The resource associated with this service is available and a restoration of the service will avoid significant cost pressures. In parallel officers advise that it would be prudent to recommence the sale of garden waste permits as there is now a level of confidence that this service can be maintained.
- 2.4 Restoration of the dry recyclate collection service (Blue bin waste) remains a priority and officers seek to restore this service as soon as we have contractual arrangements in place to uplift and treat this waste. Officers are in regular contact with our contractor to progress this matter.
- 2.5 Restoration of food waste is desirable but of a lower priority because the tonnage collected is comparatively low and the costs implications are significantly less than other waste streams. . Officers will reintroduce food waste collections when resources are available, potentially after garden waste and dry recyclate has been restored.
- 2.6 Pressure continues on our Crematorium due to the local death rate which is significantly higher than normal level for this time of year. Officers are managing funerals to maximise throughput whilst respecting the dignity of funerals and the trauma of families. We are seeking to introduce a broadcasting service for funerals in view of the current restriction on the number of

people who can attend.

- 2.7 Car parks remain closed at parks and recreational facilities. We have written to COSLA regarding blue badge holders needing access to public parks. National guidance as currently issued would restrict this and we are asking if any thought has been given to this issue, with a view to guidance being updated.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 It is recommended that the Executive Sub-Committee note:-

1. The Garden Waste recycling service along with the sale of permits will recommence within the next three weeks,
2. Blue Bin collections will be reinstated as soon as our Contractor is able to commence collection and processing of dry recyclate material,
3. Restoration of food waste collections services will be kept under review and restored when there is sufficient resource to commence this service (in line with social distancing guidelines),
4. Grass cutting will commence in cemeteries,
5. That officers are managing a high throughput at Greenock Crematorium and are exploring a broadcasting service in view of the restrictions on the number of people who can attend funerals.

**Scott Allan**  
**Corporate Director**  
**Environment, Regeneration & Resources**

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 At the CMT on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March, following presentation of a report on resourcing and contractual issues within Waste Services due to significant reduction in front line employees across the front line work force and especially drivers, it was agreed to reduce the waste collection service to residual waste only. In the week commencing 30<sup>th</sup> March, separate food waste collections ceased with the weekly residual, dry recyclates continued to be collected in Blue bins until Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April. From Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April, all waste has been collected but this is on a weekly basis in the residual container. Brown bins where presented have been tipped into the residual waste, thereby continuing a brown bin collection service for those who have purchased a permit.
- 4.2 The key issues which influenced the revised collection service were the requirement to increase the number of employees engaged in waste collection from 46 (18 drivers and 28 loaders) to 53 (25 drivers and 26 loaders) to achieve the social distancing protocols as dictated in national guidance and agreed locally with Trade Unions. With self-isolation and underlying health issues reducing the service by 20 (9 drivers and 11 loaders) as of Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March, the full waste service was not sustainable.
- 4.3 At the same time our contractor who processes our dry waste recycle, advised that they could not operate their sorting lines due to employee shortages. Initially this was identified as a short term problem but was quickly clarified through discussion as a longer term issue (i.e. potentially continuing for 4 weeks or more). In consequence we cannot dispose of material collected from blue bin waste at this time and there is only storage capacity for a few days waste.
- 4.4 A summary of the reasons for the changed service delivery model as described above was given verbally to the previous Policy and Resources Sub Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

## **5.0 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN RESPECT OF RESTORING A FULL WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE**

### *5.1 Collection of Residual Waste*

Collection of domestic residual waste involves Heavy Good Vehicles (HGVs). We have 7 on fleet and typically they alternate between collecting residual waste over one week followed by recycling the following week.

Under current operating practices as agreed with Trade Unions each vehicle operates with a driver and one loader in the cab. The third loader is taken to site in a mini bus (or makes their own way there where they have their own car). Every effort is made to keep the same crew assigned to the same vehicles and the vehicles are cleaned after every shift. Each cab has hand washing facilities. All operatives are supplied with disposable gloves.

The resource to operate the service is 7 HGV drivers and 14 loaders. With the need to carry loaders to the operating areas, this service now requires an additional 7 support drivers (qualified to drive a mini bus). These numbers do not include the staff deployed on the combined Commercial/Domestic routes.

This service is fully operational and with the suspension of blue bin collections as described above, involves a weekly collection of residual waste.

### *5.2 Commercial Residual Waste/Residential waste from large containers (i.e. high rise flats).*

Waste in this category is usually resourced with two HGV bin collection vehicles (each vehicle is crewed by a driver and 2 loaders). These vehicles collect a mixture of commercial residual waste and large container residential waste for properties such as high rise flats. Commercial waste has declined significantly at present. The drop off in Commercial activity has allowed us to undertake this service with 1 driver and 1 loader. Both crew members can sit in the cab and

be compliant with the social distancing agreement. At present only residual waste is collected on a weekly basis in the same manner as general household waste.

### 5.3 *Rural Collections, High Rise Tenements and Plastic Sacks*

This service area encompasses difficult to service properties such as rural properties, tenemental properties with bag collections and large bins at high rise buildings. It involves four HGV's resources by 4 drivers and 6 loaders. The service is restricted to residual waste at present.

### 5.4 *Collection of Dry Recyclate*

Dry recyclate 'blue bins' uses the resource as described in 5.1 to 5.3 above on alternative weeks. The blue bin routes are duplicates of the residual waste routes. Dry recyclate is deposited from the bin lorries into the waste transfer station at Ingleston.

In terms of current resources therefore, the blue bin/dry recyclate collection resource is a mirror image of the residual waste collection and involves the same vehicles and crew.

With respect to restoring this service the key issue is in respect of the Council's Contractor being unable to collect and process dry recyclate.

There is not enough storage at Ingleston to store more than a few days of blue bin collections. If we were to collect Blue bin waste, it would require to be dumped along with residual waste at Pottery St and taken to land fill under the residual waste contract. The costs implication of this is an increase per tonne from £49 to £105. The overall cost implications are set out in the table in para 5.8.4. Officers continue to liaise with the contractor with a view to achieving a restoration of dry recyclate uplift. Officers have also explored alternative contractors and have been provided with costs of £137.50 tonne and £120/tonne. This cost is significantly higher than the contracted cost for the removal of residual waste, currently £104.97/tonne. The reasons for the high costs quoted are associated with the crisis in the waste industry at this time associated with Covid-19 working restrictions and absenteeism.

A further issue that requires to be addressed is that prior to the blue bin uplift ceasing, we were seeing significant amounts of contamination in the recyclate material. This was evidenced from visual inspections of the material arriving at our waste transfer station. This has major implications for contractors who process recyclate material and charge penalties in consequence. Officers think a reason for the significant increase in contamination may be residents seeking to dispose of waste quickly following the initial indications that the country was moving to a 'lock down'.

Officers consider that the issue of contamination may continue unless we are able to effectively communicate with customers the importance of keeping recycling material contamination free. This is something officers will manage prior to the restoration of blue bin collections.

### 5.5 *Collection of Food Waste*

The weekly food waste collection is delivered through 4 Large Goods Vehicles specifically adapted for collecting food waste. The people resource comprises of 4 drivers and 4 loaders.

The food waste vehicle is smaller than the vehicles which collect residual waste but requires HGV level drivers. With the vehicles being narrower, operatives are closer together in the cab. To operate with the normal resource officers would need to negotiate dispensation from social distancing guidelines with Trade Unions to allow the loader to travel with the driver. Officers consider that to ensure the safety of our employees the proper approach would be take loaders direct to site. This involves an increased resource of a further 4 drivers and 4 mini buses.

The resource required to re-establish food waste is therefore 12 operatives, (8 drivers and 4 loaders).

## 5.6 *Garden Waste*

Garden waste is collected every two weeks. It is the least resource intensive part of the waste collection operation. This service is provided with 2 HGV vehicles crewed by 2 drivers and 2 loaders. At present there is no separate garden waste collection, brown bins are simply emptied into the lorry during collection of residual waste. This service could be restored with the resource now available. The sale of permits was temporarily suspended due to uncertainty of the Council being able to deliver the service. Permit sales will be resumed in advance of the brown bin waste service recommencing.

## 5.7 *Operation of Recycling Centres*

The Council has two full Recycling Centres in Inverclyde (Gourock and Greenock) which are manned during opening hours. The resource normally associated with this is 5 (comprising 1 driver and 4 site attendants over different shifts). Recycling Centres are currently shut in line with general guidance on social distancing and the exclusion of unnecessary trips by the public. Officers do not anticipate the guidance on social distancing changing in the near future whereby the Council would consider reopening recycling centres. This however will be kept under review.

The Council continues to uplift waste from the Neighbourhood Recycling Points which are not manned. This involves two HGV vehicles, each with a crew of two. The Council also lifts fly tipping where reported and so far as resources allow.

## 5.8 *Restoration of Recycling at this time*

There are four key issues to consider with respect to restoring a full recycling service at this time:-

1. Availability of a contractor to remove and process blue bin waste,
2. Operative resources to run a full service,
3. Management of contamination in recyclates (i.e. food or other waste in blue bins)
4. Cost implications of service delivery model.

### 5.8.1 *Contractor issues*

At present the Council's recycling Contractor is not collecting from Inverclyde and a weekly tele-conference between officers including the procurement team is undertaken on the Friday of each week. The contractor has also been asked to advise us immediately of any change in their status. The contractor is based in Middlesbrough and has indicated that the main issue with respect to delivering a service is driver availability. In this respect the contractor is experiencing the same issues as the Council whereby there is a significant loss of operatives due to government requirements on self-isolating. There may be opportunities to negotiate increased payments for a restricted period through an agreed amendment to the contract to assist the Contractor given the severity of the situation. Officers are exploring this along with the potential for alternative contractors to assist.

### 5.8.2 *People Resources*

To operate a full recycling service at this time whilst complying with social distancing the service requires:-

18 HGV level drivers,

11 (app) mini bus drivers, (requires type 'D1' approval on driving licence, a lower requirement compared to the large vehicles described above).

24 Loaders.

**53 in total**

It should be noted that this is the resource required on a daily basis, a surplus across all operative types is required to cover holidays, holidays, sickness and other absences. The normal available resource is therefore 20 HGV drivers and 31 loaders. Agency staff are used to support core workload during seasonal periods (e.g. garden waste/ summer holidays)

At present the Council has 15 HGV drivers (including one agency driver redeployed from roads) and 25 loaders augmented with 7 employees from other Transport and Grounds who are driving minibuses. Resources could be increased through redeploying HGV operatives from Roads and taking on agency drivers. The issue of employing more Agency drivers is being discussed with Trade Unions as a possible temporary step to assist a return to full recycling. It is worth noting that given the current resources and level of service delivery that officers are restricted in authorising annual leave. This is an issue that requires to be addressed.

The table in Appendix 1 sets out the above numbers in tabular form.

### 5.8.3 *Management of Contamination*

If full recycling services are to be restored it is important that there is no contamination in blue bins. Extensive publicity will certainly help with this. It is important however that if the Council reinstates blue bin collections, this is associated with resolution of the Contractor issue whereby blue bin waste is treated as recyclable material. If blue bin collections progressed in advance of the contractual position being resolved, whereby the waste was simply disposed of as residual waste, this could break the trust of the public and undermine the exceptional performance the Council has achieved in recent years across recycling.

### 5.8.4 *Cost Implications*

There are two sources of cost pressure on the service at present. Firstly, the redeployment of operatives into Waste to meet the shortage of people. At present this can be contained within existing budgets. If the Council were to employ more agency staff however, there would be a cost pressure. This has not been included at this stage, the Council needs a clear understanding and support of Trade Unions on this. The budget implications would be explored in detail at that stage.

The largest cost pressure arises from the additional cost of processing recyclable materials as though it is residual waste and the loss of income.

This is summarised below in the table below:-

	Cost/tonne disposal	4 week tonnage	4 week approximate cost (normal)	Additional cost if disposed of as residual.
Residual (grey bin) waste,	£104.97	1922	£202k	
Dry recyclates (Blue Bin waste)	£49.00	618	£30k	£35k
Garden (brown bin) waste	£40.25	387	£15k	£25k
Food waste	£34.60	105	£4k	£7k
Total				£67k

It can be seen from the table that the current emergency service delivery model which involves collecting all waste as residual is creating a cost pressure of around £67k per 4 week period. It should be noted however that the figures above reflect tonnages collected in 2019. With the change in the brown bin collection service, within the 2020/21 budget, officers anticipated a

reduction in brown waste tonnage and a corresponding increase in residual waste tonnage. The above figures are therefore very much an estimate at this time.

There is also a significant income loss from Trade Waste, Tipping Permits and Bulk Uplifts. Whilst some of the income loss will be offset by reductions in waste disposal cost it is estimated that the current service delivery income loss is a net £20K/4 week period.

It is anticipated that there will be a reduction in material at Neighbourhood Recycling Centres such as glass which is likely to appear in residual waste. This is because people should not travel specifically to these locations at present due to 'lock down' restrictions. It could be argued that access to these centres is legitimate as part for example, of daily exercise. It is the case however that material, especially glass, is being deposited at the Neighbourhood Recycling Centres. Cost estimates around this issue will be calculated when officers know actual tonnage of waste from the last two to three weeks.

#### 5.9 *Waste Service Commentary*

The reduction in service has enabled officers to ensure a weekly refuse collection service can be maintained with no waste being left uncollected. Nationally there is a varied picture reflecting very different collection methods however a large number (12 or more authorities) have combined services with some authority's significantly reducing services altogether.

While it is unclear what stage the country is in terms of Covid-19 and the potential that staff currently at work may have to self-isolate, it is likely that the Council could revert to staged recycling in the short term.

The proposal would be that the Council reinstate Brown Bin Collections from around Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May on the basis that this is not labour intensive. The sale of garden waste permits would be reinstated subject to discussion with our fulfilment company. Restoration of garden waste collection would assist residents who have been confined to their home and garden and avoid a cost pressure on the Council. It should be noted that this is earlier than officers had anticipated and is before the next Policy and Resources Sub Committee which is scheduled for the 5<sup>th</sup> May. For this reason it was officer's preference to bring a late report to this Committee rather than wait until the May Committee.

Dry Mixed Recyclate collections remain an absolute priority. With respect to Council resources this service could be reinstated at short notice. It is very important however that the Council has contractual arrangements in place to process our dry mixed recyclate. Otherwise blue bin waste would be disposed of as residual waste. This could be damaging to the Council's credibility. Officers propose that this service be restored as soon as we have contractual agreement. The cost pressure against this service is currently around £35k per 4 week period. Once a contractual position is known the cost pressure can be reassessed. It is proposed that prior to reinstating blue bin collections that the Council undertake a comprehensive publicity campaign around contamination.

The reinstatement of food waste is less of a priority because the tonnages are low albeit the resource to uplift food waste is significant. It is proposed that food waste be reinstated when resources allow but that this be a lower priority than garden waste and blue bin waste.

#### 5.10 *Parks, Cemeteries and verge maintenance*

Grass cutting will take place in cemeteries and around the crematorium. We consider this essential and respectful of their function at this difficult time.

Officers will continue to consider the cutting and maintenance of pitches (including 3g pitches) to be essential otherwise significant restorative investment will be needed in the months ahead.

Road verges are a concern lest grass height restricts visibility. The maintenance of grass in parks and recreation areas is important in respect of supporting people being given limited access at this time to green space. The situation across Scotland in respect of these service areas is not wholly consistent and officers are collecting information across Scottish Councils



prior to taking a decision on the level of service which will be provide. This will be reported back at a future Committee.

Car parks remain closed at parks and recreational facilities. Officers have written to COSLA regarding blue badge holders needing access to public parks. National guidance as currently issued would restrict this and are asking if any thought has been given to this issue, with a view to guidance being updated.

#### Greenock Crematorium

Services at Greenock Crematorium are significantly busier than usual and officers seek to avoid a backlog of funerals which has implications for mortuary capacity. Officers are managing funerals to maximise throughput whilst respecting the dignity of funerals and the trauma of families. Officers are investigating the introduction of a broadcasting service for funerals in view of the current restriction on the number of people who can attend.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS

### Finance

6.1 One off Costs:- Nil

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings):- Nil

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
Waste Services	Various	20/21	£87 every 4 weeks		Will be charged to COVID costs

### Legal

6.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### Human Resources

6.3 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

### Equalities

6.4 Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

Yes See attached appendix

No This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

## **Repopulation**

6.5 There are no repopulation implications arising from this report.

## **7.0 CONSULTATIONS**

7.1 None.

## **8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1 None.

**People Resource Requirements – Waste Services**

**APPENDIX 1**

	Normal Resource				Social Distancing Resource				Available Resource as of 17.04.20 (through redeployment and 1 agency driver)			
	HGV Drivers	HGV Restricted Drivers	D1 Mini Bus Driver	Loaders	HGV Drivers	HGV Restricted Drivers	D1 Mini Bus Driver	Loaders	HGV Drivers	HGV Restricted Drivers	D1 Mini Bus Driver	Loaders
Grey Bin / Blue Bin (6 HGV collection vehicles)	6			12	6		6	12	6		6	12
Plastic Sacks HRT and rural collection	4			6	4		1	6	3		1	5
Garden Waste (2 HGV Collection Vehicles) *	2			2	2			2	2			2
Commercial uplift / non-standard residential (i.e. high flats) 2 HGV Collection Vehicles	2			4	2		Currently operation driver plus 1 due to restricted uptake	4	2			4
Food Waste 4 LGV Dedicated Vehicles	4			4	4		4	4	0			0
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>			<b>26</b>	<b>18</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Combined Total</b>	<b>44</b>				<b>55</b>				<b>47</b>			

Note: To accommodate annual leave we require an additional 3 drivers and 6 loaders.