

MAINTAINING WASTE AND RECYCLING COLLECTION SERVICES

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Cabinet agrees the contingency plans in section 4.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Staffing in the waste and recycling service has been difficult to maintain during the whole Covid pandemic, and particularly since June 2021. This has affected delivery of frontline services to residents and businesses of the new Forest.
- 2.2 This report recommends a number of changes that may need to be made to how services are delivered.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The waste and recycling service collects a range of materials from residents and businesses in the New Forest. This includes regular collections (refuse, mixed recycling, glass, and garden waste) as well as bookable collections (bulky waste, and clinical waste) and support services such as a twice annual delivery of black/clear sacks.
- 3.2 In the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, garden waste collections were cancelled for a period of 1 month, so that collections of clear and black sacks could be prioritised in a time of increasing staff absence with symptoms of Covid-19. However, through the remaining Covid-19 lockdowns, all regular kerbside collections were maintained by frontline staff, redeploying staff from street scene and other frontline services where needed.
- 3.3 Since June 2021 in particular, services have become increasingly difficult to maintain. This is due to combination of:
- The national shortage of HGV drivers
 - Higher than average staff turnover resulting in a higher than usual level of vacancies
 - Higher than average sickness absence
 - Covid-19 isolations, which continue to cause absences
 - Continued increase in tonnage of residual waste and recycling collected
- 3.4 As a result of the factors listed above, the status of waste and recycling services is now as follows:

Black & clear sack collections	Glass Collection	Garden waste	Bulky waste (i.e., furniture, white goods)
Being maintained as normal. Delivery of rolls of sacks is running 4 weeks behind schedule.	Largely being maintained, but with some localised cancellations or postponements.	Collections were suspended for 2 months but are now operating on reduced four-weekly frequency until at least January 2022	Bookings and collections are currently suspended

3.5 Many other Councils, including in Hampshire and Dorset, have had to cancel, postpone or re-structure collections in recent months because of staff shortages. This Council has taken the following actions to maintain core services thus far:

- Reduction or suspension of services to prioritise main clear and black sack collection rounds.
- Teams working longer shifts and operating at times with smaller crew sizes. Crew members being moved from round-to-round to ensure that services can be completed.
- In the short-term, staff have been utilised from other frontline services, for example vehicle mechanics and streetscene staff.
- Reviewed recruitment processes to improve application numbers and reduce administration burden.
- Reviewed HGV driver pay and provided a 7.5% market supplement to HGV drivers until March 2023.
- Offered staff who are not HGV drivers the opportunity to train to become HGV qualified. There are 7 staff across operational services who will be provided with this training.

3.6 As described, the staffing situation is such that it creates very difficult working conditions for frontline staff. This is compounded by the fact that the levels of waste and recycling being generated by New Forest householders, which increased significantly during periods of lockdown, have remained high. When comparing the period April to June 2021 with the same period in 2019, tonnages of glass, black sacks and clear sacks are 60%, 9% and 10% higher respectively. The nature of the collection service in NFDC is such that this extra weight must be physically lifted into vehicles. Feedback from staff is that much of this material is that which should be disposed of via Household Waste Recycling Centres, or via the Council's business waste collection service.

3.7 The longer-term future of collection services in the New Forest is currently being considered as part of the Council's work on a new Waste Strategy, which will be finalised in 2022. The remainder of this report presents short term options for the best approach to maintain core collection services.

4 SERVICE CONTINGENCY PLANS

4.1 To ensure the core service of collecting black and clear waste is maintained for residents, we may need to take further contingency measures over the next 6 months. If after exhausting all other measures including redeploying staff from the wider operational services, we are still unable to maintain the core service, we will make changes to service delivery as set out as contingency step 1 and 2 below. Items in bold indicate a change to the pre-July 2021 service:

Service pre- July 2021	CURRENT STATUS	Contingency 1	Contingency 2
Weekly Black and clear sacks	Weekly Black and clear sacks	Weekly Black and clear sacks	Weekly Black and clear sacks
2-weekly garden waste	4-weekly garden waste	4-weekly garden waste	Cease garden waste
4-weekly glass collection	4-weekly glass collection	Cease kerbside glass collection	Cease kerbside glass collection
Bulky waste service	Cease bulky waste	Cease bulky waste	Cease bulky waste
Delivery of Black and clear sacks	Delivery of Black and clear sacks	Delivery of Black and clear sacks	Cease delivery of black and clear sacks

4.2 As soon as we are able, we will aim to bring services back up to normal service delivery. We will fully consider the impacts ceasing services is having on our residents especially the most vulnerable and prioritise services accordingly. In the case of cessation of glass collections (contingency 1), this may be on a short-term localised basis or, if needed, a longer-term District-wide service change. In the case of garden waste, fortnightly collections will only resume in January if the forecast for longer term staffing levels allows.

4.3 The Council is exploring the option of temporarily sub-contracting the bulky waste collections service, to reinstate this service for the public.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The council must consider how to safeguard frontline services, with the priority sack collection service protected. In order to do so, the contingency plans presented here require approval.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The suspension and then reduced collection frequency for garden waste collections equates to a forecast loss of £194k of income in 21-22. There will be further financial implications if the service must enact contingency steps 1 and 2.

7 CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The delay or postponement of waste collections, especially bulky waste, could in future lead to flytipping activity.

8 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The prompt collection of residual and recycling waste is important to maintain local environmental quality. Suspension or cancellation of recycling collections will reduce recycling rates.

9 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The council will review any changes to service delivery that will directly impact upon residents who may generate additional quantities of waste as a result of health needs.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 No Impact.

11. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

11.1 I am grateful for this timely update from our Waste and Transport team. It is an open and honest appraisal of an essential service and demonstrates well our contingency planning.

11.2 This is an opportunity for me to express my gratitude to our waste collection teams across the New Forest for continuing to support our residents and businesses.

For further information contact:

Chris Noble
Service Manager – Waste and Transport
023 8028 5389
Chris.noble@nfdc.gov.uk

Manjit Sandhu
Executive Head – Partnership and
Operations
02380 285479
Manjit.sandhu@nfdc.gov.uk