

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny

DATE: 30 January 2020

SUBJECT: Waste Management and Recycling

REPORT FROM: Councillor Quinn - Cabinet Member for Environment and Operations

CONTACT OFFICER: Glenn Stuart – Head of Waste and Transport

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 This report provides an update on a range of miscellaneous waste management and recycling related topics of interest to Overview and Scrutiny.

2.0 ISSUES

2.1 What does the Council's recycling rate stand at now?

The following table shows the weights (in tonnes) of each waste stream collected over the last two complete years and up to the end of December.

Bin Type	17/18	18/19	19/20 (up to December 19)
Grey	25,295	24,907	18,448 (24,597)
Blue	9,231	9,242	6,758 (9,011)
Green	7,819	7,418	5,346 (7,128)
Brown	17,075	16,824	13,776 (18,368)
Total Tonnage	59,422	58,391	44,328 (59,104)

Figures in final column in brackets represent a full year extrapolation. The figures are not profiled to take into account the expected increase in weights from Christmas/New Year.

Number of households in Bury:

2017-18 – 83,036

2018/19 – 83,311

2019/20 – 83,700.

Note:

Grey Bins - non recyclable, residual waste

Blue Bins – glass bottles and jars, steel and aluminium food and drinks cans, plastic bottles, aluminium foil and aerosols.

Green Bins – paper and cardboard

Brown Bins – food and garden waste

Annual grey bin tonnages reduced between 2017/18 and 2018/19 and may show a further small reduction this year. The reduction in residual waste tonnages is obviously welcomed, particularly given the continual increase in the number of households in the borough, but is difficult to explain.

Blue bin tonnages have stabilised, whilst green bin tonnages have shown a reduction, continuing a trend of recent years. The former could be attributed in part at least to the ongoing light weighting of items such as glass bottles and jars and food and drinks cans. The latter is largely due to a continuing reduction in newspapers and magazines bought, with the move to digital media, only partly offset by an increase in cardboard packaging arising from internet shopping.

Brown bin tonnages fluctuate with the weather because the largest constituent of this bin is garden waste so that a wet, warm spring and summer will increase tonnages. It is very difficult to extrapolate brown bin tonnages therefore. For the first time brown bin collections were suspended over the 2 week festive period just gone, to relieve the pressure on the rest of the service at this difficult time of year. The move worked very well in that regard and literally only a handful of complaints were received by the Contact Centre.

Recycling rate for collected bin waste

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Yearly Average
17/18	58%	62%	62%	62%	59%	59%	58%	55%	54%	54%	53%	51%	57%
18/19	58%	63%	61%	60%	57%	59%	60%	57%	51%	56%	51%	57%	57%
19/20	59%	60%	61%	60%	60%	58%	57%	54%	54%				58%

The monthly recycling rate peaks in May/June every year, as garden waste tonnages increase, followed by a gradual reduction over the remainder of the year.

As tonnages across all 4 waste streams have stabilised following the Council's move to 3 weekly collections in October 2014, so automatically have recycling rates.

2.2 DEFRA's Resources & Waste Strategy

Household waste recycling rates in England have risen from around 11% in 2000/1 to about 45% today but they have stagnated in the last 5-6 years. DEFRA has ambitions to increase recycling performance but recognise that current drivers are insufficient to meet new targets. A new Resources & Waste Strategy was published by DEFRA in December 2018. A number of subsequent consultations were launched in February 2019, to which Bury the other GM Councils and the GMCA responded.

The consultations focused on the following:

- Recycling consistency
- A deposit return scheme (DRS)
- Extended producer responsibility (EPR)

In its responses to the three consultations DEFRA confirmed its commitment in July to a range of policy measures that will have significant implications for local authorities' waste and recycling collection services in the future. DEFRA confirmed that it will introduce a deposit return scheme (DRS) for drinks containers, a 'full net cost recovery' extended producer responsibility (EPR) scheme for packaging, and a

consistent set of core recyclable materials to be collected from households and businesses in England – all by 2023.

2.2.1 Recycling consistency

The consultation on consistency in household and business recycling sought views on the introduction of a consistent set of recyclable materials to be collected from households and businesses, with standardised collection services, in order to make it easier and simpler for everyone to recycle anywhere in the country.

Support was reported for a greater level of consistency in household dry recycling collections. As such, DEFRA will be seeking to amend legislation to require all Councils in England to collect the following materials as a minimum from 2023:

- Glass bottles and containers – including drinks bottles, condiment bottles, jars;
- Paper and card – including newspaper, cardboard packaging, writing paper;
- Plastic bottles – including clear drinks containers, HDPE (milk containers), detergent, shampoo and cleaning products;
- Plastic pots tubs and trays; and
- Steel and aluminium tins and cans.

Separate weekly collections of food waste were also supported by a majority of respondents, something DEFRA has also pledged to introduce, adding the caveat that the different circumstances of different local authority areas would need to be taken into account.

In terms of garden waste collections, it was proposed that a free weekly collection of garden waste be offered by Councils. However, given the level of opposition to this due to funding issues, the Government will be further examining the costs and benefits of this proposal before deciding whether to press ahead.

Looking at businesses, DEFRA will be seeking to amend legislation to require businesses, public bodies and other organisations to separate their dry recycling – and where quantities are sufficient, food waste – from residual waste.

What could this mean in Bury?

Bury currently collects from the kerbside all the materials listed above, with the exception of plastic pots, tubs and trays. From 2023 these would be diverted from the grey bin and placed in the blue bin for recycling. Extensive and expensive modifications would be required to the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) at Sharston in South Manchester operated by Suez under contract to the GMCA to facilitate this.

The Council currently collects garden and food waste mixed together in the brown bin on a 2 weekly cycle. It may have to collect these materials separately from each other in the future. In this case, food waste would probably be collected in a much smaller container or 'street caddy', typically of 23 litre capacity, typically using a smaller 7.5 tonne tipper vehicle. Garden waste would continue to be collected in the green bin. Both collections may need to switch to a weekly frequency.

If businesses are mandated to recycle more then there should be an opportunity for the Council to grow its already successful commercial waste collection service. Currently the Council has 1,329 commercial waste customers, of which 513 recycle

using a blue or green bin. Food waste collections are not offered to businesses currently.

2.2.2 Deposit return scheme

The DRS consultation asked for input from the public and stakeholders on what a potential DRS could look like, how it might be managed and the possible impacts it could have, both positive and negative.

DEFRA's response does acknowledge the comments from local authorities, which in general expressed concern about the impacts of a DRS on kerbside recycling systems, with calls for a DRS to be put on pause until other policy measures like EPR and consistency have been introduced.

Despite this, the Government has pledged to introduce a DRS for drinks containers in England and Wales from 2023, something which this Council has lobbied for previously. The Scottish Government brought forward proposals for its own DRS in May of last year, in which drinks containers made from aluminium, steel, glass and PET plastic will carry a 20p deposit. Similar schemes already operate successfully in other countries – for example, total return rates of drinks containers in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden are at 90%, 92%, 98%, 92% and 85% respectively.

DEFRA has not yet confirmed what model of DRS will be used in England and Wales, whether the 'all-in' scheme, which would see a deposit added to a wide range of containers up to three litres in size, or a more focused 'on-the-go' scheme that would only include the types of containers that are regularly bought and consumed out of the house.

Moreover, since Defra has said it will aim to 'work with the devolved administrations to accomplish a coherent UK-wide approach', this might suggest that the UK Government would like to introduce a DRS in line with the Scottish proposal, which supports the 'all-in' approach. A second consultation will be held in 2020 to determine the costs, benefits and specific details of the DRS, including which materials and sizes will be included.

What could this mean in Bury?

If a 20p deposit is applied to a wide range of drinks containers this will inevitably divert many such items from the blue bin to a system that redeems the deposit. This would reduce the income to the Council from the sale of these materials, particularly in the case of aluminum. It would create spare capacity in the blue bins, but this would be offset by the inclusion of plastic pots, tubs and trays in kerbside collections.

The DRS should have a beneficial impact on littering. There should be less irresponsible discarding of such items in the first instance and it should also encourage people to pick up such items because of the intrinsic value they possess. It could be a means of raising funds for scout groups and other similar organisations. This should lead to a cleaner and less littered borough.

2.2.3 Extended producer responsibility

The government has confirmed it will be introducing an EPR system for packaging producers in 2023. Further analysis will be required to inform the details of the system, but Defra has made it clear that it would like to see a 'full net cost recovery' regime, to ensure producers, not local authorities, shoulder the cost burden of collecting and managing the disposal of their waste. Currently, packaging producers pay only around 10 per cent of the cost of dealing with packaging waste. By increasing that to cover the full amount, Government will incentivise producers to think carefully about using less packaging, and to switch to using packaging that is easier to recycle. It is anticipated that EPR for packaging will raise between £800 million and £1 billion a year for recycling and disposal.

A second consultation on EPR is anticipated to be launched in 2020. Crucially, DEFRA has acknowledged the link between EPR and the other waste policy proposals on DRS and consistency, stating: 'Reforms to the packaging producer responsibility system are linked directly to those policy proposals and to the introduction of a DRS for drinks containers in Scotland. Further work to develop our policy proposals in all three areas will be undertaken in parallel ensuring they form a cohesive packaging of measures.'

Following the overhaul of the packaging regulations, the Government will explore EPR schemes for items that can be harder or costly to recycle. As well as improving existing schemes for cars, electrical goods and batteries, this could include things such as textiles, fishing gear, vehicle tyres, certain materials from construction and demolition, and bulky waste such as mattresses, furniture and carpets.

What could this mean in Bury?

EPR will reduce the cost burden on the public sector of dealing with waste and shift it to the private sector. This obviously will have a hugely positive financial impact on the Council, given that the combined budget for waste and recycling collection is approx. £4.0m pa, whilst it pays approx. £14m pa to the GMCA in the form of the waste levy to cover the cost of disposal.

EPR should reduce the amount of residual, non-recyclable waste generated and increase the amount of packaging that can be recycled. This would relieve the pressure on grey bin capacity but increase pressure on blue and green bin capacity.

3.0 Households signed up to receive e-mail alerts about bin collections.

The number of households receiving e-mail alerts for all their bin collections at the end of December 2019 stands at 32,124. This is an increase on 25,567 in November 2018 when a similar report was last presented to Overview and Scrutiny.

E-mail reminders are an invaluable aid in reminding residents which bin to put out on which day and is a low cost form of communication. The service is FREE and promoted on an ongoing basis over the website, via the Customer Contact Centre and when the recycling team engage with residents.

Last year the system was developed further, enabling it to be used now to send messages to subscribers on a specific round by round basis to communicate issues regarding e.g. a failure to complete a round due to wintry weather or a vehicle breakdown, advising residents to leave their bins out and that we will return next

morning to make the collections. This facility provides even more of a reason for residents to subscribe to the service.

4.0 Missed Collections

Please see below the total number of bins reported to the Customer Contact Centre as missed for last year, as well as up to December of the current year. The figures exclude misses reported on line.

2018/19

Type of bin	Missed Collections per 100,000
Brown	87
Blue	92
Grey	167
Green	89
Total	107

2019/20 – up to December 2019

Type of bin	Missed Collections per 100,000
Brown	92
Blue	90 (up to September 2019)
Grey	167
Green	74
Total	84

Missed collections are a result of different factors such as access problems particularly in narrow back streets caused by parked cars or skips, weather conditions and mechanical breakdowns, as well as genuine oversights.

It should be noted that whenever it is not possible to empty bins on the scheduled day they are always emptied on a subsequent day. The only exception to this rule is when Monday 'Farms' brown bin collections are disrupted because that vehicle is employed collecting other waste streams from Tuesday to Friday every week and is hence unavailable to catch up the 'missed' brown bins.

A significant proportion of missed bin reports are a consequence of a vehicle breakdown which has prevented the completion of a round on the scheduled day.

5.0 Waste collection vehicle fleet

The majority of the vehicles in the waste collection fleet (i.e. bin wagons) are 8 years old and beyond their normal life expectancy. This leads to reliability issues which in turn impact on service continuity. As a result, 4 newer hire vehicles have been brought in.

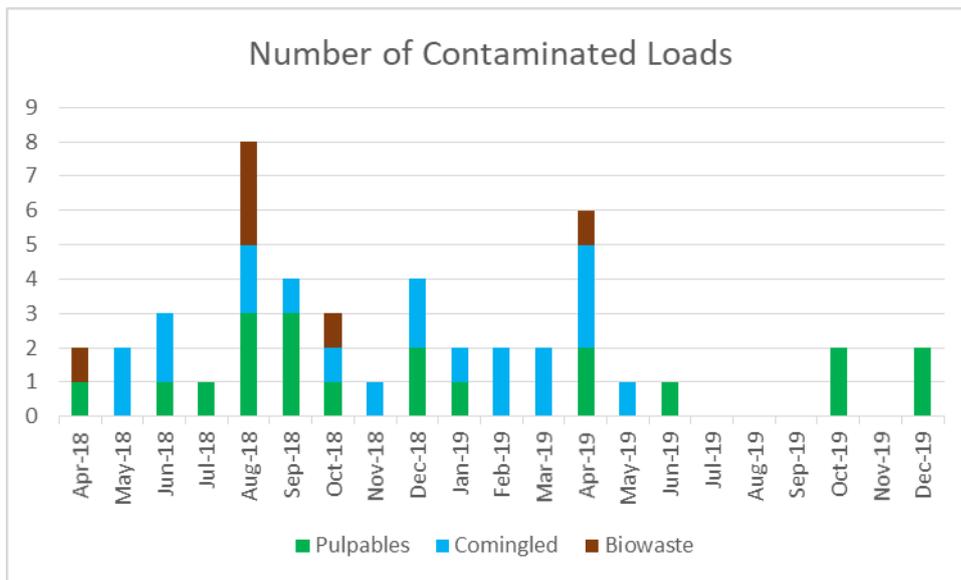
The so called 'Farms' vehicle is of a bespoke specification and the only one of its size in the fleet. It travels along farm tracks, many of which are in a poor state of repair, which places undue stress on the vehicle causing it to break down far more than any other. Because of its unique size (in order to access farms, rural properties and other hard to reach addresses) it is very difficult to find a replacement hire vehicle at short notice. Late last year a replacement vehicle was hired in on a medium term basis to improve the quality of the Farms collections. To relieve pressure on the existing and any future 'Farms' vehicle/s, collections from farms and rural properties with access tracks in a rutted and/or potholed condition will have to be made from the side of the

main road in the future. Residents will be notified individually in due course of such changes.

A vehicle replacement strategy is being finalised currently, which it is hoped will secure sufficient capital money to renew all the bin wagons that need replacing, enabling the procurement process for multiple vehicles to commence shortly. The build process for such vehicles is quite lengthy so it could be up to 12 months before a new fleet is actually delivered, dependent upon which make of vehicle is ordered.

6.0 Contamination of recycling bins

Ensuring that residents put the 'Right Stuff in the Right Bin' by recycling correctly remains a challenge to the service. Following the Chinese Government's clampdown on the quality of imports of recyclable waste in April 2017 the UK recycling industry has worked hard to improve quality.



Since April 2018 there have been:

- 20 rejected green bin loads, amounting to 113 tonnes lost.
- 20 rejected blue bin loads amounting to 119 tonnes lost.
- 6 rejected brown bin loads amounting to 42 tonnes lost.

These figures are regrettable but do not compare unfavourably with our GM neighbouring District Councils, who all experience similar difficulties.

How is the Council trying to tackle the problems of contamination? It works with the GMCA and other GM Districts in the delivery of various campaigns. Last year a campaign to reduce the amount of wrong plastics being placed into the blue bin for recycling was delivered across the borough in conjunction with the GMCA, which fully funded it. A recycling leaflet was delivered to 76,000 households, excluding flats, and a sticker was then placed under all the blue bin lids towards the end of the year. Adverts were placed in the local newspaper, the Jewish Telegraph and on billboards. Schools were notified along with internal staff via the staff intranet. It is hoped that a similar campaign can be delivered this year in relation to the green bins.

7.0 Conclusion

Over the last few years the Waste Management service has made huge strides forwards, in terms of making efficiencies and thereby significant financial savings, as well as in improving the Council's recycling rate. Over this time the collected bin

waste recycling rate has improved from 27% to just short of 60%, achieving huge savings in avoided waste disposal costs.

Given the ongoing financial challenges that the Waste Management service must face, with an unallocated savings target of £1.1m, there is clearly still work to do. Following the appointment of a new Executive Director of Operations in January it is intended that decisions will be taken shortly about transforming the service in order to maximise efficiencies, optimise collection rounds and ensure that it is delivering value for money.

List of Background Papers:-

None.

Contact Details:-

Glenn Stuart, Head of Waste and Transport

Executive Director sign off Date: _____

JET Meeting Date: _____