

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING 14TH SEPTEMBER 2021

SUBJECT: WASTE MANAGEMENT STABILISATION

REPORT FROM: CLLR ALAN QUINN – CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

CONTACT OFFICER: DONNA BALL - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OPERATIONS

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2011 the recycling rate in Bury was 27% one of the lowest in GM. We took the decision to purchase 80,000 green bins to collect paper and card and 24,000 bins to collect garden and food waste.
- 1.2 In October 2014 Bury became the first Council in England to introduce 3-weekly collections for residual waste. The move was successful in that residual waste tonnages reduced by **17%** and recycling tonnages increased by **10%** in the first year, whilst the collected bin waste recycling rate increased to an average of **57%** and ongoing savings in excess of **£800,000** through reduced disposal costs were achieved in 2014.
- 1.3 We have been hit by government cuts of over £102,000,000 since 2010. The waste department, like all other departments has had to find ways of saving money.
- 1.4 However, it is nearly seven years since these major changes were made, and in February 2021 Cabinet approved a saving of £150k from the waste collection service together with the continuation of the vehicle replacement programme that was agreed as part of the 2020/21 capital programme. This was to support the modernisation of the service and to make it fit for purpose in 2021 and beyond.
- 1.5 The review of new rounds was designed to:
- Re-balance the collections rounds to even out the workload and rebalance the distribution of several thousand new homes that have been built in the borough.
 - Achieve a **£150k** Council saving (reduction of 1 vehicle and crew).
 - Optimise the rounds to ensure 2 weekly brown bin collections are more efficient
 - Allow for changes in the tonnages of each waste stream presented for collection
- 1.6 During 2021 the Waste Management Service has seen the investment in new vehicles to replace the old fleet. This investment will help improve air quality and supports the climate change emergency declared by the Council and the commitment to be carbon neutral by 2038. The new vehicles will also improve H&S performance and service quality as well as make the service as efficient as possible.
- 1.7 Following the waste service review the new revised rounds came into operation on 21st June 2021.

2.0 Issues

2.1 The review of household waste collection rounds incorporated several complex factors including:

- The balancing of waste collection rounds with varying tonnages across each waste stream needing to be collected and disposed of on the same day.
- Balancing 3 weekly blue, green and grey rounds with 2 weekly brown bins
- The collection of brown bins on a different day to the other bins to improve efficiency
- **87,750** properties serviced, with **130,000** collections taking place each week
- Refuse collection vehicles (RCV's) requiring 2 or 3 'tip-offs' each day at waste transfer stations across Greater Manchester
- Allowing for unplanned issues on routes such as traffic, blocked access to streets and vehicle/mechanism breakdowns
- Different types of properties (terraced, detached, semi-detached, apartments, farms etc)

The redesign of waste collection rounds was carried out using existing data, experience within the service and support from a national consultant (Webaspx) specialising in the design and implementation of waste collection rounds.

2.2 The major redesign of waste collections rounds requires crews to learn new collection routes and it can take time to allow the new routes to settle in and for the staff to become familiar with them. Data needs to be gathered to monitor and analyse performance so the new rounds can be reviewed and tweaked as required

2.3 Implementation of the Waste Management modernisation programme has been gradual since 21 June however, performance has improved to near 'business as usual' over the past few weeks. The service has experienced a number of issues during the roll out of the new rounds including a national shortage and inability to recruit HGV drivers, Covid 19, a requirement for some staff to isolate, familiarisation of many different rounds by each crew as well as some resistance to the changes by a small number of crews.

2.4 There is an existing resilience issue with the rural/farms routes where there is an average of **2700** collections per week. The service has one small RCV for the rural areas which is subject to a high level of wear and tear going up and down unadopted roads. The rounds are also complex which can create an issue, even with maps when a backup crew is needed. The service is in the process of purchasing a second good quality small RCV to support the farms route combined with training more drivers and loaders to be familiar with the routes

2.5 There is a global issue with the supply chain including freight and shipping which is affecting all businesses nationally. The waste service is not exempt from this problem, and it is already having an effect on the supply of waste service products such as compostable liners and waste and recycling bins. The Councils stores staff are in regular contact with suppliers. There is also a worldwide shortage of silicon chips due to covid which means that vehicles are delivered late. For example, our new gulley wagons and road sweepers will be delivered late due to this shortage.

3.0 New Rounds

3.1 The Council purchased specialist waste collection round optimisation software called Easyroute Pro. in 2015 from a company called Webaspx. The specialist software was used to produce an entirely new set of collection rounds that are more balanced, and which are as efficient as possible. Round optimisation will save 4% on miles travelled and fuel used. The rollout of the new rounds commenced on 21 June and close monitoring of the rollout is being carried out.

Each crew previously had 4 routes to learn and now all operatives are required to familiarise themselves with 12 rounds. This familiarisation has taken longer than expected and has had an impact on residents and their collections.

- 3.2 A full assessment of which rounds are failing to complete and why is underway in order to ascertain a better understanding of the issues and ensure that the data is robust.

In the meantime, some of the rounds which have been failing to complete are being given some assistance as part of the monitoring process. As of w/c 24th August the majority of collections are being completed as scheduled. However, due to the dynamic and variable nature of the service there is always a risk of some missed collection such as through occasional vehicle breakdowns, staff shortage, traffic, blocked access etc.

The reassessment of the rounds is ongoing with data being collected for all rounds. A review will be carried out working with supervisors, the workforce and the Trade Unions as well as with our specialist consultant Webaspx who helped design the new rounds

- 3.3 Performance has improved to near 'business as usual' over the past few weeks and we are putting in extra capacity to maintain this improvement in performance until the new rounds can work well without the additional support. It is also important to give as much time as possible to let the new rounds settle down and ensure accurate data is collected and the routes are fully tested before they are changed. This review is likely to take 6 to 8 weeks, during which time a revised stabilisation plan will be developed, and any rebalancing of rounds will be considered. This will be implemented to cause the minimum disruption to residents.

4.0 Replacement of the waste collection vehicle fleet

- 4.1 Most of the refuse collection vehicles in Bury were nearly 9 years old. The vehicles had an original life expectancy of 6 years. The vehicles were increasingly unreliable and expensive to maintain and a challenge to keep roadworthy. Some older vehicles have failed, meaning that replacement vehicles are hired in at considerable cost, in order to be able to deliver the service. It was also critical to replace the waste collection vehicles as they would have been non-compliant with the proposed GM Clean Air Zone which will be introduced in May 2022.

- 4.2 Waste Management and Transport undertook extensive research into replacement vehicles, involving discussions with vehicle manufacturers, visits to other Councils to see working demonstrations of vehicles, gathering feedback from waste management operational staff and transport professionals. The vehicle favoured by both Waste Management and Transport was the Faun Rotopress for a range of reasons including:

- Vehicles have just **10** moving parts, as opposed to a standard compaction vehicle which has **37** moving parts. It is therefore low on maintenance, easy to repair and with very short downtimes.
- Low body weight and high payload.
- Reduced fuel consumption.
- Expected lifespan of the Rotopress body is **10-15** years. The body could also be converted to an electric drive some years down the line.
- The Rotopress vehicles are shorter than the "compaction vehicles" which makes it easier for them to navigate smaller roads.
- They can carry at least half a tonne more of waste
- They are also in service with Bolton, Wigan, Stockport and Rochdale Councils.
- They use a Mercedes chassis and engine which our mechanics are used to working on.
- Mercedes has a large depot in Bolton which carries spare parts which is a cost saving as we have a local supplier.
- Electric vehicles were considered but as they are twice as expensive and the product still not mature yet, they were not chosen.

The Council progressed a procurement exercise and new vehicles have since been delivered to support the service modernisation. **14** new Rotopress vehicles have been delivered with **2** further due by the end of September. There are also **4** new Variopress RCV's delivered (similar to the existing type) to be used on the blue bin routes to minimise noise from blue bin/co-mingled recycling waste

- 4.3 It is also planned to purchase a further **2** new RCV's as well an extra farms/rural RCV as part of the modernisation plans to maximise resilience within the service

5.0 Workforce Implications

- 5.1 Now that the service has been reviewed and collection service design is being implemented the staffing requirements for the future are much clearer. We are aware of the national shortage of HGV drivers (possibly up to 100,000 based on figures from the Haulage Association) and plans are in place to recruit or train drivers as well as consider permanent combined driver/loader position to minimise the need to use agency staff. We are going to respond to the national shortage of HGV drivers also by introducing an apprenticeship scheme as well as train up our existing staff where possible.

We now have the opportunity to make some permanent appointments to Operative and Driver/Team Leader positions reducing the current over reliance on agency and temporary staff, a number of whom have worked for the service long term. The process of recruitment is now underway, and an apprentice scheme will be worked up to train more drivers.

- 5.2 The service is committed to the ongoing development and training of its staff, and it aims to deliver a range of practical and bespoke training on an ongoing basis. This will often be delivered in the form of toolbox talks lasting 10-15 minutes, which are best delivered first thing in the morning when the workforce is all gathered together at the depot. The focus on training will generally be on service delivery standards, team leadership, H&S and transport and vehicle related issues and will be delivered through various means, but mainly toolbox talks.

5.3 COVID-19

Coronavirus has a significant impact on our waste collections. The tonnage data used to redesign the rounds was based on an average 4% covid uplift (April 2020 -July 2020). Since the first national lockdown in April 2020 (during 20/21 financial year) we have seen a higher than expected increase of **18.2%** for comingled waste (blue bins), **15.6%** for garden and food waste (brown bins), **11.6%** for residual waste (grey bins) and by **7.9%** for paper and card (green bins).

Due to continued home working these tonnages have not returned to pre-covid levels and this is a cost we may have to absorb in the future. These increased tonnages as a result of more people working from home has also been the experience across GM and nationally and is not just confined to Bury.

6.0 Performance.

Since 21 June the performance dropped to below acceptable levels at the start but has since recovered, but we've still more to do to build in resilience. The percentage of missed bins had a peak at the start of August when **22.2%** of bins were missed because the rounds weren't working well enough as well as from sickness absence and holidays. At the end of week commencing 16th August this had reduced significantly to **1.9%** of bins missed per day.

- A total of **130,000** properties are scheduled to be collected each week
- **19** vehicles are out each day on the new routes
- The weekly working pattern remains Tuesday to Friday
- Crews are dedicated to the collection of one waste stream

- Mileage of the new routes is reduced by **4%**
- Routes are more compact and efficient
- Missed bins are usually scheduled to be collected within **5** days of being missed and if missed at the end of the week then Saturday or Monday may be utilised

The service performance dashboard can be found in **Appendix 1**

7.0 Communication

7.1 In the run-up to the implementation period a series of communication materials were delivered to all households to ensure residents were well informed ahead of the planned changes. All residents received:

- pre-notification leaflet.
- change of collection day leaflet.
- new format, easy to follow collection calendar.

Extra one-off collection leaflets were also delivered to appropriate households.

These communication materials were complemented by:

- a briefing note for all councillors and the contact centre.
- bulletins and information on our website.
- press releases issued to our media list and shared on our social channels.
- a social media campaign.
- awareness-raising via our customer contact centre.

A strong call to action to sign-up for bin alerts flowed through all communications activity.

The website is updated on an ongoing basis with the latest service information. If collections are missed, these are also listed along with a planned date for return. This information is shared with the Customer Contact Team for consistency of message.

Email reminders and updates are being issued each week (more detail at 7.2)

7.2 Email reminder and updates system (bin alerts)

The campaign to sign residents up to ebin alerts is ongoing and has been successful. Residents can sign up to receive email reminders and alerts from Waste Management at www.bury.gov.uk/bincollections. All that's needed is a post code, address details and an email address they want us to use. As of 27 August, there were **43,690** subscribers signed up for bin alerts (around **3,000** more than prior to the new rounds).

Every week an automated email is sent to each subscriber the day before their scheduled collection informing them of the colour of bin that is being emptied and the day that it is scheduled to be emptied on. This email is automatically generated using the data that is stored on our database so any changes made in this will be reflected in the emails.

Emails can also be sent out through the database to specific rounds and streets and a generic email can be sent to every subscriber if needed. The update emails are written by a member of office staff and sent out at the end of the day (when necessary) to apologise to residents that we have been unable to empty their bin and tell them when we plan to return.

8.0 Risks

- Waste management is a dynamic and changeable service by its nature. Therefore, there will always be a risk of missed bins through breakdowns, sickness levels, shortage of agency staff, blocked access and shortage of HGV drivers. This was already evident prior to the commencement of the new rounds.
- Covid remains a risk through social isolation when required as well as a higher risk of employees being off work through Covid related issues as we go into autumn and winter. The situation will be closely monitored
- Lack of knowledge of the farms routes to enable effective cover is being addressed. It is planned that an additional drivers and loaders will be trained on the farms rounds as well as purchase an ex-demo small RCV to provide back-up to the farms round.
- A small number of the workforce may continue to resist change. Workforce performance is being monitored, training is being provided and support where needed as well continuing to collect robust data and deploy processes for reviewing incomplete rounds
- There is also a risk that the planned saving of **£150k** is not achieved in 21/22. However, if not achieved this financial year, the saving will be achieved in full next year and every year after that.

9. Longer term modernisation

Work has begun on longer term planning, particularly the technology challenges and opportunities and a scheme to develop our own drivers in-house. An assessment has been made about the technology challenges in the service and work is required to reduce the number of systems in Waste Management and integrate the final solution into the Council's Microsoft cloud environment and CRM system. Work has also started to develop an apprentice scheme to train and develop drivers. These will be brought forward as part of a wider Operational Service Modernisation Plan.

List of Background Papers: -

Contact Details: -

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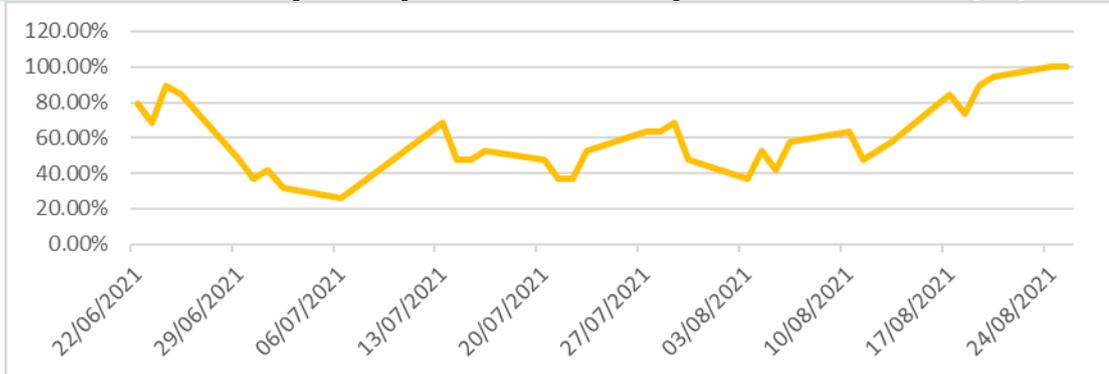
Executive Director sign off Date: _____

Executive Team Meeting Date: _____

Appendix 1

Waste Management – Data Dashboard

% Rounds fully completed since implementation 21/6/21



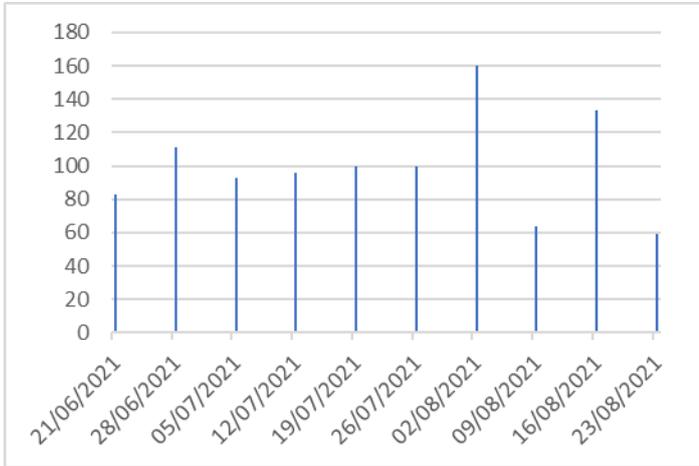
The graph above shows the number of rounds that have completed since 21/06/21. The incomplete rounds include any that are only partially incomplete (could be any number of bins left). It also includes any rounds that we have not been any to deploy due to staffing shortages etc.

% of calls answered by the Contact Centre for Operations* (*It is not possible to break them down by Service type)

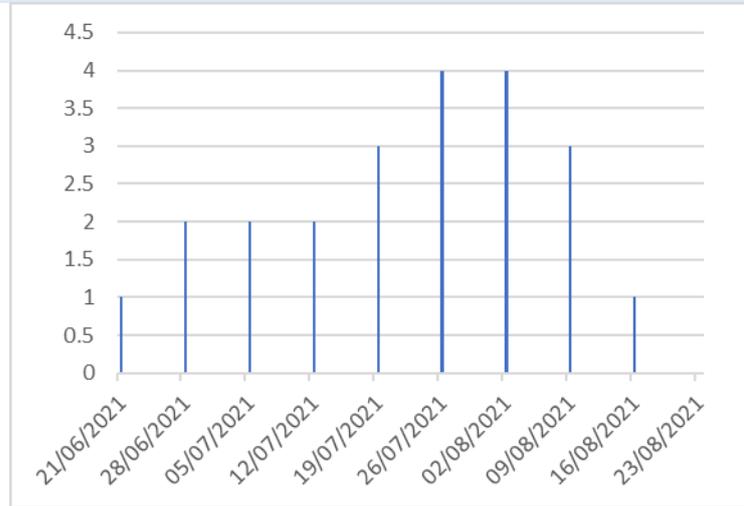


The percentage of calls answered will be affected through sickness and holidays etc in the Contact Centre

Weekly number of informal complaints re: missed bins

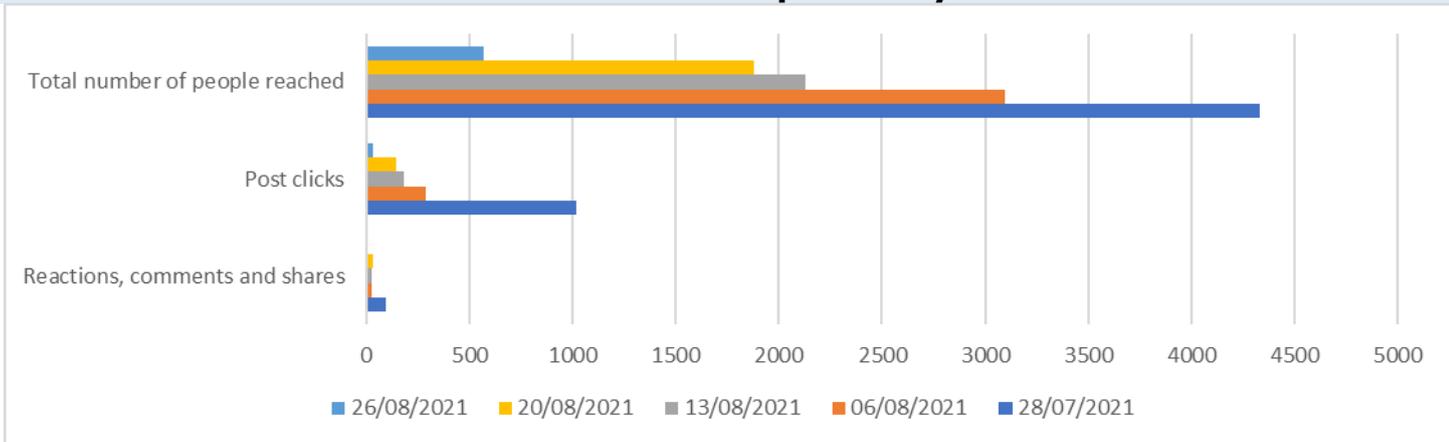


Weekly number of formal complaints re: missed bins



The 2 graphs above show the number of complaints received each week. This spiked at the start of August which coincided with the same period that the service struggled with sickness absence and holidays. Since 17/08/21 complaints (especially formal) have been on a downward trend which coincides with the decrease of number of missed bins.

Social Media Waste Updates by Comms



The graph shows that the level of social media engagement or reaction has steadily decreased