

## **Notes of a meeting of the Waste Service Review Working Party held on Monday 8 January 2024 at 10:00am.**

### **PRESENT**

Cllr Julia Huffer (Chairman)  
Cllr Mark Inskip  
Cllr Kelli Pettitt

### **OFFICERS**

Isabel Edgar – Director Operations  
Ian Smith – Director Finance  
Catherine Sutherland - Waste Development & Support Manager  
Hannah Walker – Trainee Democratic Services Officer  
Jane Webb - Senior Democratic Services Officer

### **9. APOLOGIES**

None.

### **10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **11. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Notes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

### **12. LONG LIST OPTIONS**

The Waste Development & Support Manager informed Members that the purpose of the meeting was to refine a long list of different service options to ask the Specialist Waste consultant to model. The chosen consultants were Plan B after following a 3-quote process. They had 20 years' experience in waste service and working with local authorities that had a Trading Company.

The Director Operations provided members with an update on the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) transitional arrangements relating to the implementation of the Environment Act and introduction of weekly food waste collections. Members were advised that she was still waiting for an update on the transitional arrangements, although the latest informal discussion with Defra was that the Secretary of State was still minded to name East Cambs in the transitional arrangements.

The Director Operations updated Members that East Cambs had written directly to Defra, to set out their unique position. To date correspondence had been via the partnership, however at that late stage it was felt prudent to correspond on the matter as an individual Authority. Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) as the disposal authority are in a long-term contract which does not end until 2036. This would mean that East Cambs as the collection authority would be named in transitional arrangements (law) by the Government and therefore the Council would not be entitled to funding to provide a separate food waste collection until then. East Cambs have approached Defra to offer a pragmatic approach to transitional arrangements which would enable them to access the funding and provide their residents with the enhanced recycling service. This was supported by a letter to Stephen Barclay MP, which was known to CCC. In addition to this, the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) contract was also being tendered as it had come to an end.

The Waste Development & Support Manager explained that the MOA for ECSS would end in 2025, and now was the opportunity to redefine the Council's waste service policies. She went through the strategic objectives to enhance the service provided, keep the costs of collecting waste and recycling down, and to keep the District clean. Members were presented with a list of options for refuse, recycling, garden, and food waste collections in terms of different containers, frequency of collection, and if there would be a charge.

The Director Operations explained that there were 21 options of waste services, with the ones highlighted in green was the recommended options for the Working Party to progress with Plan B. Plan B were baselining the current service and the agreed options would be modelled against it. This would be presented back to the Working Party in February 2024.

The three options recommended by the Director Operations for modelling:

1. Option 3 – move to refuse bin collection (140lt container), continue to collect weekly and implement a weekly separate food waste collection with no other changes to the service.
2. Option 10 – move to a refuse bin collection (140lt container) continue to collect weekly implement weekly separate food waste collection and a chargeable garden waste collection. Changing the frequency of refuse collections and charging to collect garden waste would likely provide a more cost neutral option for the Council.
3. Option 11 - move to a refuse bin collection (140lt container) collected fortnightly, implement a weekly separate food waste collection and a variable chargeable garden waste collection.

It was explained that initially there could be a drop in collected garden waste bins as residents would opt out of paying, but this would recover over the next few years. Plan B could model that outcome based on existing evidence from other authorities that had switched to a subscription service.

Members discussed the option to remove the charge for an additional recycling bin, officers confirmed that by removing the charge for collecting additional recycling to the standard blue lidded bin would be a positive, advising that not many authorities did this. The consultants would consider the income that option currently generated.

Members discussed a range of considerations to the list of options, the following points occurred from the discussion:

- To provide options for low-income residents who could not afford a garden waste service, such as a discounted rate or a Direct Debit /subscription option.
- To consider the garden waste service to run for 46 weeks rather than 52.
- Some residents especially those in Ely have small gardens and paying for a garden waste service may not be best value for them.
- A kitchen caddy to collect food waste could be provided, would be small, and able to fit in residents' kitchens. The outdoor caddy (that it would empty into) would potentially be lockable.
- It was important to provide residents with the reasons for the decisions made on which option would be chosen.
- Members would like to see the cost differences between options 3, 10 and 11 for modelling.

The Director Operations advised Members that the cost modelling would not necessarily be the final costs of the service but would provide members with a baseline to compare different collection types. She also advised that when undertaking changes to a service there needed to be a clear rationale around the changes and messaging that supported and encouraged changes in behaviour from residents.

In addition, she suggested whether Members may want to consider whether the first year of a chargeable garden waste service could be at a discounted price, then after the first year the price would increase, this would help to embed the service, and improve take up.

Making changes to the service in one go would help to embed the services and ensure that benefits were delivered as a package of better service options.

She also explained that if there was a chargeable garden waste service the ongoing costs such as wages, petrol and cost of the vehicle would remain, although the rounds could be more cost effective. She expected that the participation rate for a chargeable garden waste service would likely be a maximum of 60%

Members decided that the Director Operations should model options 3, 10 and 11.

**13. POLICY AND SERVICE STANDARDS / CONSIDERATIONS**

The Waste Development & Support Manager advised Members that the consultants had suggested that the Council may want to consider operating services across the District on different days and/or frequency. For example, changing the frequency of collections in rural areas. Members were asked what their thoughts were on that idea. Members agreed that this would stop the service being a universal service to all customers, and too complicated for residents.

Members were asked to consider a range of the policies for the waste service including enforcement, such as how to deal with bins obstructing the highways, and residents not recycling the correct items. Suggested approaches could include sending letters to residents, tagging bins, and in extreme cases the use of some councils and a Fixed Penalty Notice (this was already in the new Enforcement Policy signed off by committee).

The Director Operations advised that they needed to set service standards, for instance towards what would happen if the road were blocked, or a missed bin. She advised Members that a customer service standard would be discussed at the next meeting.

The Waste Development & Support Manager explained that policies were also needed that considered street cleansing such as sweeping, litter picking and dog bins, and the operation of schedules, frequencies, and response times. A discussion about the proliferation and frequencies on dog bin emptying took place and Members emphasised the following points:

- Parish Councils have the knowledge about the appropriate places to site dog bins.
- Dog Bins should be emptied more frequently than prescribed in the MOA.
- The Director Operations advised that some local authorities combine litter and dog bin emptying together, this would provide a better service to keep the costs down.
- An app or website function should be considered for residents to report if a dog bin needed to be emptied.
- The location of specific dog bins needed to be clearer by putting a number or QR code on the bin for people to report to aid customer services.
- The Director Operations suggested that it may be that the location of the dog bin needed to be moved, which they could do using mapping technology.
- Alternatively, they could set a baseline for dog bins, and if a Parish Council felt they needed another one they would have to pay for it to be emptied. Members were happy with the idea as long as the charge would be low.

Other points raised by Members:

- The introduction of a reactive blitz team would come at a cost but may reduce complaints which would allow Street Scene to carry out their normal scheduled work.
- A Member highlighted that it would be useful for residents to know when their street would be cleaned so that they could move their cars.
- The Director Operations acknowledged that the waste service struggled to react to change. Clearing fly tips were a problem due to issues with land ownership, and a lack of equipment to collect the waste. Members emphasised that a more effective inspection needed to take place to minimise problems when they attempt to collect the waste.
- East Cambs logo tape or sticker should be placed on fly tips, graffiti etc to acknowledge that we were aware of the problem, rather than multiple residents reporting the same problem.

The Waste Development & Support Manager advised Members that they were working with the Planning department to provide guidance to development sites on what could go in the bin and where to put them out.

**14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 6 February 2024 in the Council Chamber, Cllr Inskip would join the meeting virtually, and the consultants were expected to attend the meeting.

The meeting closed at 11:35am



## **Notes of a meeting of the Waste Service Review Working Party held on Tuesday 6 February 2024 at 12:39pm.**

### **PRESENT**

Cllr Julia Huffer (Chairman)  
Cllr Mark Inskip (*joined virtually via Teams*)  
Cllr Kelli Pettitt

### **OFFICERS**

Isabel Edgar – Director Operations  
Ian Smith – Director Finance (*joined virtually via Teams*)  
Catherine Sutherland - Waste Development & Support Manager  
Hannah Walker – Trainee Democratic Services Officer

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Steve Batchelor – Plan B Consultants  
Kelly Miller – Plan B Consultants

#### **15. APOLOGIES**

None.

#### **16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

#### **17. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Notes of the meeting held on 8 January 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### **18. CONSULTANT PRESENTATION**

Steve Bachelor and Kelly Miller from Plan B consultants introduced themselves to the Working Party and presented to Members several options for the waste service. Kelly Miller explained that a three-stage approach towards service options was used, data was taken from East Cambs as a 'Baseline' in terms of existing labour, vehicles, schedules, and tonnage yields. A series of alternative operational solutions were created in line with the service options being considered by the Council compared against the baseline. And an estimated service cost would then be calculated for each operational solution including the baseline current service.

Each service option had included a resource summary, an indication of the kerbside recycling rate, a vehicle and financial summary compared to the operating costs with the baseline (current) service.

### Service Options

- Four service options were modelled for the different material streams (residual, recycling, garden waste and food waste) with variables between each such as the frequency of collection, charging and non charging for garden waste.
- Two versions of each service options were presented to show the difference in costs between collecting waste in a single stream vehicle or co-collection in a dual body vehicle. Therefore a total of eight operational solutions were presented. Options 1, 2, 3, 4 represented single stream collections, and options 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, and 4.1 represented co-collections.
- Co-collections would require a transition to a different RCV vehicle which would have a twin compartment with recycling waste one side and food waste on the other side.
- Estimated vehicle CAPEX was also calculated for each operational solution.

### Service Options Considerations

- By having weekly food waste Plan B projected a participation rate in the service of around 60%.
- Moving to alternate week collection for residual waste could result in a 5% transfer of recyclable waste from the residual bin to the recycling bin/food waste bin.
- The size of residual waste bins can encourage/discourage recycling by providing too little or too much capacity. All modelling had been carried out on a 140l residual waste bin.
- Overall the introduction of alternate weekly collection for residual waste and weekly food waste would see an increase in recycling rates, however the introduction of a chargeable garden waste service would see a decrease in recycling rates.
- Different service options would have an impact on the overall recycling rate to a greater or lesser extent. The modelling showed that option 4 would likely achieve the highest overall recycling rate (c64.5%) and option 2 seeing an overall decrease in the recycling rate (c54.5%)

### Garden waste options

- The Governments Simpler Recycling Guidance was updated on 21 November 2023 which required local authorities to provide a garden waste service but can they choose whether or not to charge for the service.
- A chargeable garden waste service would likely lead to a decrease in the overall recycling rate.



- A chargeable garden waste service was estimated to retain around 50% of subscribers. Fenland District Council started providing a similar service and had seen 50% subscribers. Once subscribers had joined the service the number of subscribers remains stable.
- Garden waste was seasonal, and the average participating household was used for modelling purposes, but rates could be higher or lower across the year.
- 65% of authorities across England had already opted to charge for household garden waste collections.
- Variable pricing could be considered for households on low incomes.
- The Strategic Waste Review of 2020 suggested that with an introduction of a subscription service, 31% of garden waste would 'disappear' from the waste stream through resident behaviour change.
- A 50% subscription rate would require 3 vehicles as opposed to 4 for a free service.

### Annual service cost

Plan B Consultants had estimated the annual collection for each service option and showed this as variance (+/-) from the existing baseline service, based on the information provided, known/predicted labour and vehicle costs provided. The cost estimates did not include other service elements such as ancillary services, and capital costs for new vehicles or containers or any disposal costs. The subscription garden waste revenue was based on a £45 charge at a 50% subscription rate, yielding an estimated annual revenue of £929k.

A table was presented comparing the annual cost across eight different services showing labour, vehicle and other costs, and a subscription garden waste. The variance in annual costs from the baseline was also demonstrated.

- Option 3 would yield the most significant saving with an annual reduction in service cost of £702k (fortnightly residual waste, fortnightly recycling, weekly separate food waste and a chargeable garden waste £45 a bin).
- Options 1 and 1.1 would incur the most significant increase in annual service cost at £971.5k (Weekly residual waste, fortnightly recycling, weekly separate or co-collected food waste, free garden waste)

The Director Operations reminded Members that the estimates provided by Plan B were not what the service was going to cost, the estimates show a variation on a modelled baseline. When a service method had been shortlisted this could then be costed. Procurement of vehicles and bins would also need to be included.

Members discussed a range of considerations to the list of options, the following points occurred from the discussion:

- Estimates were relative and based on the current costs of fuel and labour, Plan B wanted to show a comparative idea of the highs and lows of all options.

- Option 3 fortnightly recycling, residual, chargeable garden waste and food waste would provide the biggest savings. Options 1 and 1.1 would see the biggest increase in annual service cost. Option 4 showed the most improved recycling rates.
- During a discussion on the types of vehicles used in the modelling the Chair emphasized that 10 new refuse vehicles had just been ordered and would not be worth being retrofitted/replaced. The 10 new vehicles could not be used for co-collections, they would need to be hired.
- Collections for the garden waste could be reduced in frequency during the winter, or the potential to double up rounds.

In response to questions from the Director Operations, Kelly Miller from Plan B confirmed the following:

- Weekly food waste was included in every option, differences were in residual waste if it was weekly or fortnightly, and the difference in the way it was collected.
- The updated quote on vehicle CAPEX was £108,000 to run on diesel but could not confirm if they could run on HVO, this would have to depend on warranty for alternative fuels.
- Weekly food waste would mitigate for some loss of garden waste if a chargeable service was selected.
- Fortnightly residual wheeled bin household waste kilos per household was already low, 140L bin was considered by the consultants as more than adequate for 2 weekly collections but consideration was needed for larger households.
- The advantages and disadvantages of separate or co collections were; increase or decrease of cost, increasing frontline resources would lead to a greater requirement for staff and vehicles, there were already increased HGV driver requirements and recruitment was difficult.
- Moving to residual fortnightly would mitigate some but not all of the additional staffing requirements.

Members identified that Option 4 provided the best overall performance and cost. The Director Operations raised that the predicted costs that would actually be incurred for the service would remain unknown until new revenue funding for food waste was announced and round modelling was undertaken. It also did not include any potential borrowing or roll out costs. Therefore caution was needed about the numbers.

The Waste Development & Support Manager queried why the estimated vehicle CAPEX was less for option 4 than options 3 and 4.1. Kelly Miller explained that this was because of the number of spare vehicles in the existing fleet. In response to a further question the availability to hire alternative vehicles would have to be ready to start in April, otherwise authorities could be waiting longer of up to 24 weeks.

Members thanked Kelly Miller and Steve Batchelor from Plan B consultants for their presentation.

**19. SHORT LIST AND COSTS**

The Director Operations explained to Members that due to the number of considerations and details for each option she would like to present the consultants slides to each political group, to ensure everyone had the same information and understood the different constraints, assumptions and considerations, before any recommendation on the final model could be made.

Members agreed that group briefings should happen prior to the next Working Party meeting. The Director Operations also suggested that due to the time constraints it was unlikely that street cleansing options would be ready to take to Operational Services committee in March and would need to be considered separately.

The Director Finance confirmed that going out to procurement had already been accounted for in the 2024/25 budget and on the basis of securing funding, however as there was variance in the different models it would be difficult to know the actual costs of all the different projects.

The Director Operations referred to the terms of reference for the working party with the purpose to consider the future delivery model for services: Full procurement, ECSS or bring services in house. A full procurement would have a cost and depending on the nature of the contract, it would allow for the contractor profits and have costs built in to mitigate risk or any increase during the lifetime of the contract.

Members agreed that it would not be beneficial to hire in twin pack vehicles as the scale of activity would not be appropriate, however any additional staff could be diverted to training to reduce the reliance on agency staff.

**20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Director Operations would present the benefits and disbenefits of the different delivery models for the Waste and Street Cleansing Service and model options to groups week commencing 4<sup>th</sup> March.

The date of the next meeting was set for Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March however recommendations need to go to Operational Services Committee for despatch by Monday 11 March. The Director Operations would update Members if the date for the next meeting changes.

The meeting closed at 1:54pm

