

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET - 9 JANUARY 2024
REPORT OF STREETSCENE CONTRACT TASK AND FINISH PANEL

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the recommendations arising from the Streetscene Contract Task and Finish Panel.
- 1.2 The Council's Streetscene contract comprises waste and recycling collection, street cleansing and other ancillary services such as bulky waste collection and new bin deliveries. The contract is delivered by Urbaser and commenced at the end of March 2020. The contract ends in 2029 and there is the option to extend this for up to a further 9 years.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to note and recommend to Cabinet to consider the actions set out in paragraph 2.2 to 2.9 of this report.
- 2.2 **That the collection of cardboard presented beside the bin is implemented.** Cardboard will be flat packed and placed alongside the blue lidded bin and will be recycled with other dry mixed recyclables. The intention is to increase available capacity in the blue lidded bin and result in an increased tonnage of recyclable materials processed and an increase in the recycling rate above the current 53% target. This will be implemented at no cost to the Council. This will be communicated via the Council website and social media channels. We will also use the digital screens on the collection vehicles to inform residents. It was noted by the task and finish group that a pilot was commencing for collecting recycling at flats which would also contribute towards increasing the recycling rate. It was also noted that a campaign was planned for the Autumn to promote food waste recycling to increase further participation. **Action: Officers to seek agreement with Executive Member (Environment) to trial this from December 2023.**
- 2.3 **That the bring bank service is to be reviewed and a change to the service to be implemented.** To review the bring bank locations and types of bins used. This may result in the removal of bring banks from locations that do not require this recycling option, such as locations that are near Tewin Road Recycling centre, or have to be driven to and are not in close to vicinity to flats served by a communal collection service. With regards to the types of bins, to remove all current bring bank bins at remaining sites and replacement with 1100 litre material specific bins. These bins will be able to be collected on all refuse collection vehicles which can be operated by any qualified HGV driver (rather the current specialist vehicle). This provides resilience to the service. Collection to be scheduled as required. Funding of this change has been agreed by the Urbaser Partnership Development Group which met on 11/10/2023. All required bins and resource to implement this change will be funded through the Urbaser improvement fund and at no cost to the Council. Collections of bring banks on Saturdays were discussed, however the cost of Saturday collections was considered prohibitive at this time, and that the change to 1100 litre bins could facilitate more frequent collections. However, officers were asked to establish whether collections could take place on bank holidays or, if not possible, immediately either side of bank

holidays due to heavy usage at these times. **Action: Officers to commence the review of the Bring Bank service, collections on bank holidays, or immediately before and after, and plan for implementation of the change by 01/04/2024.**

- 2.4 That the Council investigates options for entering a 12 month pilot contract with an external provider for environmental enforcement. There are companies who provide service to support local authorities by detecting littering and fly tipping and serving fixed penalty notices to address these offences. This would complement the planned enhanced approach towards tackling illegal dumping of rubbish and fly tipping including the use of mobile CCTV. **Action: Officers to engage with Procurement to commence soft market testing to establish what services are available.**
- 2.5 **That the Council continue to collect paper separately to dry mixed recycling as this provides a greater income to the Council than collecting it with other recyclables.** The price per tonne received for paper that is recycled has decreased significantly since last year, but income is still double for separated paper than for paper that is collected with other recyclable materials as it is better quality. There are supply issues with the inner paper caddies that we use for separating the paper in the blue lidded bin. There is only one UK manufacturer and the lead in times to make and supply them have increased significantly. **Action: Officers to investigate other options for receptacles to collect paper,**
- 2.6 **That a communications campaign be developed that seeks to change behaviour to encourage civic pride for the borough and enhanced education and publicity about matters such as waste disposal, recycling and tackling of illegal waste dumping including enforcement. This will include a 2 page article on recycling is produced and published in the Spring 2024 edition of ONE magazine. Action: Officers to work with the communications team to produce a communications campaign and the article.**
- 2.7 **That a briefing note is distributed to members through the information hub on the responsibility for verge protection across the borough.** A discussion took place at the task and finish group about the responsibilities for grass verges. It was established that responsibility is based on land ownership. Most verges adjoining a highway are Hertfordshire County Council land. Most other areas of grass are WHBC land or privately owned. Each landowner will make their own decision on whether to install verge protection measures on their land. **Action: Officers to produce brief and publish on the Members Hub.**
- 2.8 **Consideration of sponsorship for Waste Cage Days.** There was discussion of the benefits and costs of the waste cage days that have been used in the past to collect rubbish. **Action: Officers to investigate whether cage days could be sponsored (perhaps through social value actions) by our Corporate contractors (such as Urbaser).**
- 2.9 **That a Cabinet Streetscene Panel is introduced to provide regular oversight on the performance of the outsourced waste and cleansing contract.** The task and finish group discussed and determined that this service area was high profile and of public interest and felt it warranted overview by its own panel. **Action: Recommend to cabinet consideration of this item.**

3.0 Explanation

- 3.1 At the beginning of the municipal year Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) used a scoring matrix to decide on the topics they wished to scrutinise in the coming year. The Streetscene contract came out as a High Priority topic following this exercise.

- 3.2 A scoping document for the Streetscene contract was agreed at the OSC meeting on 18th July 2023 and it was agreed that a Task and Finish Panel be set up to look at this. This scoping document is included as Appendix A.
- 3.3 Membership of the Task and Finish Panel were agreed as Councillors B. Sarson (Chair), J.Cragg, R.Grewal, A.Nix, T.Rowse, S.Kasumu and L.Musk.
- 3.4 The first meeting of the Panel was held on 4 September 2023. At this meeting the Panel agreed the scope of the report. The full scoping document is included in Appendix A.
- 3.5 The objectives of the task and finish group scrutiny were to consider:
- improvement of recycling rates and/or targets;
 - the 12 suggestions made as a motion at the Full Council meeting of 1 February 2023;
 - the verge issues which appear to fall between boundaries of responsibility between Herts County Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - improving bin collection performance
- 3.6 4 meetings were held in total and all areas of the scope were discussed as summarised below;

SCOPE 1 : “considering complaints, performance and missed bin data”

Data is currently reviewed at quarterly performance clinics. Contractual KPIs are being achieved and any issues are reviewed at monthly contact meetings.

Missed bins:

The target for the number of missed bins is a maximum of 180 missed bins per 100,000 bins collected. The performance is within this target (as below). Over 1.38 million bins were collected in Q1 of 2023/24 and 99.89% of these bins were collected on schedule.

Quarter/Year	Total Collections	Missed bins per 100,000 (Urbaser KPI Maximum 180)
Q1 (2022-23)	1302756	179
Q1 (2023-24)	1388619	143

Complaints:

Officers confirmed in the current Quarter we have seen a total of 153 complaints about waste services of which 79 were upheld (data in table below). These issues are being addressed through supervisor checks and ongoing monitoring. Where training issues are identified, training is delivered by the Urbaser Service Delivery Manager In Q2 2022/23, we received 177 complaints of which 75 were upheld.

Type Of Complaint / Outcome	Not defined as a complaint	Not upheld	Partially upheld	Upheld	Live	Total
Fly-tipping		1		1		2
Household rubbish and recycling collections	21	16	5	78	16	136
Litter	4	1			2	7
Recycling banks	2					2
Street Sweeping	5				1	6

153

Scope 2 : “Looking at data on the cost of fly tipping, regular spots for fly tipping, and the Council’s approaches to reduce fly tipping”

Task and Finish group received and discussed information and presentations about fly tipping numbers and types, fly tipping hotspots, our overarching approach to fly tipping and enforcement activity.

The following approaches have been identified:

- A communications campaign that encourages civic pride for the borough and covers the how to dispose of rubbish correctly and with an enhanced focus on enforcement for fly tipping and littering offences.
- Increase in the number of Fixed Penalty Notice fees being issued, and use of social media to publicise successful enforcement actions.
- Fly tipping FPN value to increase to £500 (£350 for early payment) and littering FPN value to increase to £150 (£100 for early payment)
- Review of enforcement options and structure of teams involved.
- Increase in publicity both on website and social media.
- Explore option of a pilot for Environmental Enforcement to complement the enhanced approach to flytipping and littering enforcement including the consideration of the use of mobile CCTV.

Scope 3 : “Considering the Councils current recycling targets, performance and strategies to for improving recycling rates”

Task and Finish group received and discussed information and presentations about our current recycling rate (almost 51%). Our target for 2023/24 is 53%. The UK’s target is to achieve 65% by 2035. The global market for recyclable materials and the anticipated Government’s response to their waste strategy was discussed, including the Government’s emerging new ‘Simpler Recycling’ response to the strategy.

The following approaches have been identified:

- Implement collection of cardboard presented beside the bin on recycling collections week. (recommendation)
- Continue to develop and roll out flat recycling (Corporate Project)
- Review of bring banks and delivery of option to review existing bring bank sites to remove some and to install 1100 litre bins which can be collected by the existing refuse vehicles rather than the specialist vehicle (recommendation)

- Planned campaign in Autumn to promote food waste recycling to increase further participation
- 2 page spread on recycling agreed with communications team for the Spring edition of ONE magazine

Scope 4 : “considering the 12 points raised as a motion at the full council meeting 1st February 2023”

Covered all points (some are projects and also cross into Scope 2).

Questions 1 – 4 : Recycling Bank Service
 Question 5 : Bin collection calendars
 Question 6 : Flat Recycling Trial
 Question 7 &10 : Students / Landlords
 Question 8 : Leaflets on recycling
 Question 9 : Larger recycling bins
 Question 11 : Cage Days
 Question 12 : Fly tipping prevention

The recycling banks, and flats recycling trial items were considered by the task and finish group under scope 3 above, and flytipping prevention was considered under scope 2 above.

Bin calendars had previously been printed on cards and distributed to households but is now printed within the ONE magazine and is available on the Council’s website. This was discussed by the group this in terms of the reduced costs and being a better environmental option. No recommendations were made.

With regards to leaflets and information on recycling in particular regarding students and landlords, Officers confirmed that Student/Landlord work is ongoing with University of Hertfordshire, and that officers are engaging with Private Sector Housing to provide information to HMOs. Additionally, Officers are designing a Webpage with dedicated resources and links for use by students and HMOs / landlords.

Waste cage days were discussed, and the benefits and costs obtained and discussed. It was decided that officers should investigate whether cage days could be sponsored by our corporate contractors (such as Urbaser) or as part of the social value aspect of their contract.

Larger recycling bins were discussed, but it is not possible to take this proposal further due to operational constraints, but collecting cardboard waste presented beside the bin will help increase recycling capacity.

SCOPE 5 : “understanding where the responsibilities are between WHBC and HCC when it comes to the maintenance or protection of verges”

Officers confirmed that the responsibility for verges is based on land ownership. Most verges adjoining a highway are HCC land, whereas most other areas of grass are WHBC land or privately owned. However, WHBC do cut HCC owned grass verges under an agency agreement.

Officers confirmed that verge protection is the responsibility of the landowner. Each landowner will make a decision on installing or repairing protection measures on their land.

This decision will take into consideration impacts to residents and available budgets. Verge damage caused by refuse or grounds vehicles will be repaired by the relevant contractor at their cost.

Officers confirmed that WHBC Parking services are implementing Vehicle Protection Orders (VPOs) when changes are made in areas which will allow PCN's to be issued to cars parked on verges. This is an ongoing process.

Implications

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report

5. Financial Implication(s)

5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report – they are being met from existing resources. Some recommendations could have a financial impact should changes to services be agreed at a future date.

6. Risk Management Implications

6.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report

7. Communication

7.1 There are no communication and engagement implications arising from this report – except those in relation to further information and the campaign about recycling and flytipping.

8. Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

8.1 There are no security and terrorism implications arising from this report

9. Procurement Implication(s)

9.1 There are no procurement implications arising from this report

10. Climate Change Implication(s)

10.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report, except that increased recycling will reduce the residual waste that needs to be disposed or to landfill.

11. Human Resources Implication(s)

11.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report

12. Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

12.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications arising from this report

13. Link to Corporate Priorities

13.1 The subject of this report is linked to all of the Council's Priorities.

14. Equalities and Diversity

14.1 An EqIA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

Appendix A

Scrutiny Scoring Matrix

Topic/area of interest: **Street Scene**

Public Interest + Strategic Value + Risk + Corporate Priorities + Financial Value = Scrutiny Value Score

	Numerical score			
Public Interest	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Risk to Council or service delivery	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Alignment to Corporate Priorities	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Financial Value	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Issue of concern for partners?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Will the outcome of scrutiny review result in any meaningful impact on the Council service?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Will the outcome of scrutiny result in any benefit for a significant part of the community / partners / stakeholders or the Council?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Total Score				19

Decision:

A number of matters were discussed regarding street scene. There was a Task and Finish panel last year, but the committee felt these were very high profile services to the public and should be subject to regular scrutiny. In particular, fly tipping, bin collections / recycling and verge maintenance were highlighted as areas the committee would like to focus on.

Agreed: A task and finish panel would be set up to cover:

- Looking at data on the cost of fly tipping, regular spots for fly tipping, and the councils approaches to reduce fly tipping.
- Considering the 12 points raised as a motion at the full Council meeting of 1 February 2023, regarding fly tipping.
- Understanding where responsibilities are between the Council and Hertfordshire County Council, when it comes to the maintenance or protection of verges.
- Considering the council current recycling targets, performance, and strategies for improving recycling rates.
- Considering complaints, performance and missed bin data

The objectives expected through this scrutiny are to determine if recommendations could be made:

- to improve recycling rates and/or targets;
- from the 12 suggestions made as a motion at the Full Council meeting of 1 February 2023;
- in dealing with verge issues which appear to fall between boundaries of responsibility between Herts County Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
- to improve bin collection performance

Scrutiny Review Title	Street Scene
Scoring Matrix Result	19
T&F Panel Members	TBC
Co-opted Members	TBC
Portfolio Holder (s)	Councillor Sandreni Bonfante
Officers	Sue McDaid, Paul Harris, Kirsten Roberts
Key Stakeholders	Hertfordshire County Council (for verge protection)

Background Issue to review - the rationale for scrutinising this issue

The committee recognised the high profile nature of services within this category, in particular, bin collections, recycling, fly tipping and verge maintenance/ protection. Whilst it is recognised verge protection is not a Council function, members felt there are times where works appear to fall between the responsibility of HCC and WHBC.

Scrutiny Aims and Objectives

The objectives expected through this scrutiny are to determine if recommendations could be made:

- to improve recycling rates and/or targets;
- from the 12 suggestions made as a motion at the Full Council meeting of 1 February 2023;
- in dealing with verge issues which appear to fall between boundaries of responsibility between Herts County Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
- to improve bin collection performance

Review of Implications/Impacts/Risks

Service failure could lead to:

- *Reputational damage*
- *Environmental damage*
- *Health and wellbeing implications*

Methodology for Gathering Evidence

A range of methods will be used to gather evidence including:

- Considering data on the cost of fly tipping, regular spots for fly tipping, and the councils approaches to reduce fly tipping.
- Considering the 12 points raised as a motion at the full Council meeting of 1 February 2023, regarding fly tipping. Officers to provide information on these areas to assist members. *1
- Obtaining information on where responsibilities are between the Council and Hertfordshire County Council, in relation to the maintenance or protection of verges.
- Considering the council current recycling targets, performance, and strategies for improving recycling rates.
- Considering complaints, performance and missed bin data

*1 – the motion made at full Council on 1 February 2023, was:

“Fly tipping defaces our Borough and as well as being an eyesore can contribute to attracting vermin and other health and safety issues. The council commits to take the following steps to

address this:

1. Review the specification and produce implementation plans for the clearances of the skips from local recycling facilities including scheduling of weekend collections where this is deemed necessary.
2. Review the specification and produce implementation plans for the clearances of the skips from local recycling facilities over the Xmas period when demand is higher.
3. Review the provision of recycling facilities and produce implementation plans for all fabrics including clothing, curtains and bedding materials.
4. Work with Lovells to reintroduce local recycling facilities at High View in Hatfield as soon as is practicable.
5. Revert to the communication of bin collection days to the specific rounds i.e., cease the “all encompassing” communication which too many residents find confusing
6. Complete the trial of recycling from council flats within the Borough and communicate a clear timetable for rolling out recycling to all council flats and subsequently all other flats within the Borough.
7. Produce targeted materials for students describing the correct recycling procedures within the Borough and aligned to distribution through the University of Hertfordshire freshers’ week.
8. Ensure that Borough literature covering the dos and don’ts of correct recycling and based on common errors is provided to each household e.g., don’t attempt to recycle soiled takeaway food packaging
9. Ensure that the procedures for securing more or larger home recycling bins are communicated within Borough literature, on the council website and through social media.
10. Produce specific communications for targeting landlords and tenants of HMOs
11. Trial the reintroduction of “cage days”
12. Take further preventive steps to deter fly tipping at known hot spots such as local recycling facilities.”

Proposed time scales and meeting frequency (aim for 2 to 3 months)

Start date	August 2023
Frequency of Meetings	To be determined by the panel at its first meeting
End Date	October 2023

Reporting back to OSC/Recommendations to Cabinet

Date of OSC	November 2023
Date of Cabinet	January 2024 (for budget)
Scrutiny Review Title	Budget