

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Streetscene & Engineering Cabinet Board

25 May 2018

Report of the Head of Streetcare

M. Roberts

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All Wards

Information on Refuse and Recycling Collections

Purpose of Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide information to Members regarding the delivery of the Council's refuse and recycling collection services.

Executive Summary

- 2 This report provides an update for Members on the following issues:
 - i. Service configuration;
 - ii. Staffing of collection rounds;
 - iii. The cost of refuse and recycling;
 - iv. Route optimisation;
 - v. Overtime;
 - vi. Numbers of missed collections reported to the council;
 - vii. Update on management of change regarding Bank Holiday collections;
 - viii. Enforcement of the 'Side Waste' policy; and,
 - ix. Trials of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Background

- 3 Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, as a Waste Collection Authority, has a statutory duty to collect refuse and recycling. The Council currently provides fortnightly collections for refuse and garden waste, and weekly collections of recyclables including food

waste. During 2017 this equated to some 5,000,000 collections of refuse and recycling from households in the County Borough.

Service Configuration - Refuse

- 4 The Council's fleet of refuse service vehicles is currently as follows:

- 7 'split back' two compartment front line freighters
- 2 'narrow track' single compartment front line freighters
- 2 caged tippers
- 2 spare 'split back' freighters
- 1 spare 'narrow track' freighter
- 1 spare caged vehicle
- 1 tail-lift tipper used for wheeled bin deliveries

The spare vehicles provide cover for 6 weekly safety inspections, scheduled maintenance and breakdowns.

In addition to the above, an additional single compartment freighter and a caged tipper are hired in during the growing season to assist with green waste collections.

- 5 11 refuse collection rounds run every day, Monday to Friday. 'Split-back' freighters are used on 7 of these rounds and the vehicles provide for the collection of refuse plus a second material (i.e. green waste for most of the year and cardboard or refuse over the Christmas period). There are also two 'narrow track' rounds for areas with more limited access, supported by the hired vehicles detailed above in the growing season. In addition, there are two 'safari' rounds for collections from farms and other places with difficult access (e.g. Aberavon gated lanes).

Service Configuration - Recycling

- 6 The Council's kerbside recycling collection service, branded 'Recycle+', is carried out using a fleet of 23 purpose built 'kerbsort' collection vehicles. Different sizes of vehicle are used to ensure that, as far as possible, a consistent level of service is delivered to all communities across the County Borough. The vehicles come in standard 5.0m, 4.3m and 'narrow access' 3.5m wheelbase sizes. There are currently 21 recycling rounds per day, carried out Monday to Friday, including two 'narrow access'

rounds. There are two spare vehicles to cover inspections, maintenance, and breakdowns. There is also 1 'transit tipper' vehicle used for delivery of recycling kit. It is noted that the budget for 2018/19 includes for the introduction of a further vehicle and crew as kerbside recycling continues to expand and a further spare vehicle is being purchased. The initial purchase of both new vehicles is being grant funded by Welsh Government.

- 7 In addition to the above, the service also operates 1 recycling 'safari' round for collections from farms and other places with difficult access. Properties on this round are still on the old 'clear sack' recycling system but are expected to be converted to kerbsort 'Recycle+' collections around June. New tailored vehicles are currently being built to facilitate this change which are also being grant funded by Welsh Government under the Collaborative Change Programme. Members are reminded that the Environment & Highways Cabinet Board under the former administration has previously resolved that on completion of the 'Recycle+' roll-out, the current 'side waste' restriction will be tightened and no side waste will be collected alongside wheeled bins. Furthermore, in black bag areas the number of refuse sacks will be restricted to three.

Service Configuration – Trade Waste

- 8 Trade refuse collections are carried out as part of our domestic refuse collections with the additional support of 1 single compartment freighter and 1 large 'tipper' vehicle for the collection of recyclable material and food waste from our larger trade recycling customers.
- 9 It is noted that changes are going to have to be made to the current dedicated trade recycling collections to align them with domestic collection arrangements further to recent changes to waste regulations so that for example glass is collected separately. Again vehicle changes are being made to facilitate this using grant funding from Welsh Government.

Staffing of refuse and recycling collection rounds

- 10 The refuse and recycling collection rounds are staffed by 33 and 65 full time employees respectively.

- 11 In addition to the standard crew numbers, there is an additional resource pool of 14 employees that can be drawn upon to provide cover for sickness and holiday leave. Any level of absence above this level is covered by agency staff engaged through the Council's corporate agency contract. In 2017, the number of agency staff days and the reasons for their requirement is provided below:

Recycling collections

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Sickness absence/phased returns | 1,090 |
| Holiday leave | 1,274 |
| Afternoon shift | 1,263 |
| Recycle+ roll out | 6 |
| Paternity leave | 18 |
| Hospital appointments | 1 |
| Agency staff inductions | 37 |
| LGV training cover | 35 |
| 'Other' | 1,153 |
| Sub Total | 4,877 |

Refuse collections

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Sickness absence/phased returns | 451 |
| Holiday leave | 566 |
| Green waste collections | 318 |
| Jury service | 6 |
| Hospital appointments | 5 |
| Paternity leave | 5 |
| 'Other' | 1,389 |
| Sub Total | 2,740 |

Total: **7,617**

'Other' includes, for example, cover for OHU appointments, staff required for gritting and winter maintenance, training courses, cover for HGV drivers and cover for Supervisors whilst on other work.

On average 27 agency staff are currently being required on a daily basis and the reasons for this is under review.

- 12 In some instances, the volumes of recycling presented at the kerbside exceeds the levels that can be collected on the standard

rounds and 'late shifts' may be implemented to get recycling off the streets. Occasionally this can also be required for refuse collections.

Cost of refuse and recycling

- 13 The total cost for the provision of the refuse and recycling collections is funded from a combination of contributions from Council Tax, grant funding from Welsh Government, and trade waste income.
- 14 In 2017/18 the total budget for waste collection and disposal was £6.995M which, based on 64,000 households and only 24% of council revenue spend coming from Council Tax, equated to £26.23 per household per year, or 50 pence per household per week (less than 8% of 'Band D' Council Tax in Briton Ferry).
- 15 The latest benchmarking for 2016/17 indicates that of the other 21 Councils in Wales, in respect of the net Waste Services costs per household 9 are cheaper, 3 have an equivalent cost and 9 are more expensive.

Route optimisation

- 16 The refuse and recycling collection rounds have evolved over time, adapting to accommodate changes to the fleet, alterations to recycling collection arrangements, and new housing developments. A process has therefore been ongoing to review and optimise the rounds.
- 17 Whilst introducing the 'Recycle+' kerb-sort recycling service, the Waste Supervisors undertook a review of the collection rounds which indicated that there was significant amount of travelling time and distance between collections, i.e. one vehicle might collect from a number of different areas on any one day thereby creating unnecessary "non-productive" travel.
- 18 In particular, the review also identified that more collections were being made on a Thursday compared to any other day of the week, often giving rise to problems at the end of the day which cascaded into collections on Friday. Subsequently, an exercise to balance the recycling collection rounds during the week along with corresponding refuse collections was undertaken resulting in increased service reliability on Thursdays and Fridays. Further

optimisation work is ongoing but before completing this process it is necessary to complete the ongoing waste strategy review so that any implications of service delivery changes resulting from the review can be taken into account. Whilst household recycling is still expanding, through optimisation it is hoped that the number of refuse rounds can be reduced by one as the rounds are 'speeding up' with the reduction of side waste, but completion of the review is again required in case there are any changes to green waste collections which would add to collection times.

- 19 As identified previously, an additional narrow access 'kerb-sort' vehicle is on order and an extra recycling round is going to be added to the service in 2018/19. With the addition of this vehicle, the work currently allocated to the 2 narrow access rounds will be shared across 3 rounds to increase service reliability and reduce overtime on this part of the service.

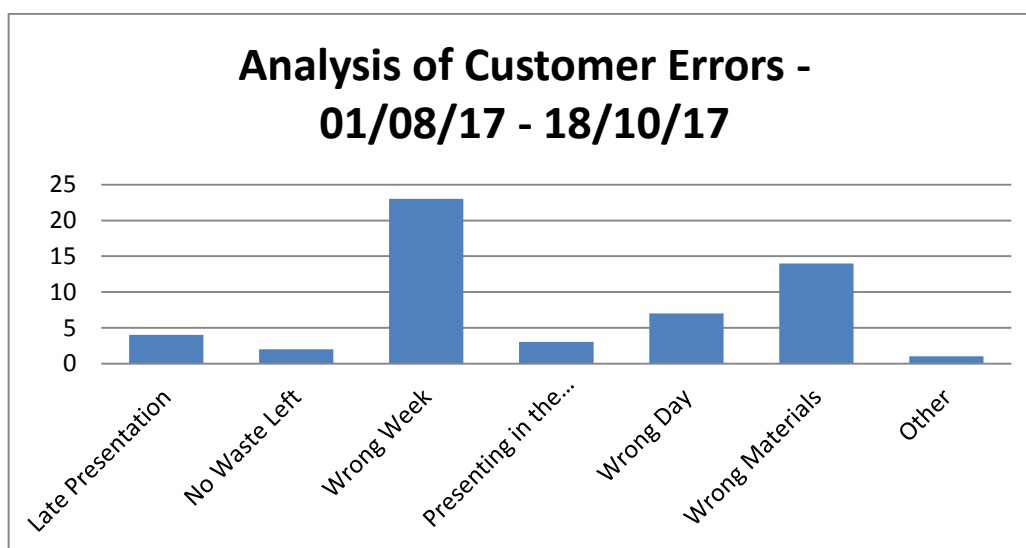
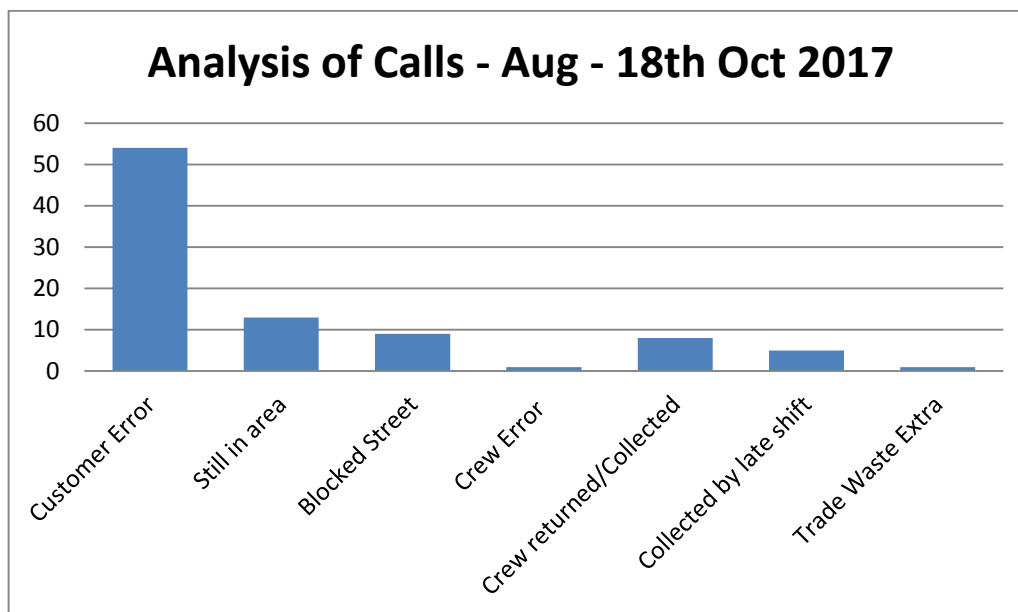
Overtime

- 20 There are two main reasons for overtime working with respect to collection services: catch-up days follow bank holidays and work to complete rounds further to bad weather, breakdowns, road closures or quantities of waste/work.
- 21 Total overtime expenditure in 2017/18 was circa £152,000 of which some £70,000 is associated with the normal catch-up days.
- 22 The overtime payments in the previous year amounted to £230,000 before balancing of the rounds during the week.

Numbers of missed collections reported to the Council

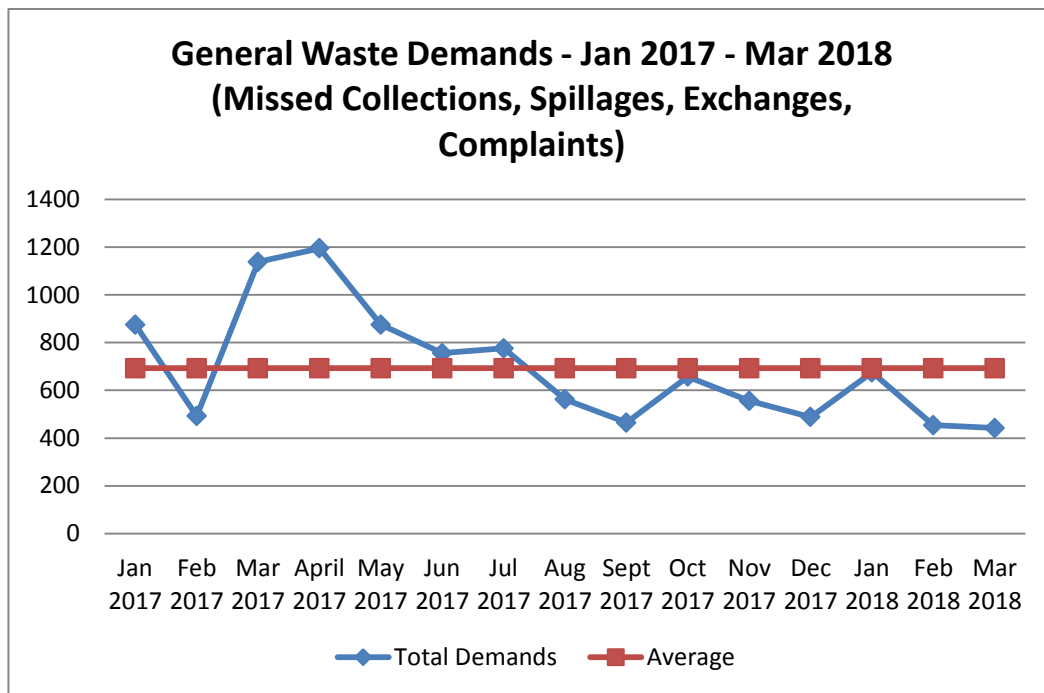
- 23 Currently all 'missed' collection calls are recorded together regardless of the nature of the call.
- 24 Further to the circa 5,000,000 collections undertaken in 2017, a total of 7,065 collection related calls were received by the Council, which equates to 0.14% of the number of collections. It is noted the number of calls should be considered in the context of the service changes that were made during 2017, including the changes to collection days as part of rebalancing the weekday collections and a further roll-out of 'Recycle+'.

25 Since August 2017 officers have started to analyse calls that have been reported as a missed collection and the graphs below shows the results of data analysis carried out during August to October.



26 The above shows that by far the greatest number of calls concerning 'missed collection' relate to errors by residents such as putting out waste on the incorrect week.

27 The graph below also indicates that we have improved the delivery of our service - the number of requests received for missed collections and spillages etc. has reduced during the last year.



28 Members have enquired how much it costs to go back for a missed collection but it is not possible to calculate a meaningful value.

Update on Management of Change regarding Bank Holiday collections

29 It is an historic practice to not collect refuse and recycling on Bank Holidays. In order to catch up, the collections following national holidays are generally made one day late, or sometimes two days late over the Christmas period. This means ultimately working the Saturday or weekend after the holiday to complete the catch up. Good Friday is an exception, where historically it has been possible to put arrangements in place to allow collection and tip-off of refuse and recycling on the day.

30 The working of catch up days on weekends following public holidays is currently voluntary and collection staff can choose whether or not to work them. The trend over recent years has however been fewer and fewer staff volunteering to work on the weekend following a Bank Holiday and it has now reached an extent where the numbers of additional agency staff and staff drawn from other service areas are not 'bridging the gap' required to maintain service provision.

31 Discussions have been held with the Trade Unions and staff and various attempts have been made to resolve the situation. In the absence of a satisfactory solution management have formally

consulted with staff under the Council's Management of Change arrangements regarding the working of 'catch-up' days becoming a contractual requirement of employment. In response to the consultations the unions submitted an alternative four day working week proposal which has been evaluated and rejected. A meeting is arranged with staff to finalise the change process and if staff are all contractually obliged to work the 'catch-up' days it is proposed to introduce a staff rota for staff to take periods such as Christmas or New Year week off as annual leave if they want to.

Enforcement of 'Side Waste' Policy

- 32 Following the Environment and Highways Scrutiny Committee of January 2016 which last considered the challenging statutory recycling and composting targets and approved the current side waste restriction, Officers have started an on-going programme of education and enforcement of the policy.
- 33 Initially work was centred on the crews identifying the 'gross abusers', that is properties regularly presenting excess waste of over 10 bags. These have received visits from officers and, for example, a number of traders operating from home have been identified which have been required to enter requisite trade waste agreements.
- 34 There is now a need to take forward enforcement action more generally and it is proposed, subject to support as part of the ongoing waste strategy review, to ramp up enforcement against those residents presenting excess waste where not covered by the Council's exemption scheme. This is proposed to be done after the side waste restriction is tightened and no side waste is allowed to be presented alongside wheeled bins (and three bags maximum in black bag areas).
- 35 As part of the increased enforcement, householders will first be advised of the policy and the weekly recycling service that is available and, in the case of excessive non-recycling and compostable waste, information on the exemption scheme. Any 'unauthorised' residual waste after a period of transition will then be left uncollected by the crews and ultimately fixed penalty notices will be issued to the residents that do not recycle and persistently present excess waste or fly tip.

Trials of new Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- 36 Periodically, personal protective equipment is reviewed and the workforce has noted certain concerns with some of the PPE currently provided. Consequently, trials of wet weather clothing from different manufacturers are currently being undertaken and it is likely revised clothing will shortly be issued.
- 37 Supervisors and staff have also been looking at current footwear issued and although meeting the necessary BS EN standards the footwear has been found to be not fully water resistant and these have now been replaced by better quality waterproof footwear. Since issuing the new footwear some ten months ago, supervisors have received no complaints from the collection staff.
- 38 Following a number of issues with some of the kerb-sort vehicle compartment doors, “bump caps” have been added as essential PPE, which have been introduced pending a longer term solution from the vehicle manufacturers.
- 39 As part of more general health and safety measures, additional awareness training has recently been provided to all staff with respect to substances such as asbestos, needle stick injuries, and the potential dangers from power lines.

Financial Impact

- 40 The PPE trials may result in more expensive protective clothing being provided.
- 41 Efficiencies due to further route optimisation will result in a reduction in costs such as overtime.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 42 There are no equality impacts associated with this report.

Workforce Impact

- 43 The on-going management of change process relating to Bank Holiday service provision is intended to bring about changes to workforce terms and conditions to secure services around Bank Holiday periods going forward.

Legal Impact

- 44 There are no legal impacts associated with this report.

Risk Management

- 45 The waste and recycling collection service is one of the most prominent visible services areas and service performance has implications for the Council's reputation. Furthermore, the Council has legal obligations to fulfil. The Council's waste strategy, service delivery arrangements, and service performance therefore need to be kept under periodic review.

Sustainable Development

- 46 Improvements made to waste collections increase the efficiency of the service, help ensure that the services offered to our communities and businesses are resilient and reliable, boost our recycling performance, and thereby contributes to delivering the wider goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and Environment Act.

Consultation

- 47 There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

List of Background Papers

- 48 E&H Scrutiny Committee – No Side Waste Policy, 28th January 2016

Officer Contact

- 49 Mr Andrew Lewis, Waste and Neighbourhood Services Manager.
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