

SUBJECT:	Flats Service Review Report
REPORT OF:	Officer Management Team - Director of Services Prepared by - Head of Environment

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the proposed service review for flats.

2. Links to Council Policy Objectives

- 2.1 This matter is related to the following local and national policy objectives:

- South Bucks Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Plan Key Theme - Sustainable Environment - protecting our heritage, protecting our future.
- Council priority to continue to improve the street scene and cleanliness of the district as a key public services coordinator
- The current Joint Waste Management Strategy for Bucks policies, including “securing a long-term strategy for the management of wastes for which the member authorities are collectively responsible”.
- The Council’s recycling/composting target of 60% by 2025 as part of the Joint Waste Management Strategy for Bucks. The national target of 45% by 2015 and 50% by 2020. There are no longer District specific targets.

3. Background

- 3.1 In March 2013 this PAG agreed with the recommendations of a report presenting the background, estimated costs and operational implications of changing refuse and recycling services in the District. The new service consisted of providing alternate week refuse and enhanced recycling collections together with food waste and a chargeable garden waste service. Operational roll out of flats was deferred until Summer/Autumn 2014 so that appropriate collection policy and methods could be identified and put into place.
- 3.2 Following the property assessments for wheelie bin suitability, flats that were identified as suitable for the standard food waste service were allocated either standard wheelie bin or the modified blue sacks service and were delivered containers at the same time as households. Approximately 1800 properties are on the standard/modified service.
- 3.3 Approximately 3000 properties across at least 200 sites have remained on either a weekly black sack or weekly bulk collection due to being unsuitable for the standard food waste collection service. This could be a block of flats, a converted larger property or maisonettes for example.
- 4.1 Every block of flats differs in terms of building features, management structures and types of resident; it is therefore counterproductive to offer one ‘blanket’ service to all flats and it has become apparent that providing effective services to flats is more complex than initially thought. **Appendix A** gives some background information and other Local Authority experiences in flats recycling and food waste collection schemes.

4. Flats Service Review

Aims and Objectives

- 4.2 The aim of the Flats Service Review is to provide residents with an improved service and thereby increase the amount of recycling collected and resident participation in flats by bringing collection services in line with the rest of the district.
- 4.3 This will be achieved by;
- Implementing weekly food waste collections from communal containers wherever possible
 - Ensuring recycling provision is in line with the new collection service, i.e. the appropriate capacity and container provision for separate 'mixed recycling' (i.e. plastics, cans, bottles and cardboard and 'paper recycling' collections.
 - Providing containers, wherever possible, for the storage and collection of refuse as it is very difficult to monitor and enforce the four black sacks per fortnight per property particularly from communal collection points.
 - Reducing the frequency of refuse collections from flats to fortnightly or where this is not possible reduce the capacity provided for refuse collected on a weekly basis.
 - Consulting with property managers and resident representatives to ensure suitable storage and access is available to facilitate safe collections.
 - Communicating the new collection service to residents and enable them to take part in recycling schemes.
 - Enhancing the services to flats will also have the additional benefit of reducing the number of properties on the bulk collection rounds so make the overall service more efficient.

Prioritisation

- 4.4 There are still around 3000 properties receiving weekly refuse collections, not all of which will currently have recycling services in place. These are putting added pressure on the bulk round and will still be disposing of significant amounts of refuse, therefore the order of priority for review will be;
1. Current Weekly sack collections - aim to introduce food waste, update recycling collections, reduce frequency of refuse collection and introduce refuse containers wherever possible.
 2. Current Bulk collections - aim to introduce food waste, update recycling collections and reduce frequency of refuse collection wherever possible.
- 4.5 Properties on the standard/modified service will be monitored and evaluated to ensure the system is working or whether communal facilities would be more successful.

Timescales

- 4.6 In order to implement successful refuse and recycling collection services it is important to identify and address any barriers at each site. Officers have already started conducting inventories of weekly sack/bulk properties which will form the basis of site visit discussions with property managers and residents to establish the best way forward for each site.

- 4.7 It is estimated that the review will take until at least the end of October to visit and implement changes at all sites, see table 1 below, a full project plan has been established. Some sites that require more substantial works by the property manager may be finished later. If additional staffing resources outlined in section 7 below are not agreed then the project is unlikely to be completed before the New Year.

Table 1. Service Review Timetable

Time frame	Action	Details
May/June	Flats inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct inventory of existing weekly/bulk property details, collection arrangements, management contact and storage/access/H&S issues. • Prioritise properties for review.
June/July	Contact property managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce review, actions, timescales etc. schedule site visits. • Select sites to trial food waste collection methods.
July to September	Site visits & Identification of works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct site visits with property managers; identify and carry out works if required. • Establish roll out programme. • Notify residents of when changes will take place.
September/October	Service Roll Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled installation of recycling/food waste containers . • Introductory events to hand out 'Flat Packs'
October/November	Monitoring & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and evaluate food waste and recycling collections. • Monitor properties on the standard/modified service to identify any issues.

5. Proposed Collection Methods

- 5.1 **Appendix B** depicts what the flats waste and recycling collection service could look like, there may be small variations and the best solution will be selected for each site.

Food Waste

- 5.2 Guidance for storing food waste states that it must be secure and properly contained to prevent spillage and access to vermin in order to be compliant with the Animal by Product Regulations. Containers must be leak proof and securely covered. Where bins are stored outside of bin stores they should ideally be locked or secured into place either by housing units or fixed frames.
- 5.3 Food waste collections from flats are much more complex than from households. Research and experience from other Local Authorities shows lower participation rates in flats due to the additional effort that is required by residents, key to maximising participation is to pay particular attention to container/liner provision and bin security/cleansing
- 5.4 It is proposed that food waste is collected by residents in 5L kitchen caddies, the same as households, which are then emptied into brown lidded communal wheelie bins not larger than 140L to minimise manual handling. Specialised lockable 140L food waste

containers can be installed for sites that require the additional security. A number of sites will be selected to trial the collections/containers.

- 5.5 Residents in flats will be provided a sample roll of 52 liners, like households, however research and experience has shown that much higher participation and volumes of food waste can be expected from flats if liners are provided on an ongoing basis. This would involve an ongoing cost for the Council, and is something that will be reviewed following the roll out and monitoring of the new communal food waste collection scheme, before any final decision is made.

Paper and Mixed Recycling

- 5.6 Flats will be provided with containers to facilitate the separation of 'mixed recycling' and 'paper and grey/white card'. All recycling containers are provided free of charge and may be a mix of clearly labelled bulk and wheelie bins, the size and number will be dependent on capacity required, storage space and access. Where there is no space for containers properties will remain on the modified blue recycling sack and black box service.
- 5.7 Participation in recycling schemes tends to be higher where recycling is made as easy as refuse disposal and where local authorities have provided bags to enable residents to separate and transport recyclable materials. It is proposed that residents are provided with re-usable bags that are split and with clear instructions on recyclable items. These will form part of a 'Flats Pack' discussed in section 6.2 below.

Refuse

- 5.8 The aim will be to provide containers for the collection of refuse wherever possible in order to limit capacity for refuse and offer a cleaner and safer method of refuse storage and collection. As far as possible clearly labelled shared black 240L/360L wheelie bins will be provided, there will be no charge for these containers.
- 5.9 For larger blocks of flats or where space is of particular concern it may be more efficient to provide 1100L bulk bins, however there is a hire charge for these containers of £126 per bin per year. This charge is purely for the hire and maintenance of these larger bins and does not cover collection or disposal costs. Many sites where these containers are required already have them in place and there are currently over 300 bulk bins in the district bringing in an income of over £37,000 per year.
- 5.10 Property Managers understand that there may be such waste management costs involved and this charge provides an added incentive to residents to reduce refuse by making good use of recycling facilities. Housing Associations such as L&Q Housing have already indicated they are happy to incur these costs where necessary with the support of the council in explaining the reasons to residents.
- 5.11 There may be a minority of sites that will have to remain on weekly collections either with or without food waste collections.

Garden Waste

- 5.12 Property Managers or residents (individually or collectively) may choose to subscribe to the chargeable garden waste collection service in the same way as households and receive fortnightly collections from green bins or sacks as appropriate.

6. Communication, Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1 It is essential to consult with property managers and resident representatives as some sites may require small changes/works to facilitate more effective collections. Engaging

relevant stakeholders before making any changes to collection services will give the highest chance of success when introducing new schemes such as food waste collections. Property managers and representatives will be contacted and on site meetings scheduled to discuss the proposed arrangements and residents will be notified of when changes to collections will happen.

6.2 Communication with residents in flats is key to a successful recycling service and should not be underestimated. The service review also represents a fantastic opportunity to communicate directly with residents that are otherwise hard to reach and engage in recycling and waste prevention initiatives. It is proposed that as new recycling facilities are installed Officers host an introductory 'event' to talk residents through the changes and to hand out a 'flat pack' consisting of the following;

- Re-usable split bag for separating and transporting recycling
- Service information booklet
- Silver food waste kitchen caddy and roll of 52 liners

6.3 These 'flat packs' can also be given to residents in new apartment developments as they arise and to property managers to give to new residents as they move in. Posters to promote recycling and waste minimisation will also be developed for communal noticeboards/ areas.

7. Costs

7.1 Capital costs for resources required to maximise recycling in flats such as additional 1100L bins, specialised food waste containers/brown lids, re-usable bags etc. can be met from capital carry over and revenue costs can be met by existing budgets.

7.2 However due to the number of properties to be reviewed and the complexities involved in flats collections additional staffing resources are required in order to ensure the project is completed in a timely manner. Members are asked to approve an additional revenue cost of £13,994 to extend the Recycling Assistant post for a further six months to assist the Waste Project Officer with the project.

7.3 Due to the specific barriers to flats recycling ongoing communication and liner provision is key which will mean ongoing costs for the Council however these can potentially be met within existing budgets and by ensuring the most effective methods i.e. calendar and liner delivery together. This will be reviewed as part of the 2015/16 budget process and a decision made at that time.

8. Resource and Wider Policy Implications

8.1 Cabinet and Council are requested to make an additional £13,994 Revenue available in the budget.

8.2 An additional decision will need to be made on the question of on-going caddy liner provision to flats. A further report will be prepared for this PAG detailing the potential costs and benefits once food waste collections from flats have commenced.

8.3 Potential risks are as follows;

- Current records of flatted properties are not very detailed; a higher number of properties and sites may be identified as the inventory is carried out leading to increased costs.
- The Recycling Assistant role is not extended and so all work is completed by the Waste Project Officer, this will lead to longer completion times most likely into the new year.

9. Summary

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report and advise the Portfolio Holder as to whether;
- Cabinet should approve the additional £13,994 Revenue budget to fund a six month extension of the Recycling Assistant Post.
 - To review the ongoing provision of liners to flats in order to maximise participation and the amount of food waste collected, following the roll out.

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Background Papers:	Previous Reports on this matter.