



ADUR & WORTHING  
COUNCILS

**Scrutiny review of the implementation of the Adur and Worthing alternate weekly waste collections service (AWC)**

**Report by the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working Group**

**1.0 Summary**

1.1 In September 2019 Adur and Worthing Councils introduced a new alternate weekly waste collection service for residents' refuse and recycling bins across Adur and Worthing.

1.2 The decision to proceed with this new service was taken by the Councils in late 2018 and was made on the basis of the following factors which both Councils needed to consider:-

- The legislative requirement for both Councils to improve their recycling rates to achieve the European Waste Framework Directive target to recycle 50% by 2020;
- The positive impact that alternate weekly collections has delivered for other Local Authorities who operate this collection system. Such change has supported significant change in the way that households manage their waste and all areas had reported a reduction in the amount of residual waste per household, as well as an increase in the proportion of waste that was being recycled; and
- The surge in community interest and involvement in environmental issues, that support the Councils ambitions to drive a sustainability agenda and be effective stewards of our natural resources.

1.3 This report from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group has reviewed the introduction of the new waste collection service since September 2019 and analysed the data available on the new service delivery.

**2.0 The new Alternate weekly waste collection service (AWC)**

2.1 Extensive planning was undertaken for the introduction of the AWC from early 2019 and this involved an Officer Project Team led by the Head of Environmental Services. The Project Team ensured that the project was kept on track and implemented successfully from September 2019.

- 2.2 The change to an alternate weekly waste collection service has strived to change the frequency of as many of the 81,000 household properties in Adur and Worthing to alternate weekly collections which has in the main been achieved successfully, however, from the outset it was realised that there were some properties where an alternate weekly collection would not be feasible:-
- Properties where chutes are used. Some properties/flats had been built with refuse chutes which feed directly into bins situated in the bin store. If these chutes were to backup due to bins becoming full, this would create a significant fire hazard. Such properties remain on weekly collection of refuse.
  - Properties with limited storage capacity. E.g Flats that cannot accommodate any extra bins as their bin stores are too small and there are no other areas to store bins on site.
  - Properties with vehicle access issues (e.g the town centre) so a smaller size vehicle is needed for collection and therefore a higher frequency of collection is required.
- 2.3 The AWC has involved a route redesign for the collections and the new configuration has enabled the operation of the service in the most efficient and effective manner. This has also ensured that the vehicles operate to the most efficient route, thus avoiding unnecessary fuel costs.
- 2.4 A service redesign of the waste and recycling teams was also undertaken as part of the process in consultation with staff. Detailed communication about the new service was released prior to the introduction of the new service which was aimed at promoting waste reduction and more recycling. The campaign involved press releases and social media posts (text and video) and leaflet design. Half page advertisements about the service changes were published in all three 'Herald' newspapers in September 2019.
- 2.5 The main plank of the Communications plan involved the regular social media posts which gained traction with the public. The reach of Facebook posts for June to August 2019 was over 130,000 views, and from July 2019 there was a noticeable drop in negativity in the comments received from the posts.
- 2.6 To ensure full coverage the decision was taken to deliver to each residential household across Adur & Worthing - 81,000 in total, three different forms of communication to inform householders that the new service would be starting in September 2019. The communications were delivered in three separate stages between June and September 2019. This three pronged approach was designed to ensure maximum awareness levels of the new service prior to the switch.

### **3.0 Background to the JOSC Review**

3.1 As part of the JOSC Work Programme, JOSC agreed to set up a Working Group to review the introduction of the new alternate weekly waste collection service and to consider how the Councils were reviewing ways to increase recycling rates. Councillors Andy McGregor, Lavinia O'Connor, Jane Sim and Bob Smytherman were appointed to the Working Group. The Working Group met in September and December 2019 and February and April 2020 to consider information and formulate its recommendations. Councillor Andy McGregor was appointed as Chairman of the Working Group and Councillor Bob Smytherman as its Vice-Chairman. These meetings included a visit to the West Sussex Viridor Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) in Ford.

3.2 The Working Group discussed and agreed the following Terms of Reference and project objectives for the review:-

1. To review the introduction of the new alternate weekly refuse collection scheme when early data is available. This will include a review of data relating to fly tipping and the experience of local residents since the introduction of the new scheme.

2. To review the recycling strategy and what is being done to improve recycling rates to meet the recycling target.

3. To question the Executive Members for Environment (Adur) and Digital and Environmental Services (Worthing) and Senior Council Officers on the new alternate weekly collection scheme and the recycling strategy and plans to increase recycling.

4. To consider if there is a need for any recommendations to be put to the Joint Strategic Committee/relevant Executive Members to help with the introduction of the new refuse collection service and to improve recycling rates.

Outcomes expected - A better understanding of the introduction of the new alternate weekly refuse collection service and current recycling policies and to assess if any recommendations need to be made to improve the service and recycling rates.

3.3 This report provides the detail of the discussions and findings from the Working Group and some recommendations which the Working Group considers will help assist the Councils improve recycling rates and the delivery of the new service.

#### **4.0 Method of the review**

- 4.1 From the start of the review, the Working Group wanted to ensure that it was briefed on the background to the introduction of the AWC and its implementation arrangements in September 2019. The Working Group met on 5 September and 10 December 2019 and 13 February and 15 April 2020. At the meeting in December 2019 the Working Group visited the MRF in Ford, West Sussex to assess what happens to the recyclable material collected and to find out more about recycling in West Sussex.
- 4.2 The Working Group has held evidence gathering meetings with the following witnesses:-

Mary D'Arcy, Former Director for Communities, Adur & Worthing Councils  
Tony Patching, Waste & Cleansing Operations Manager, Adur & Worthing Councils

Mark Quartly, Assistant Operations Manager, Adur & Worthing Councils  
Councillor Ed Crouch, Worthing Borough Council Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services

#### **5.0 Findings and Proposals**

- 5.1 The Working Group has received good evidence from the witnesses on the introduction of the alternate weekly waste collection service. The evidence has highlighted that the implementation of the new service appears to have gone relatively well and there has been an increase in recycling and reduction in general waste being collected.

#### **5.2 Evidence gathered from the witnesses**

- 5.3 To begin the review, the Working Group received a presentation from Mary D'Arcy, former Director for Communities, Adur & Worthing Councils and Tony Patching, Waste & Cleansing Operations Manager, Adur & Worthing Councils on the background to the implementation of the new service and the extensive plans being put in place to ensure that the implementation was successful. The Working Group welcomed the work that was undertaken.
- 5.4 In December 2019 the Working Group visited the Materials Recycling Facility in Ford, West Sussex to see how the facility processed the recyclable materials after collection from households in West Sussex. This visit has also provided the Working Group members with more information on the type of materials recycled at the MRF, what happens to some of the recyclables afterwards and general information on recycling.
- 5.5 The Working Group has also been able to review some of the data on the new waste collection service since its introduction during the week commencing 16 September 2019. This data is referred to later in this report.

5.6 Finally, in April 2020, the Working Group consulted with the relevant Adur and Worthing Executive Members - the Adur Executive Member for the Environment, Councillor Emma Evans and the Worthing Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services, Councillor Ed Crouch. The Working Group interviewed Councillor Crouch for his views on the introduction of AWC.

5.7 A summary of the issues raised during the February and April meetings is set out below. Data included has been updated and taken as at June 2020:-

- Since September 2019, refuse had reduced by 3,101 tonnes - 500 truck loads (This would have been a higher reduction, however, the Covid-19 Pandemic has shown an increase in household waste and during the peak of the Covid-19 Pandemic in March, April and May 2020 residual side waste was being collected which had an affect on the waste tonnages) Recycling tonnage was up by 1,105 tonnes - 200 lorry loads.
- Recycling rates for the year up to the end of May 2020 were 45.56% compared with 39.49% at the same period in 2019 which indicated that the service was expected to achieve the target increase set for the new service of around 5-7%, despite the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- There had been a few issues relating to collections from HMO properties but Officers had been working with Managing agents and residents to try and address any problems, the main issue was encouraging residents to recycle. Many sites had had a visit with doorstepping given personal advice and literature, also bags had been given out to carry and separate their recycling. The bin capacity had been increased and also improved signage had been added in a number of locations to assist in the containment of waste.
- Prior to Covid-19 Officers had undertaken 51 bin audits on individuals who said they couldn't see how they could cope but after a visit all of those people were fully informed on how they could manage.
- Since September 2018 when discussions started regarding the alternate weekly collections, 7,038 large recycling bins had been delivered and 3,860 large refuse bins had been delivered.

5.8 Councillor Ed Crouch, Worthing Borough Council's Executive Member for Digital & Environmental Services told the Working Group that he was pleased that the implementation of the new alternate weekly collection service had gone well but there were some hotspots relating to fly tipping (not directly the result of the introduction of the new service) and in some cases where the

crews had to be changed. It was, however, a process not an event - In the first three months there were some issues relating to whether or not areas should have remained on the weekly service in the town centres etc. There were also some teething issues where new crews were involved with new rounds. Most people were pleasantly surprised, however, by how well the service has worked in Worthing and there had been relatively few complaints.

5.9 Councillor Crouch also advised that where there are genuine concerns about bin capacity then bin audits are offered or a light touch enforcement approach taken by applying tags on the bins. If there are ongoing issues he suggested that the local ward Member should highlight these issues through the Executive Member and/or Head of Service. The decision would then need to be made to assess if there should be an enforcement approach taken and/or education approach to see if people are recycling correctly.

5.10 The Working Group had decided to include a review of fly tipping as part of the terms of reference for the review as they were concerned that there could potentially be an increase in fly tipping as a result of the introduction of the new service. Officers advised the Working Group that there had been a small increase in fly tipping but nothing of any significance and that it was not solely connected to the alternate weekly collections - There had been some incidents of 'rubble' being tipped in the Durrington area. Councillor Crouch echoed this view but was also questioned by the Working Group on concerns about the amount of time that it takes to report a fly tipping incident. It was agreed that it might be possible to remove the initial assessment part of the reporting process to speed up the overall process of reporting and he agreed to speak with the Head of Service to review this.

5.11 The Working Group was also keen to review the recycling strategy and ways to help the Councils increase recycling rates. As part of this the Working Group discussed ways to help inform residents about the value of recycling. It was suggested that the communities should be provided with more information on recycling via appropriate regular communications from the Councils and with information sent via the Council Tax information - This should provide advice on general recycling and information on the recycling symbols used on packaging and that there also needed to be some lobbying applied and pressure put on manufacturers to not use single use recyclable material.

5.12 As part of ways to increase recycling levels, the Working Group discussed the possibility of introducing food recycling in Adur and Worthing following the

Government's announcement that Councils should routinely collect food waste from households with the roll out of this to take place by 2023. When questioned on this issue Councillor Crouch considered that, in his view, the Councils would need to consider how food waste recycling could be introduced and the type of vehicles to be used. There was also a need to consider the 'pay back' period for introducing food waste recycling before the Councils could consider introducing such a scheme on a permanent basis. The Councils, however, would continue to monitor the results of food waste recycling trials elsewhere in West Sussex when considering if it was to be introduced in Adur & Worthing. Councillor Crouch suggested that if the trial schemes elsewhere worked well and evidence provided by those Councils who had introduced permanent food waste recycling suggested that the scheme was successful, then Adur & Worthing Councils could possibly consider introducing a similar scheme. (The Councils Strategic vision - Platforms for our Places - Going further Work included a commitment to reduce waste and increase recycling and as part of this the Councils were working with West Sussex County Council and partners to create the conditions to meet requirements required by the Government's Waste and Resources strategy by 2023 which included the potential for the collection of food waste being made mandatory and looking at trialling a new commercial food waste collection service by Summer 2021.)

## **6.0 Conclusions and recommendations**

- 6.1 The Working Group would like to thank Officers and the Executive Members for their support and invaluable contributions into this short review. The Working Group is generally pleased with the way that the new alternate weekly waste collection service was introduced and with the work which went into planning for the introduction of the new service prior to September 2019. The Working Group is also pleased that the introduction of the new service has seen an increase in recycling and a reduction in general waste collected. The Working Group considers that the teething issues with the introduction of the new service as referred to earlier in this report are being addressed.
- 6.2 As part of the review the Working Group has reviewed current recycling policy and would like to see the Councils collecting more recycling in order to try and achieve the European recycling target of 50% as required by 2020 and meet the requirements of the Governments Waste and Resources Strategy by 2023. The Working Group would like to see some form of timeline identified for this as it did not find clear evidence of this during interviews.

- 6.3 The Working Group believes that recycling can be increased by providing more information to local residents on what can and can't be recycled. The Working Group also considers that the Government should put more pressure on manufacturers for them to reduce single use recyclable materials. Finally, the Working Group believes that the Councils should seek to introduce food waste recycling as soon as possible providing evidence from trial schemes in West Sussex and elsewhere demonstrate that this can make a difference to increase recycling and that such a scheme can be cost effective.
- 6.4 With regard to the reporting of fly tipping incidents, the Working Group considers that the reporting system should be changed to remove the initial assessment part of the reporting process in cases where sufficient information is available from the person reporting which will make the process quicker and more efficient.
- 6.5 The Working Group would, therefore, like to put the following recommendations to the Joint Strategic Committee for review and consideration. The Working Group considers that these will assist the Councils in increasing recycling rates and providing better information on recycling in general to the Adur and Worthing communities.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 That the Working Group welcomes the introduction of the new alternate weekly waste collection service from September 2019 which has been introduced well with good planning measures put in place but the Working Group considers that, when the time is right, the Councils should undertake some form of consultation with local residents on the introduction of the new service to get appropriate views to help with future service development.**

**Reason** - To recognise that the Councils have put in place a well planned service that has been successfully implemented but also to ensure that the Councils continue to undertake appropriate engagement with local residents to ensure that their views are considered in the ongoing development of the service.

- 7.2 That the Councils should look to provide more communication to the communities of Adur and Worthing on what can and can't be recycled and provide further information on recycling in general to help better educate the public and seek to increase recycling levels.**

**Reason** - The Working Group considers that there is a need for more information on recycling to be provided to the communities to help increase recycling levels and reduce waste.



**7.3 That the Councils seek to lobby the Government to encourage manufacturers to reduce single use packaging.**

**Reason** - The Working Group considers that a reduction in single use plastic will help reduce energy use and carbon emissions.

**7.4 That at the appropriate time the Councils seek to introduce food waste recycling, if the evidence from trials elsewhere in West Sussex demonstrates the value of this form of recycling, as a way to increase recycling levels and reduce further waste. The Councils should also be satisfied that it is cost effective.**

**Reason** - The Working Group believes that food waste recycling is a good form of recycling which can help the Councils increase its recycling levels and help reduce overall waste but wants the Councils to ensure that such a scheme would be cost effective.

**Local Government Act 1972**

**Background Papers:**

None

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