

Report for:

Cabinet

Previously seen by

Environment PDG (15 August 2023)

Date of Meeting:	29 August 2023
Subject:	Waste Service Provision
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Josh Wright, Cabinet Member for Environment and Services
Responsible Officers:	Darren Beer, Operations Manager – Street Scene and Open Spaces Matthew Page, Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste
Exempt:	NA
Wards Affected:	All – District wide
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

This report considers the following:

- The effectiveness of the council’s waste and recycling scheme, known as the Bin-it 123 scheme, as implemented in October 2022
- Improving operational efficiency of collection crews, increasing recycling rates and limiting CO2 emissions
- A review of recycling frequency following the Cabinet decision on 29 Nov 2022 to complete a weekly recycling trial in the District during the financial year 2023-2024

Recommendation(s):

1. **To cease collecting side waste from 1 October 2023 and deliver a comprehensive communications programme in advance of this to minimise the need for enforcement.**
2. **To postpone the trial scheduled for 2023-2024 to allow for an evaluation of the effectiveness of the current scheme against the metrics of recycling % achieved, residual tonnage reduction, and overall cost to the authority.**

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Mid Devon District Council commenced three weekly residual waste collections through the implementation of the Bin-it 123 scheme on 10 October 2022. The purpose of this scheme was to increase the level of recycling and reduce the level of residual black bin collections, which in turn reduces the waste to be collected. A combination of these two factors enables the District to reduce its carbon footprint and puts it in a stronger position to meet both its carbon net zero commitment and the national recycling targets as set out in the national Environmental Improvement Plan (2023), which aims for a municipal recycling rate of at least 65% by 2035.
- 1.2 During the first eight months of the scheme’s implementation, Street Scene Operatives have carried out multiple extra activities to ensure the new Bin-it 123 scheme would have a successful transition into practice. This included the collection of additional side waste put out by residents, the delivery of extra bins and containers to households, regular patrolling of town centres and other key areas of the District by our Environment and Enforcement team, visits to households from our Recycling Officers and the sending of letters and communication to the residents of Mid Devon.
- 1.3 The purpose of this paper is to review the performance of the Bin-it 123 scheme to date and outline a way forward in terms of raising further awareness of good recycling practice to maximise the reduction in our carbon footprint.
- 1.4 It also includes a request for policy clarity in light of the existing arrangements with respect to side waste and the recommended postponement of any further trialled changes to the waste and recycling scheme until such time as the effectiveness of the current scheme can be fully evaluated.

2.0 Bin-it 123 Performance

- 2.1 Chart 1 below shows that the recycling rate for the months of April and May compared to the same months in 2022 (pre 3 weekly roll out) has gone up between 4 and 5 percentage points. This represented an increase or improvement in recycling figures of approximately 8% to 9%. While this reflects positively on the scheme’s trial, design and implementation, it should be remembered that these performance figures represent the actions and behaviour of Mid Devon’s residents. This improvement represents a real and significant shift in behaviour, and correlates well to informal assessment of feedback both before and during the early period of implementation, when much of the negativity on social media was challenged by other residents who were positive advocates of the need for change and the environmental imperative for doing so.
- 2.2 Chart 2 below shows that in the year to May 22, 13429 tonnes of residual waste was collected whereas for the same period in 22-23, 11938 tonnes were collected. This is a reduction of 1491 tonnes; again a significant positive change.

Chart 1: Recycling Rates 21-22 and 22-23

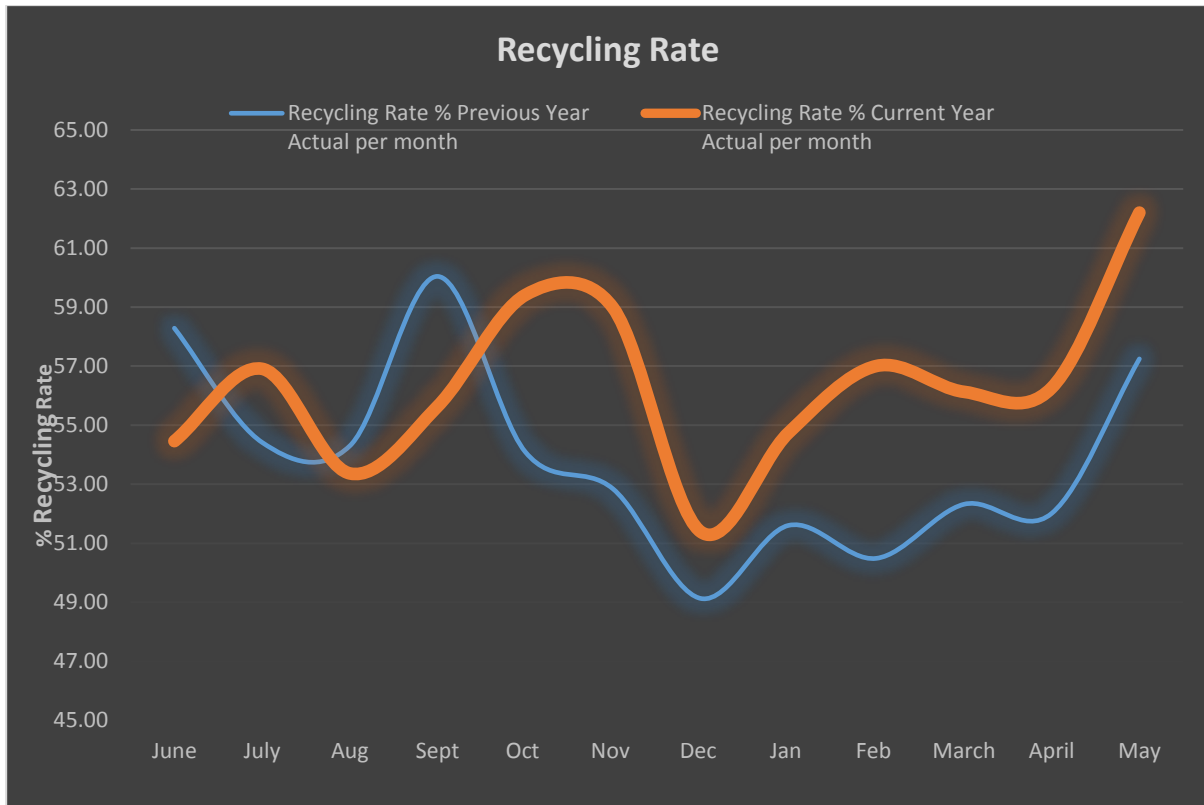
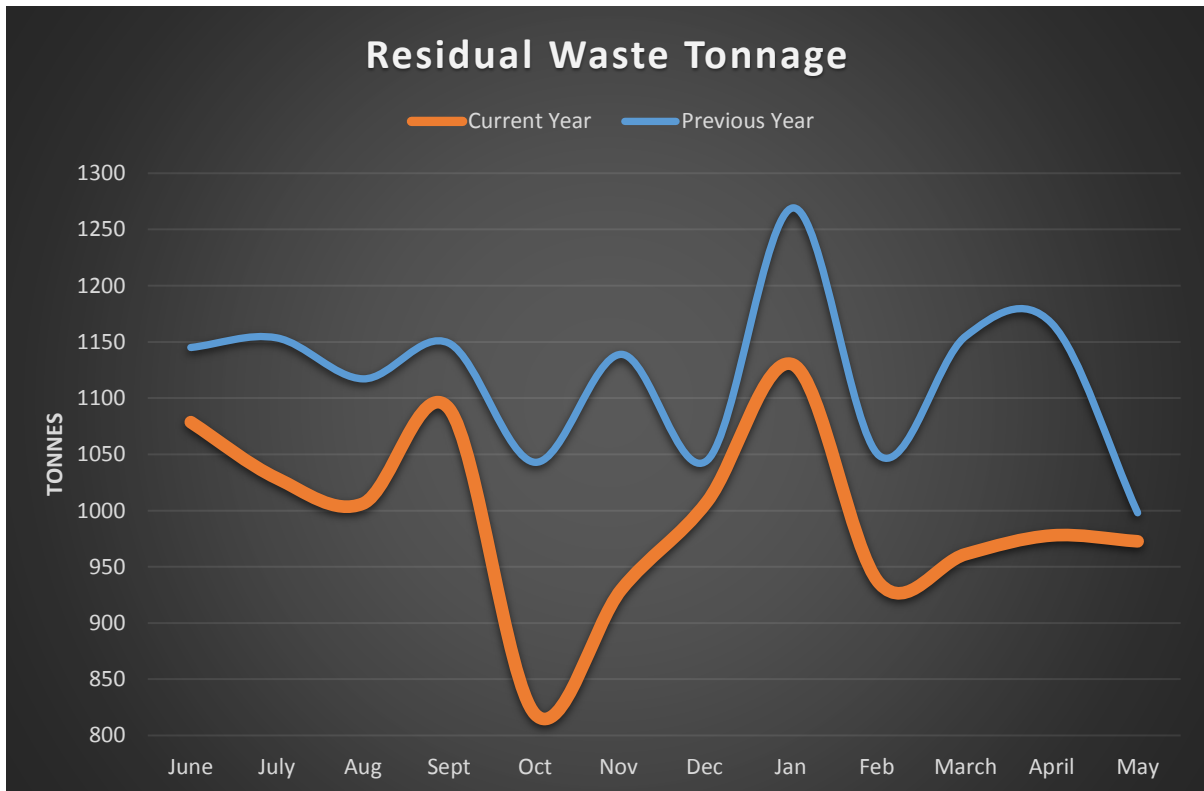


Chart 2: Residual Waste Collected (Tonnes)



3.0 Side waste

- 3.1 The waste and recycling crews have collected side waste from households for the past nine months to help embed Bin-it 123 and to start the implementation period from the perspective of helping residents with this significant change and utilising tools at the education end of the spectrum.
- 3.2 The proactive performance and pre-empting of issues by both the crews and the environment enforcement team have helped keep the District clean and tidy during the first nine-month implementation period.
- 3.3 This practice, while well-intentioned, has also had negative consequences for both the perceived and actual effectiveness of the Bin-it 123 scheme, but also the Council. In addition to the issues associated with persistent non-recyclers, many households are still putting recycling out for collection in black bin liners and bins instead of using the appropriate recycling containers, which is slowing down rounds. Where no kerbside sorting is done by the resident, it is limiting our recycling collection rate, and ultimately the scheme is not reaching its full effectiveness.
- 3.4 The practice of continuing to pick up extraneous residual waste (black bags) outside of the approved container is also taking up unnecessary resource and additional expenditure to ensure side waste collections take place. In looking at other local authorities bin collection schemes, very few (if any), collect side waste as the practice directly contradicts the policy of increasing recycling. This is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The top performing authorities (by recycling rate 21-22); not one commits to collecting side waste.

Authority	Unitary/ District-	Recycling Rate	Side Waste collected	Collection Frequency (weeks)		
				Waste	Re- cycling	Food
Three Rivers District Council	District	63.5%	No	2	1	1
South Oxfordshire District Council	District	62.7%	No	2	2	1
St Albans City and District Council	District	62.4%	No	2	2	1
Vale of White Horse District Council	District	61.9%	No	2	2	1
East Devon District Council	District	61.0%	No	3	1	1
Stockport MBC	District	60.3%	No	2	2 & 4	1
Rochford District Council	District	59.9%	No	2	2	1
Tandridge District Council	District	59.9%	No	2	2	1
Guildford Borough Council	District	59.3%	No	2	2	1
Cotswold District Council	District	59.2%	No	2	2	1
Surrey Heath Borough Council	District	59.2%	No	2	2	Yes
Waverley Borough Council	District	58.9%	No	2	2	1
Trafford MBC	District	58.8%	No	2	4	1
Maldon District Council	District	58.3%	No	2	2	1
Stroud District Council	District	58.2%	No	2	2	1

Authority	Unitary/ District-	Recycling Rate	Side Waste collected	Collection Frequency (weeks)		
				Waste	Re- cycling	Food
East Riding of Yorkshire Council	Unitary	60.1%	No	2	2	2
South Gloucestershire Council	Unitary	59.9%	No	2	1	1
Dorset Council	Unitary	59.8%	No	2	2	1

3.5 The waste and recycling team have carried out side collections for the past nine months, however it is proposed to now stop collecting side waste so that the policy can complete its full implementation and the council can then accurately evaluate its effectiveness in achieving the necessary improvement in our recycling rates achieved and residual tonnages collected.

4.0 Weekly recycling options

4.1 Mid Devon is currently awaiting details of the Government's future funding plans for waste and recycling, how these will affect the authority and how it will legislate for future recycling practice to be carried out across the country.

4.2 It is possible that Government will mandate how recycling collections are completed in the future including garden and food waste collections along with the types of materials required to be recycled and how the public can recycle some of these items under Defra legislation (Consistency in Household and Business Recycling, Extended Producer Responsibility and Deposit Return Scheme).

4.3 The previous administration voted for a trial of weekly recycling to take place during the 23-24 financial year once the implementation of the three weekly bin collection scheme had been achieved.

4.4 Many of the top recycling authorities do not have weekly recycling schemes in place (see Table 1 above), which shows that excellence in recycling performance is not dependent on having weekly recycling (3 of the top 4 best in the country have not required a weekly recycling collection to achieve this). This would suggest that people's willingness to recycle is not being limited by a fortnightly collection. Mid Devon's recycling performance has significantly improved since introducing three weekly bin collections through raising education and awareness of the scheme with the public.

4.5 Given the government is potentially about to announce national changes to how waste and recycling is carried out, with recycling practice bound to be a central feature of this announcement, it makes sense to postpone any pilot of the weekly recycling scheme until two conditions are met; firstly that we have the detail of how future collections as mandated by central government will be made and funded; and secondly, that the council has had the opportunity to fully evaluate the implementation of the Bin-it 123 scheme, including the ceasing of side waste collection, in order to establish the upper limits of what can be achieved by the current scheme. Without such a baseline, it is unclear how the potential gain from any further trial could be robustly proven.

5.0 Future waste provision

- 5.1 Mid Devon District Council will continue to raise education and awareness of the Bin-it 123 scheme with residents to further increase our recycling rate and reduce the residual waste put out for collection.
- 5.2 This is happening through a number of different measures including regular press announcements and communication, household visits from Recycling Officers and visits to schools and other institutions to help raise awareness of good collection practice.
- 5.3 It should be noted publicly and via council communications, that the residents of Mid Devon have done an excellent job in responding to the need to increase recycling rates. The council's current performance is a reflection of their significant efforts and the measures outlined above are seeking to address the issues related to the behaviour of a persistent minority, which is holding our collective environmental performance back from where it could be if the current scheme was fully complied with.

Financial Implications

None in relation to the report. If a trial was to be conducted at some point in the future, the costs of a three-month trial are likely to be around £30K. However, if the service was asked to proceed with the roll out of weekly recycling on a permanent basis there would be substantial costs of circa £1.4m. Provisional estimates suggest that the delivery of weekly recycling collections would require the relocation of the Waste and Recycling service to a larger site with additional capacity to accommodate the extra vehicles and the potential extra recycling.

Legal Implications

Under Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act Waste Collection Authorities may by means of notice specify how householders present their waste for collection.

Risk Assessment

The risks associated with the recommendations in this report relate mainly to the handling of appropriate education and enforcement activity – both areas where the current team have significant experience. This report recommends a tightening up of the policy in this space, and as such the risk of not addressing these issues are that the policy does not achieve its full effectiveness. In the event that any future changes are trialled (or mandated by government) a register of risks would need to be compiled in advance of those proposed service changes. There are potential risks, including impacts on; carbon emissions, the carbon footprint, operational costs and other resources required (from containers to personnel).

Impact on Climate Change

An increase in recycling would further enable the Council to reduce its carbon footprint and hit its carbon net zero commitment. Recycling is one of the most 'mainstream' concepts of addressing overarching sustainability goals, therefore it is vital to make sure that the council is maximising the effectiveness of both its scheme design, but also its

operational implementation. Being a large rural district, our waste and recycling vehicles cover a lot of mileage annually, and there are opportunities to potentially reduce fuel usage with the future types of vehicles Mid Devon would be looking to procure.

Equalities Impact Assessment

The service will continue to provide assisted collections according to the current policy; considerations for residents residing in HMOs, flats and properties with no outside space will be included in any proposed project plan. The service would review the lessons learnt and best practice from recent changes along with a review of other councils who have successfully implemented strategic changes to their waste collections operations.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

This report identifies with the 'Environment' priority area of the Corporate Plan for 2020-2024 '*increase recycling rates and reduce the amount of residual waste generated*'. Supporting and enabling customers to recycle and reduce residual waste contributes to Mid Devon District Councils' commitment to the Devon Climate Emergency.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 01 Aug 2023

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 01 Aug 2023

Chief Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: 01 Aug 2023

Performance and risk: Dr Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 28/07/2023

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Darren Beer, Operations Manager – Street Scene and Open Spaces

Email: dbeer@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone: 01884 255255

Background papers:

<https://democracy.middevon.gov.uk/documents/s26160/Cabinet%20Report%20-%20Recycling%20Options%20Nov%202022.pdf>