



education activities once the allocated funding from CLG has been used.

- (b) Full review of collection options including the collection of food waste and changes to collection frequencies.
- (c) Widespread public engagement to seek opinion on the current service provision and potential future options.
- (d) Support continued aims and objectives outlined in the Waste Strategy Update.

### **3. Background**

#### **Changes to the Recycling Service - Update**

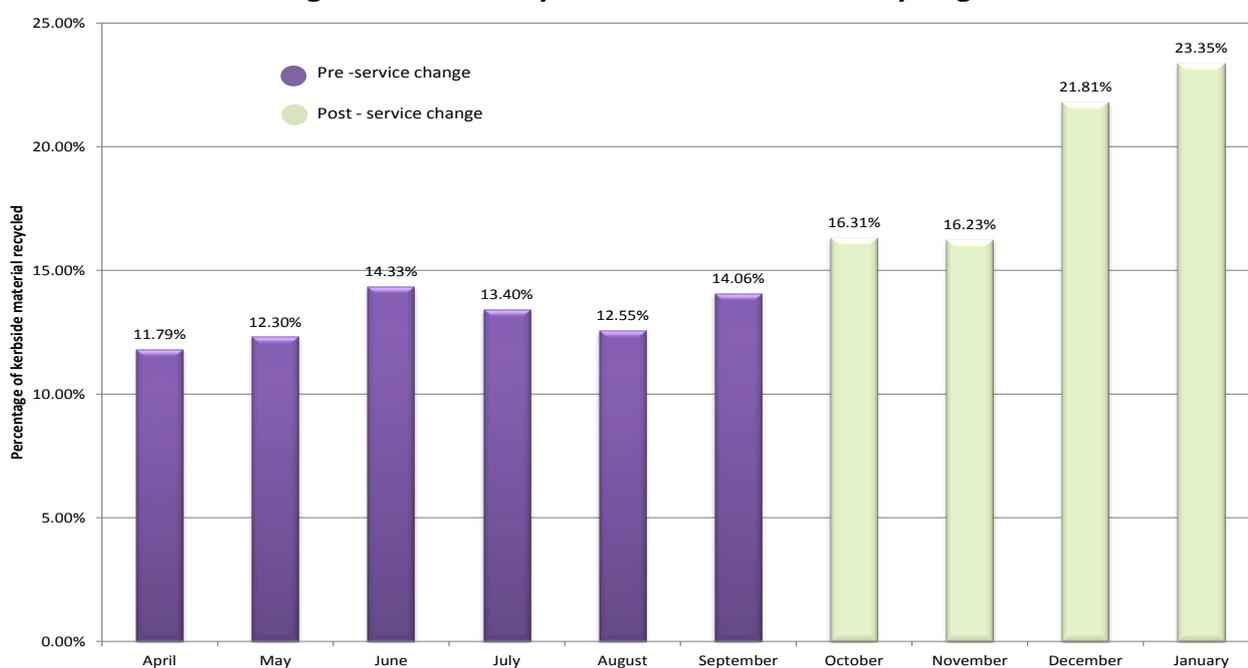
- 3.1 In September 2014, we started making changes to the recycling service. For the majority of residents in the borough we replaced their boxes and bags for recycling with a brown wheeled bin for paper, plastics and cans – using a recycling box to collect glass separately. We also introduced the collection of cartons, foil and aerosols from the brown bin and the additional collection of separately bagged clothing.
- 3.2 From 1 September 2014 until 10 October 2014, 75,500 wheeled bins were delivered to properties in the borough with a further 4,000 properties receiving clear sacks for their recycling.
- 3.3 Residents who did not want a bin for recycling were given the option to opt out of the recycling service. Less than 100 properties (98), formally opted out of the recycling service. Reasons given for opting out were – preference to recycle at the mini recycling centres or Bickenhill Household Waste Recycling Centre, residents had arranged to share a bin with their neighbour, and producing insufficient waste to warrant recycling.
- 3.4 Residents living in properties that due to space constraints could not accommodate a wheeled bin for recycling were provided with clear sacks.
- 3.5 The contractor employed to deliver the bins performed well with only a 0.7% missed delivery rate – the contractor mobilised additional resources to rectify the missed deliveries which were corrected within 5 working days of being reported. The Waste and Recycling team had learned valuable lessons from the previous wheeled bin roll-out and the measures put in place throughout this roll-out (provision of detailed maps for the delivery crews and escorting them in areas with complex street layouts) ensured that the missed delivery rate was kept to a minimum.
- 3.6 The changes to collections started on 15 September 2014. It was important that we encouraged residents to recycle the correct materials from the start of the new service, as unwanted materials can impact on material quality and result in loads being rejected. Therefore the collection crews were instructed to visually inspect the contents of each bin before collection and if unwanted materials were evident in the bin, the crews left a feedback hanger on the bin informing residents why their bin had not been emptied, with a request to remove the unwanted items and represent for their next scheduled collection.
- 3.7 Following learning from previous changes to the recycling service. We took the decision not to have an amnesty period to allow residents to adjust to the new service. Our experience from the changes implemented in 2011 showed that having an amnesty period enables some residents to get used to participating incorrectly in the service. Then when we inform residents that they are not recycling correctly it causes frustration and confusion. Therefore we were clear with our messages from the start of the scheme and used feedback hangers to help residents put the right material in the right container.

- 3.8 During the first four weeks of the new collection system we did encounter problems with plastic bags (carrier bags and wheeled bin liners) being used to contain recycling. This resulted in a higher than average number of bins not being collected as we are unable to collect plastic bags and carrier bags as part of the recycling service. Prior to the changes to the collection service the recycling collection crews logged on average 361 exceptions on the In-cab recording system that related to contaminated recycling. Post service change, this increased to a peak 2,946 in the third week following the changes. By week 8 and two complete recycling collection cycles the number of exceptions logged for contaminated recycling had reduced significantly to 687 and is now back to pre-service change levels.
- 3.9 Although we made reference to being unable to accept plastic bags and carrier bags in our leaflets and supporting articles in Your Solihull, we realise that we could have made this message clearer and is a valuable lesson learned for future communications regarding the service.
- 3.10 The changes to the service resulted in anticipated increase in customer contacts to the Connect Contact Centre. To support staff at the Contact Centre an additional call handler was brought in to deal exclusively with calls regarding waste and recycling.
- 3.11 The changes to the recycling service were a major service change which impacted directly on 75,500 residents across the borough. Increased customer contact and complaints are inevitable during such a period of change. However the number of formal complaints that we received regarding the service change was low, this is shown by the information in the following table. The number of complaint's relating directly to the service changes are shown underneath the total complaints. These were predominantly related to missed collections as a result of not emptying bins that contained contamination (mainly plastic bags).

	2015	2014	2013	2012
September Total Complaints	-	27	11	23
September service change complaints		8		
October Total Complaints		37	17	16
October Service change complaints		31		
November Total Complaints		25	6	14
November Service change complaints		4		
December Total Complaints		17	21	24
December Service change complaints	-	3		
January Total Complaints	19	20	58	48
January Service change complaints	1			

- 3.12 Initial reports from the material processing facility indicate that overall the contamination levels in the material collected are within the acceptable contract tolerances, which is positive. We will be working with the re-processor to help our understanding of the types of contamination. We can then use this information to inform future communications regarding the service.
- 3.13 Early indications show that we are collecting more recycling than before we made the changes to the service and it appears that more residents are now participating – however we will be carrying out participation monitoring across the borough to provide a better understanding of the impact of the changes on levels of participation. The following chart shows the amount of recycling collected from the kerbside since April 2014.

**Percentage of material recycled from the kerbside recycling service**



3.14 The lower recycling rate of 11.79% in April equates to 1,090 tonnes of material recycled and the higher rate of 23.35% in January equates to 1,573 tonnes of material recycled. To fully understand the impact of the changes on recycling rates, we need to monitor over a longer period of time as we tend to collect more recycling over the Christmas period – which is not generally sustained throughout the year.

3.15 For the first three quarters of 2014/15 our estimated combined household recycling and composting rate was 43.81% - this is comprised of 17.92% (13,151 tonnes) recycling (including recyclables from the Household Waste Recycling Centre and Mini Recycling Centres) and 25.89% (18,997 tonnes) of garden waste sent for composting. In the same period, 47% (34,493 tonnes) of waste was sent for energy recovery at the Energy from Waste Facility at Coventry and 9% (6,739 tonnes) was disposed of to landfill.

**Mid-point update of Solihull’s Municipal Waste Management Strategy**

3.16 In 2010 Solihull’s Municipal Waste Management Strategy was adopted. The Strategy sets out the authority’s vision and targets for managing waste and recycling until 2020.

3.17 A commitment was made to update the Strategy at its mid-point to take into consideration changes in legislation and whether the targets and objectives that were set out in 2010 are still valid.

3.18 As part of this process an update report has been produced, which summarises our achievements since the Strategy was adopted in 2010. The update also looks forward to the challenges ahead in the remaining Strategy period, particularly increasing recycling in a challenging fiscal environment.

3.19 Despite some changes in waste policy relating to England and Wales since the Strategy was adopted (Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011). The targets and aspirations outlined in the Strategy are still relevant and should continue to underpin our future plans for managing waste in the borough.

3.20 The Strategy update report is provided at Appendix A. As the document is an update and there are no significant changes proposed to the targets, it is unlikely to require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as required by The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. In this case we need to produce a screening report outlining why we think a SEA is not required. This report then has to be sent to the Statutory Consultees who are English Nature, English Heritage, the Countryside Agency and the Environment Agency for review. As we propose to retain to same targets as the original Strategy, the screening review process should be straightforward.

3.21 Once this process is complete, we will make the report available on the councils website.

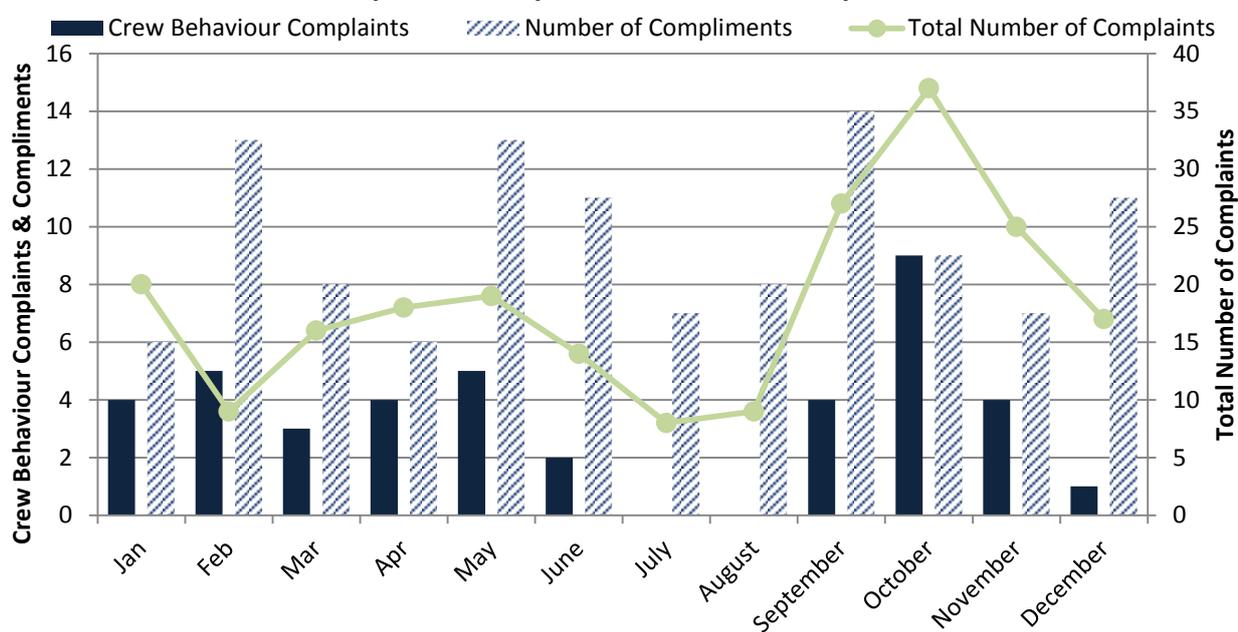
### **Complaints and Customer Feedback regarding the Waste and Recycling Service**

3.22 In August 2014, the Corporate complaints team produced their annual report which showed that complaints against Amey crew members had increased compared to the previous year. Consequently, the Scrutiny Board asked for a further report on waste and recycling complaints to gain an understanding of why there was an increase.

3.23 In November 2014, a briefing note was circulated which explained that a lot of complaints are categorised as crew behaviour complaints by the Contact centre – but that they are not necessarily related to examples of rude and inconsiderate behaviour by the crews but may refer to other collection related issues such as a missed collection. This is still related to crew behaviour – however we accept that missed collections will occur as there is always a margin for human error in the delivery of the service, whereas rude and inconsiderate behaviour is unacceptable and that is why at a local level we make the distinction between these types of complaint.

3.24 The following chart shows the total number of complaints received against the waste and recycling service in 2014 and the number of complaints that related to directly to crew behaviour (classified as inconsiderate or rude behaviour and inconsiderate driving). The peak in complaints in October (as outlined in section 3.11) relates to the changes to the recycling service.

**Crew complaints, compliments and total complaints - 2014**



- 3.25 In 2014 (January to December), 19% of the complaints received against the service were related to crew behaviour. However as can be seen in the figure above, in every month, the number of compliments received regarding the delivery of the service was more than or equal to the number of complaints received regarding the behaviour of the crews.
- 3.26 Rude and inconsiderate behaviour from the crews is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. However, It should be noted that we are recording increasing incidents of aggression and hostility towards the crews from members of the public. This does not excuse rude behaviour from the crews and Amey has developed customer care training to help their crews cope with negative behaviour from residents.
- 3.27 In addition, Amey (supported by SMBC Officers) is developing a campaign to highlight the issue of aggressive behaviour and verbal abuse faced by some crew members while carrying out their jobs. This will include messages to encourage other road users to be patient while waiting behind a collection vehicle – there have been incidents of road users putting themselves, the collection crews and other road users at risk by carrying out dangerous manoeuvres instead of waiting for the collection vehicle to move. This is clearly something that we want to prevent to protect all involved.

#### **4. Evaluation of Alternative Option(s)**

##### **Moving Forward – Recycling Service Changes**

###### **Flats and Multi-occupancy properties**

- 4.1 As outlined in the previous section, we have completed the changes to the recycling service for the majority of properties in the borough. We have now shifted our focus and will be concentrating on improving the level of recycling available to flats in the borough (approximately 4% of properties in the borough).
- 4.2 We will be concentrating on providing recycling to flats and multi-occupancy complexes that currently have no recycling provision, (0.5% of the properties in the borough). Following assessment and liaison with Managing Agents and Landlords (as appropriate), we will put in place recycling containers at these developments.

We will also provide information leaflets and posters so to ensure that residents know how to participate in the service.

- 4.3 Following a successful trial in 2013, in conjunction with Solihull Community Housing, we will also be improving the recycling facilities at the councils high-rise blocks of flats. This involves the provision of new recycling containers, improved signposting to the recycling facilities and providing information and reusable bags to residents to assist with their recycling.
- 4.4 It is not possible to provide all flats and developments with new containers – so where there are already recycling containers in place, we will re-brand the containers for mixed recycling (including a separate container for glass) and will issue information leaflets to the residents to assist with recycling.
- 4.5 At the end of this exercise we anticipate that all flats and multi-occupancy developments in the borough will have the opportunity to recycle as part of the kerbside collection service. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by late summer.

#### Further Communication regarding Recycling Service

- 4.6 It is readily acknowledged that to sustain levels of participation in recycling schemes it is essential to continue to communicate with residents, providing feedback on how the service is doing, what happens to recycling and that their input is valued. Our challenge is also to ensure that our service requirements are simple and easy to understand. We also need to ensure that we use accessible methods to get our messages across – taking into consideration the changing demographics of the borough. To gain a better insight into what methods of communication are most effective, we will be carrying out a small survey to find out how residents found out about the changes to the recycling service. We used a variety of communication methods and our aim is to find out which methods are worth investing in, in future.
- 4.7 To achieve this we are in the process of developing an engagement programme to support the recycling service. This will include the use of social media to put messages across but will also include a direct communication to all households in the borough regarding the recycling service. This links with our aim to ensure that we produce high quality recycling.
- 4.8 To ensure that we get our messaging right – we will be setting up a small group to assist with the development of our communications. It is anticipated that this group will provide a sense check on our communications so that we produce information that is clear and easy to understand.
- 4.9 We are fortunate that we have funds remaining from the award from Communities and Local Government (CLG) which can support our communications. Over the next year we have allocated £50,000 to support education and engagement activities. However looking ahead it will be important to retain a budget for education and engagement to support continued participation in the service.

#### Review of Mini Recycling Centre Use

- 4.10 By summer 2015 almost all residents in the borough will have access to some recycling collected directly from the kerbside. As such the demand Mini recycling centres is expected to significantly decrease. Indeed, we have already seen a gradual reduction in use and over the past three years the number of public sites in the borough has reduced from 24 to 15 (with Sainsburys taking over responsibility for their site in Shirley).
- 4.11 In 2014, two of our contractors withdrew their services. We were served notice by

both our can collection contractor and plastic collection contractor. Both companies gave the same reason for withdrawing the service – which is that it is no longer economically viable for them to service the banks as fewer authorities provide Mini recycling centres due to the development of comprehensive kerbside recycling collections.

- 4.12 Amey has taken over the collection of cans from the remaining Mini-recycling centres and we still have agreements in place with paper, glass and textile contractors. However, we regularly suffer from unauthorised textile banks being placed on sites under our control, the placement of so-called rogue banks is a nationwide issue and we are working with colleagues in car – parking to identify and serve notice for the removal of these banks.
- 4.13 The majority of Mini-recycling centres are located on either council owned or privately owned car parks and we are facing increasing pressures to remove or reduce recycling banks to free up spaces for car parking.
- 4.14 With all of these issues in mind we will be carrying out another review of our Mini recycling centre provision, assessing use by the public and the impacts of continuing service provision, this information will be used to compile a report that will be completed by the end of September.

## **Waste Strategy Update**

### Future Service Options

- 4.15 In 2013/14 Solihull achieved a reuse, recycling and composting rate of 40%. England has been set the target of reaching a reuse, recycling and composting rate of 50% by 2020<sup>1</sup> and Solihull's targets are aligned to this but with the aim to use best endeavours to reach 60% by 2020. Individual local authorities no longer have Government imposed recycling targets that they have to reach. Each authority can set its own targets as Solihull has done through the Strategy process.
- 4.16 The current industry view is that if we progress at the current rate, it is unlikely that England will reach the 50% recycling target by 2020<sup>2</sup>. When the annual municipal waste management statistics were published in November 2014, it was indicated that the Government were going to task the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to look into why recycling rates were stagnating and what potential measures could be put in place to ensure that the 50% target is reached – however it is currently unknown what these measures may involve.
- 4.17 To increase levels of recycling to 50% and above will certainly be challenging and will not be achieved without further changes to the waste and recycling service and the potential for increased costs.
- 4.18 In the Waste Strategy update report, future areas for consideration to increase recycling are proposed and these include:
- Collecting food waste
  - Changing collection frequencies
  - Changes to operations at Bickenhill Household Waste Recycling Centre
- 4.19 With the exception of material such as household batteries, oils and small electrical items – we now collect most readily recyclable materials from the kerbside so adding

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<sup>1</sup> The target of 50% reuse, recycling and composting was set in the EU Waste Framework Directive and is included in the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The recycling rate for England was 44.2% in 2013/14, an increase of just 0.1% compared to the previous year.

more materials to the dry recycling collection is unlikely to have a large impact on the level of recycling achieved.

4.20 Depending on how it is implemented, collecting food waste can potentially add from 1 – 4% to the recycling rate, with higher rates of food waste being captured when it is part of a separate weekly collection – with refuse being collected fortnightly.

4.21 The majority of higher performing authorities in England are based around fortnightly collections of refuse combined with various recycling options. Changing the collection frequency of refuse has the potential to reduce collection costs and increase levels of recycling. Due to benefitting from CLG funding we are committed to carrying out weekly collections of refuse until 2018 – however it is an option that would benefit from consideration before this date.

4.22 As part of our future planning we need to look at further opportunities to improve levels of recycling and separation of recyclable materials at Bickenhill Household Waste Recycling Centre. As part of this exercise we would review how high performing sites operate and identify mechanisms that we could adopt to improve performance at the site, these could include an open bag policy – whereby the contents of bagged waste is examined to ensure that no recyclable waste is being disposed of.

4.23 Before proposing any further changes to the collection service a full cost benefit analysis would need to be carried out on any option, as changes to the collection service could have significant potential impacts on council budgets. In addition to this it is proposed that a detailed public engagement is carried out to canvas public opinion on the current service provision and potential future options.

## **5. Reasons for Recommending Preferred Option**

5.1 As part of the on-going progression of the waste and recycling service we have successfully made changes to the kerbside recycling service, which it is anticipated will have a positive impact on our reuse, recycling and composting rate. However it is clear that in order to reach or exceed a 50% recycling rate we will need to make further changes to the collection service. This may include changes to the collection service and also changes to our current policies.

5.2 The contents of this report presents Members of the Scrutiny Panel with options for further consideration as requested as part of their scheduled work programme.

## **6. Scrutiny**

6.1 This report is being presented to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Board

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Delivery of the Council's Priorities**

The options/proposals in this report will contribute to the delivery of the following Council Priorities:

- Build Stronger Communities – maintaining an investing in the public realm
- Deliver Value – Deliver the Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Managed Growth

## 7.2 Policy/Strategy Implications

The contents of this report are commensurate with the councils targets and objectives of the Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

## 7.3 Meeting the duty to involve

No consultation has been carried out on the contents of this report. However required Statutory consultees will be consulted on the Municipal Waste Management Strategy update report.

## 7.4 Financial Implications

Funding from CLG enabled us to make the changes to the recycling service. We received £2.9 million towards the cost of making the service changes. A 10 year financial plan has been designed to allow existing budgets to support the service.

## 7.5 Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising as a direct result of this report

## 7.6 Risk Implications

There are no risks arising as a direct result of this report

## 7.7 Statutory Equality Duty

A Fair Treatment Assessment has been carried out on the delivery of the Waste and Recycling Service and one to specifically address the changes to the recycling service.

## 7.8 Carbon Management/Environmental

There are no carbon management implications arising as a direct result of this report

## 7.9 Partner Organisations

Partner organisations include Amey – the waste and recycling contract service provider and Solihull Community Housing who we are working closely with to improve recycling facilities at flats under their management.

## 7.10 Safeguarding/Corporate Parenting Implications

There are no safeguarding implications arising as a direct result of this report

## 7.11 Customer Impact

There are no direct customer impacts arising as a direct result of this report.

## 7.12 Other implications

## 8. List of Appendices Referred to

8.1 Appendix A – Municipal Waste Management Strategy – Mid –point update 2015

## 9. Background Papers Used to Compile this Report

9.1

## 10. List of Other Relevant Documents

10.1 Solihulls Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2010 -2020

[http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/StrategiesPlansPolicies/wasteandrecycling/Waste\\_Management\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/StrategiesPlansPolicies/wasteandrecycling/Waste_Management_Strategy.pdf)