

## Pre-Scrutiny Questions and Answers – Overview & Scrutiny Agenda 3 October 2023

### Report Title: Waste Contract Review

Report Author(s): Zoe Court

### Councillor Russell:

Firstly, thank you for the report and the news that we are reaching a recycling rate of 60% which is excellent.

We often receive comments from residents with regard the service they receive when calling the Stratford helpline as being difficult to get through. Is the performance of this helpline being monitored and measured?

#### Response:

We have been unable to do this as this arrangement was set up as part of the merger, once this ended we were unable to get call stats but following a recent meeting with WDC and SDC Leaders the call stats were received last week, we are now reviewing the stats and the current arrangements.

I am aware that for residents that can't pay for their green bin using the online payment facility, some councillors have resorted to paying for them themselves with residents paying them back. Long term, what is being put in place to assist those that can't make online payments?

#### Response:

I am aware this is an issue for a minority of residents, we can issue an invoice which allows the resident to do a bank transfer or use paypoint. However with support of Cllr Roberts, we will be asking that if a cheque is sent in, we cash it rather than return it as this is not fair on our vulnerable residents.

1.7: What were the initial assumptions that led WDC to believe that 123+ would work without adjustments in the centre of Leamington where there is a concentration of flats/shared accommodation?

Response:

The introduction and preparation of the contract specification was lead through the merger and not lead by a WDC officer. WDC officers did raise concerns about a minority of properties with no storage changing from weekly to 2 weekly collections, and that would lead to issues with waste being presented more frequently. This was ignored.

We are now reviewing these arrangements to present a solution that makes sure the 123+ system works for everyone.

**Councillor D Harrison:**

Thanks for the very useful report on the Review of the Waste 123+ Contract , and it is encouraging to see a general improvement in recycling rates since the start of the scheme and the fact that we are above the annual average recycling rates. I have personally found the Cloud9 app very useful for timetable reminders, and the fact that separation of recyclables is no longer needed has been hugely appreciated by householders.

Paragraph 1.4 states that prior to "Go-Live" date, a blue-lidded bin for co-mingled recycling was provided. Was this the case? I thought a combination of red plastic containers and blue hessian/fabric collapsible containers were provided and recyclables had to be separated prior to collection ?

Response:

There was a go live date of 1 August for the new contract, but with the delivery delays residents could continue to use the red boxes/hessian sacks until they received their new blue lidded bin. Some properties are not suitable for the wheeled bins, so they can continue to use red boxes, the hessian sacks were phased out and are no longer collected, but these properties had the opportunity to have an additional red box free of charge. In addition the red box can still be used for 'excess' recycling – placed out next to the blue lidded bin.

Para 1.7 – there is no reference made to the issue of contaminants in recycling blue-lidded bins leading to issues down the line or non-collection as a result of incorrect bins being used. Has this been an issue (particularly in student areas) or is behaviour from residents improving? Is further education needed

Response:

Reports from the crews of contamination levels is low, they do check random bins by lifting the lids and if any contamination is spotted, the bin is not emptied and a sticker or card is left to advise the resident. However most contamination is likely to be 'hidden' in the middle, so wont be seen by the crews – it will be removed at the MRF and contaminations levels are monitored and

penalties imposed if the levels are above what is considered acceptable. We have a new officer working as our Waste Education & Enforcement Officer, who will be visiting student properties over the coming weeks to explain the 123+ scheme and where we get reports from crews, this officer will visit.

Para 4.3 – as the cost of managing calls is referred to within the Inter-Authority Agreement, has there been an assessment done on breakdown of calls /queries from SDC v WDC or is it apportioned on a pro-rata basis (no. of households?). Also presumably the volume of these calls are reducing over time?

Response:

We have only just received the call data, which we are now reviewing – we would hope to see a reduction in calls now as the contract has stabilised, and as part of WDC digitalisation work, we are keen for those residents that can 'self-serve' to do so making it easier for those that need to call to get through.

Para 4.6 – a large portion of cost (and revenue) arises from receipts at the Sherbourne MRF plant. Are these receipts and tickets for weights received at the plant audited or taken on face value?

Response:

Yes there is an audit trail for all recycle weights.

Appendix 1 – could you please explain the difference between the 2 graphs – thanks.

Response:

One is for 'assisted collections' (which are where the crews collect and return bins to an agreed location where the resident is unable to due to age/disability) – the other is all other collections.

Appendix 3 – could this page indicate where the monthly costs have arisen from, e.g for acceptance of non-recyclables ( land-fill charges?), or payment.

Response:

These costs are all to do with the contract, including recycling haulage costs, the SDC IAA costs was an annual payment.

Appendix 4 – the graph indicates a total income of around £1.9m, whereas the accompanying text states £1.6m . Why the discrepancy, and I am presuming this income arises from sale of green permits only (not receipts at MRF) , and perhaps the title of the graph could explain where the income is from?

Response:

This income is largely from the garden waste permits (£1.6m) – the other income including bulky waste collections and container sales. I will amend the graph.

Sorry , but in looking at the overall costs of the 123+ scheme it would be useful to provide a final overall summary , perhaps in graphical form of the total costs (split between categories of MRF, SDC, etc) and total income (for both permits and good recyclables) just to present the overall picture.

Response:

Yes, we will be doing this at the end of the financial year as I think this was suggested at the Q1 review meeting, so in April 2024 I will work on a summary in infographic format.