

<b>Environment Committee</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2023
<b>Report Title</b>	Marine Town Food Waste and Alternate Weekly collections
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Head of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
<b>Head of Service</b>	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Kelly Upson, Environmental Contracts Manager
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. That the Committee approves the implementation of the next stage of the Marine Town food waste project and the proposed methodology.

## 1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report recommends an option for the future of waste collections in Marine Town, Sheerness and seeks Committee approval of the suggested option to roll out food waste collections and alternate weekly refuse and recycling collections from September 2023.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 In 2007, Swale rolled out a new waste collection methodology of 'Alternate Weekly Collections' (AWC's). Recycling and general waste would be collected fortnightly on alternate weeks. Food would be collected every week in a food caddy. Although it was always the intention of the council to deliver this service to all properties, there were some challenges. At that time, it was agreed that residents of Marine Town, Sheerness would remain on a weekly black sack refuse collection, as many terraced properties had been converted into flats. The perception was that some of these properties had restricted storage, exacerbated for some by an absence of access to rear gardens. This storage issue made wheelie bins an unrealistic option for all residents.
- 2.2 Since the initial roll out in 2007, Marine Town residents have been provided with a fortnightly mixed recycling collection alongside the weekly general waste collections. Although initially the quality of the recyclate presented was poor, over the past several years the quality and quantity of recyclate has greatly improved, reducing the quantity of general refuse being placed out for collection, especially on the recycling week.
- 2.3 A combination of different factors drove officers to review this situation. Under the government's 25 year environment plan, it has been announced that every local authority is to provide free separate food waste collections by 2025. The vast majority of residents in Swale already have this service, but it needs to be

provided to the last few remaining pockets. In addition, recycling performance would need to improve to reach national targets. To do so, all residents would need to be offered a recycling and food waste collection. By maximising the recycling opportunity for all residents in the Borough, the result will positively impact recycling weights and reduce household residual waste tonnages.

- 2.4 As part of the resident engagement process for the new waste collection service, all residents in Marine Town were hand delivered a survey with a pre-paid envelope. The response rate was high. The majority of residents advised that they would like the facility to be able to recycle their food waste as offered to the rest of the borough.
- 2.5 In 2022, the waste survey results led to a food waste trial taking place across three slightly different roads in Marine Town – Berridge Road, Unity Street and Wellesley Road. This was a huge success with set out rates for food caddies reaching up to 50% of households.
- 2.6 As this was a success, alternate weekly collections were introduced in a second phase. Initially residents continued to place refuse bags out on recycling week but with regular monitoring and door knocking this was quickly resolved. Overall, the trial has been a success with no increase in fly tipping and good quality recycling being placed out with very little contamination.
- 2.6 The results of the trial demonstrate that this method of collection can work well in areas where waste must be collected in sacks due to inadequate storage for wheeled bins. It also confirmed that pre-trial concerns regarding food caddy ownership and caddies being left on streets did not materialise during the extended trial.

### **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 The proposal is to deliver what was originally intended and introduce weekly food waste collections to the remainder of Marine Town and to change the collection methodology from a weekly refuse and fortnightly recycling collection to an alternate weekly refuse and recycling collection as received by the rest of the borough.
- 3.2 The vast majority of the borough are already on alternate weekly collections with separate food waste. After this project has been completed, it is the intention of the officers to review any last remaining pockets of 'exempt' properties within the borough and if there is a likely chance of success, these areas will also be considered for the same waste collection methodology. These exempt pockets will be smaller, localised areas than the proposals in this report and engagement will be on smaller scale with ward councillors being notified in advance.
- 3.3 Communications with residents will be vital throughout the process. This will include door knocking, leaflets, letters and area specific social media communications. As well as the preparatory work, officers will visit the area twice weekly for the first 2 months to monitor and offer guidance and advice to

residents. Feedback from residents in the trial was positive around the communications received.

## **4 Alternative Options**

- 4.1 To extend the trial to a further 3 roads at a time. This option is not recommended as the process is resource intensive and will impact on officer time and costs. It will also take longer to implement to all roads and may not be complete before the start of the new waste contract in March 2024. This may hamper the new service.
- 4.2 To follow the initial trial process and roll out weekly food waste to all roads but continue with weekly refuse and fortnightly recycling for a limited period. The change to alternate weekly refuse and recycling collections would then be implemented at a later date. This option was considered but it was deemed unnecessary as the trial was conducted in two stages to monitor if food waste collections were possible in this area i.e due to limited storage, would bins be left on streets and blow away etc. Both aspects of the trial have been successful. Now we know the trial worked, it would be a clearer comm's message to make these proposed changes in one campaign. Such an approach has been successful in other areas such as Sheppey Beach Villas, where food collections and alternate weekly collections have been rolled out simultaneously. A two-stage approach would also require additional resource for a longer period and additional comms to ensure residents are clear on the separate phases. There would be a further cost to contractor resource, as this option would require an extra crew one day a week to collect the food waste separately. Costs may double overall with this option and the extended project delivery period may impact upon the start of the new contract in March 2024.
- 4.3 To do nothing, leave the trial roads on alternate weekly collections but do not roll out to the rest of the area. This option is not recommended as it is a requirement within the Environment Bill to ensure all properties have access to food waste collections by 2025. It would also do little to improve recycling figures and environmental improvements.
- 4.4 To provide food waste collections to the remainder of the area and maintain weekly refuse collections and fortnightly recycling services. This is not recommended as this option will cost the council more money overall as we will be providing this area with a more extensive service than other residents. Such a service would require additional vehicles once a fortnight to collect the three waste streams and this additional service would need funding.
- 4.5 To revert back to weekly refuse collections on the 3 trial roads and remove the food waste bins. This option is not recommended for the reasons in 4.3. In addition, residents have demonstrated that this service can work, so the council may suffer reputational damage if we removed the service after a successful trial.

## 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation was undertaken in the form of the Waste and Street cleansing survey in 2021. Residents of Marine Town were issued a paper copy of the survey with a pre-paid return envelope and response rates were high. The majority of residents advised that they would like the facility to be able to recycle their food waste.
- 5.2 Local politicians and the town council were kept updated throughout.
- 5.3 End of food trial survey results showed that 88.5% of survey respondents used the caddy. 50% advised that they have wasted less food since using the caddy. 94% advised that the information received was clear and easy to understand. Overall residents gave the scheme a 9 out of 10 satisfaction rating.
- 5.4 The current contractor has been consulted and have agreed that they are able to accommodate the changes in collection methods for Marine Town. The future contractor (Suez) are aware that there are plans to introduce food waste and alternate weekly refuse and recycling collections to the area before the start of the new Waste and Street Cleansing contract and this may bring additional benefits to routing and efficiency. A more consistent service across the borough will enhance resilience and provide improved financial value for residents.
- 5.5 At time of writing, Officers are due to provide a verbal update at the Sheppey Area Committee on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023.

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>The provision of food waste collections and change to Alternate weekly refuse and recycling collections supports the priority 'Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges', with particular reference to 2.5 'Work towards a cleaner borough where recycling remains a focus and ensure that the council acts as an exemplar environmental steward, making space for nature wherever possible.'</p> <p>Bringing this area in line with the rest of the borough meets objective 3.1 of the corporate plan "Undertake targeted interventions to identify our most disadvantaged families and communities, improve our understanding of the issues they face, and develop new ways of working to reduce social exclusion and enhance opportunities and quality of life."</p>

	<p>A more consistent, less resource intensive approach will also offer better value which is relevant under priority 4.4 “Continue to reduce dependence on government-controlled funding sources and support staff to find innovative ways to ensure other objectives can be met in the context of diminished resources”.</p>
<p>Financial, Resource and Property</p>	<p>To deliver this project, temporary resources will be required in the form of project officers. Three temporary project officers will be required for 2 days per week for 3 months. This cost is estimated at £9.9K (including on costs).</p> <p>These project officers will be supported by the Environmental Campaigns and Performance Officer, Contracts Technical Officer, the Contract Monitoring Officer’s and the Environment Warden.</p> <p>1800 food bins and silver caddies - £10,225.60  1800 rolls of food waste bags - £3000  Additional Driver + 1 crew 1 day per week for 4 weeks  Total cost = £23.1K plus £3.7K Biffa support costs</p> <p>Defra advised that the costs of new burdens under the Environment Bill will be funded. However, details of how and when these applications may be submitted have not been released as yet. Queries have been submitted to DEFRA but no answers have been received. If invitations to apply for funding open before the project starts then an application will be submitted, but the alternative funding will be via the Waste Scheme promotion reserve fund as this is a spend to save project.</p> <p>By bringing the waste collection methodology for this community in line with the remainder of the borough, there will be future savings on the next waste contract price equivalent to approximately £80K per annum. The future waste contractors have been made aware that these changes will be implemented prior to the next waste contract starting.</p>
<p>Legal, Statutory and Procurement</p>	<p>Local Authorities will be required to provide food waste collection to all households by 2025. These new duties will be funded via the ‘new burdens’ doctrine, but it is currently unclear from DEFRA when applications may be submitted.</p>
<p>Crime and Disorder</p>	<p>Reports of fly tipping in the alleys of Marine Town are not infrequent. By liaising with the residents on a regular basis throughout the process, we hope to remind residents about what they should be doing with their waste, educate on ways to minimise their waste and hope to drive fly tipping down in the process. The trial showed no increase in fly tipping. The</p>

	Environment Warden will monitor the area regularly to monitor fly tipping and investigate offences.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	If collected separately, food waste can be diverted from waste to energy into an anaerobic digester plant. This is a more efficient process for energy extraction and it produces a soil conditioner at the end of the process, which will be used locally on agricultural land. This project aims to minimise food going into the residual waste stream to help us achieve the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan targets. This collection methodology also helps residents to try and reduce food waste in the first place.
Health and Wellbeing	Recent ONS statistics show that communities want to do more to help tackle climate change. By allowing people the opportunity to recycle more (at no extra cost to them), this will promote a sense of satisfaction and wellbeing, as well as the potential to save them money by wasting less food.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Some premises place a lot of waste out for collection and there are risks that these residents will not be happy with changing to an alternate weekly refuse and recycling collection and will not take advantage of the weekly food waste collection service. Our education officers will identify and target these premises.  There is a risk that this could lead to increased fly tipping in the area, although the trial did not reflect this outcome. Officers will monitor and promptly investigate any such fly tips.
Equality and Diversity	An EIA has been completed. The assessment identified no significant areas of concern. Providing a weekly food waste collection and changing to alternate weekly refuse and recycling collections will bring the area in line with the rest of the borough and ensure equality across all areas of the borough.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage

## 7 Appendices

None

## 8 Background Papers

None