

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
10 JUNE 2025

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE : UPDATE ON MOBILISATION OF WASTE COLLECTION AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE SHARED SERVICE MANAGER – WASTE MANAGEMENT

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

PRIORITY - SUSTAINABILITY

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the meeting of Cabinet on 9 July 2024 the Council agreed to award the new waste, recycling and street cleansing contract to Veolia UK Ltd. This contract has subsequently been mobilised with the contract beginning on 4 May 2025. Service changes as part of the new contract are due to commence on 4 August 2025.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 The mobilisation of the contract has been an extensive project but key steps to date are highlighted in the table below:-

Event	Date
Meeting of NHC Cabinet to agree contract award	9 July 2024
End of standstill	12 August 2024
Initial meeting with Veolia	15 August 2024
Completion of the Letchworth leases assignment	21 August 2024
Press release in relation to award	September 2024
Inter Authority Agreement Signing	5 December 2024
Vehicle Orders placed	6 December 2024
MRF tender publishing	16 December 2024
Bins and caddy mini competition publishing	December 2025
Bins and Caddy Tender Award	March 2025
Council tax service change introduction leaflet	March 2025
Members briefing	27 March 2025
MRF tender intention to award	2 April 2025
Collection Contract Award & Contract Signing	2 May 2025
Old Whitespace waste management IT system shutdown	3 May 2025
Depot handover	4 May 2025
New vehicles arrive	4 May 2025
New ECHO waste management IT system go live	6 May 2025
Bin deliveries began	6 May 2025
Press Release	20 May 2025

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 The mobilisation of the contract has gone well with minimal disruption to collection and cleansing services. The service experienced five dropped roads in week one and only one dropped road in week two.
- 3.2 The vehicle workshop is being relocated to the Buntingford depot, however work to install equipment has been delayed due to the EHC grounds maintenance contractor moving off site late and the area not being vacant until contract start. In addition landlord consent for alterations is still outstanding.
- 3.3 All but one of the planned electric vehicles are delayed. This is as a result of the manufacturer finding a fault with the chassis and battery supports. At this stage we do not yet have an anticipated date for their arrival or whether an alternative manufacturer will be chosen. Diesel fuelled vehicles are being used in the interim. The EV charging infrastructure has all been installed now at the Letchworth depot.
- 3.4 All online forms are now available to the customer. Work is ongoing to fully integrate online forms with the waste management IT system. Fully integrated forms include:-
- Check your bin day
 - Missed bins
 - Garden waste subscription
 - Order a bin/replacement or repair a bin
 - Report an overflowing litter bin
- 3.5 Some forms like clinical waste collections or bulky waste collections are very complex and are taking longer to integrate, either due to scheduling requirements needed to complete the task and/or payment integrations.
- 3.6 Some data errors exist in the waste management IT system, and this is an ongoing process for correction by Veolia. This will affect bin collection day look ups and there is a small risk of missed collections being slightly higher as a result. Any identified are being checked.
- 3.7 The data for communal properties is not pulling through correctly for properties which are serviced by a communal bin store. A resolution is being sought for this with Veolia and this affects the reporting of missed collections at communal properties and bin collection day look up.
- 3.8 The updated risk register is presented in Appendix 1. The amended elements for this update are shown in red.
- 3.9 The majority of risk scores which have changed have reduced the risk score now that the contract has mobilised. Some however have increased where the risk was realised and are still not resolved. These include Risk 27 – the availability of online services in EHC, Risk 31 – Litter bin review, Risk 37 – Bin collection day search in EHC.
- 3.10 Collection rounds and new service mobilisation plans are not yet available for the new service and this presents as a new risk as these have not been provided within contractually specified timeframes. The reasoning is predominantly to allow for input from existing collection staff to ensure that new routes have local knowledge input.
- 3.11 The lack of availability of the mobilisation plan for the service roll out impacts on the planned communications relating to day changes. Residents need to be informed of any day changes and their new cycle. i.e. which bin will be collected first after the start of the

new service on 4 August 2025. In addition, some residents will also need to be informed of any infill collections. This may occur where there is an extended gap between the last collection on the old service and the new service collections. At the bid stage Veolia indicated that there would be approximately 50% of households experiencing a day change.

- 3.12 Communications plans are provided in Appendix 2 and are still on target. It is anticipated that the next tranche of written communications will be developed and distributed in sufficient time to all households.
- 3.13 To date residents have received to their house a leaflet with council tax, there will receive further information on the new bin and what it is for when it arrives. Outlook magazine will also be delivered to every household with details about the new service and during July residents will receive a further service leaflet and collection day change information direct to their door.
- 3.14 We will be encouraging Members and Parish councillors to proactively support the communications plan.
- 3.15 The Shared Waste Service has a Communications Officer vacancy, and this has significantly impacted on the ability to deliver the communications plan. Face to face events are the most likely elements of the communications plan to be scaled back and some elements have already been. Recruitment is underway to the post.
- 3.16 From mid-June the Shared Waste Service will have a Contract Officer vacancy. Recruitment is underway. Additional temporary positions are also planned to support the roll out of the new service and recruitment is planned soon.
- 3.17 Staff resource levels continue to impact, as with any service mobilisation there is an uplift in resident contacts and this coupled with the waste management IT system set up differing from the previous set up is impacting on the workload of staff in the shared waste team and customer service team.
- 3.18 Issues with the waste management IT system are being reported to Veolia and are being rectified but this is a slow process. Weekly progress meetings are being held with Veolia to discuss outstanding elements of work linked to IT as well as weekly mobilisation meetings.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Information will continue to be provided via the Members Information Service (MIS)
- 4.2 The new service leaflet is in final draft stage. At the time of writing this will be shared with a panel of residents before the final design is confirmed to ensure that all aspects of the information are clear.
- 4.3 Once the mobilisation plan and collection day changes are confirmed the communication material for this will be finalised. The print deadline is 13 June 2025, given the tight timelines a new risk has been added to the risk register.
- 4.4 Service leaflets and letters will be distributed by one of two methods. For those households with a collection day change, this presents as a more complex communication, and these will be sent via Royal Mail. For those areas with the same collection day, but where the new cycle needs to be communicated we anticipate delivering by a hand delivery service similar to that provided for Outlook.

- 4.5 Should timeframes allow we also anticipate using correx signs in villages where there are day changes. This communication method is not suitable for towns as neighbouring streets may have differing collection days.
- 4.6 Given the timeframes all collection day change information presents some level of risk. There are risks associated with mail merge of information regarding day changes being accurate and there are risks associated with hand delivery services distributing to the correct areas.
- 4.6 Recruitment of temporary positions is required to support the service roll out and manage additional resident contacts which require more detailed responses and visits.
- 4.7 A members briefing will be held on 14 July prior to the service changes and all members are encouraged to attend.
- 4.8 Monthly members drop-ins continue to also be held. These dates and online meeting links are published in MIS.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Mobilisation Risk Log

Appendix 2 – Headline External Communications Plan Overview

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

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7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None