

From: **Susan Carey, Cabinet Member for Environment**  
**Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth Environment & Transport**

To: **Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee - 3 November 2021**

Subject: **Waste Management COVID-19 Recovery**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of report: Not applicable**

**Future Pathway of report: Not applicable**

**Electoral Division:** All electoral divisions

**Summary:** This paper presents details of the ongoing Waste Management service challenges faced by both tiers of local government.

**Recommendation:**  
 The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The waste management service continues to experience operational challenges due to impacts of Covid-19 with increased waste levels and disruption to the normal waste collection services provided by District and Borough partners, as the Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs).
- 1.2 It should be noted that tonnage classed and reported to DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) as fly tipping by WCAs, have not risen since 2014 and represents 0.5% of materials disposed of by the County Council

**2. Waste Collection Authorities**

- 2.1 Since the start of the pandemic, kerbside collected waste volumes have increased, continuing into 2021, at 15% above the norm.

Full Year Tonnes	2019/20	2020/21	20/21 vs 19/20 Comparison
WCA Kerbside	494,917 tonnes	567,829 tonnes	15%

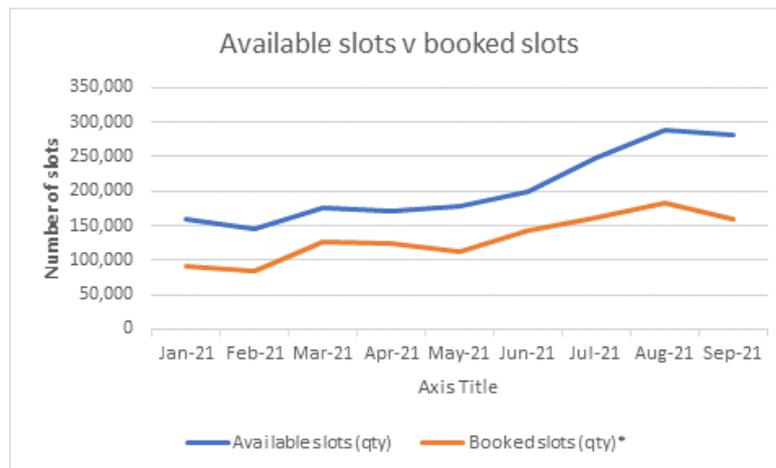
- 2.2 The increase in volumes has been an unbudgeted cost burden to the County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA).
- 2.3 Some WCAs have experienced sickness from Covid, staff being told to self-isolate and shortages of HGV drivers at the time of this higher demand. This

has resulted in some suspending garden waste collection services, with others severely disrupting collection of mixed dry recycling. Services continue to be vulnerable with collection authorities instigating their business continuity plans, utilising weekend working and on occasions sharing contractual resources to assist each other.

- 2.4 To mitigate, the County Council, as the WDA, has extended hours of work at some Waste Transfer Stations and operated more comprehensively at weekends.
- 2.5 Tipping times at Transfer Stations have operated within the contractual tolerances but have occasionally been challenged by waste collection vehicle drivers arriving in close proximity of each other.
- 2.6 Waste Disposal contractors have responded to increased demands through making some minor configuration changes at transfer facilities. Whilst driver shortages have been a risk for hauliers, they do not appear to have experienced issues to the same extent as those reported by the WCAs.
- 2.7 We are waiting to see what effect the return to schools, other educational establishments and offices this autumn will have on kerbside waste volumes and to what extent Working From Home' (WFH) and hybrid office/WFH will affect waste volumes.

### **3. Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) booking system**

- 3.1 During the pandemic, the County Council introduced a booking system (online and by phone) at the 18 HWRCs to manage demand and ensure the safety of visitors and staff. As Covid restrictions have eased, the Council has lifted all on site restrictions and limits on number of visits. The booking system has been the subject of a public consultation, the results of which are being analysed with a full report to come to this committee on 19 January.
- 3.2 In September 2021, there were 165,533 bookings made by residents. The number of those residents booking by telephone due to not having access to the internet and/ or an email address was 1,547; just under 1% of total bookings.
- 3.3 The graph below shows the total number of slots available for customers to book compared with the total number that have been booked. On average, across all HWRCs, 56% of the available slots in September were booked.



3.4 Data shows that residents have visited sites less frequently, however they brought larger loads of waste when they have visited. Previously volumes were approximately 45kgs per load; the latest data shows this to be 58kgs. There does not appear to be a pent-up demand of waste and service contractors are reporting a managed service, avoiding unnecessary queuing.

3.5 Residents have said within surveys that they would like to have the ability to make bookings on the day. In response, the County Council Commissioned BookingLab to develop a web-app to provide this enhancement. Officers are developing a proof of concept for an initial trial and use at Folkestone & Maidstone (Tovil) HWRCs. These sites have been chosen for their variations in connectivity to IT networks and cover the two main HWRC operating contractors.

#### 4. Financial Implications

4.1 The increased pressure against the current budget for the additional residual waste is £2.4m. Whilst there are increased tonnes for the mixed dry recycling, some of these additional costs have been offset by the reduction of the price to dispose of recycled materials. Furthermore, the service is assessing the potential for above budgeted income for some materials such as metals and plastics and is in the process of securing more favourable prices as part of its commissioning activities for treatment of street sweepings and paper and card.

#### 5. Conclusions

5.1 The waste service is experiencing operational challenges due to driver shortages and other resource issues related to the collection of waste. Some collection authorities have fared well in comparison, but variability does exist with some authorities.

5.2 The booking system has allowed residents some surety of accessing site with garden waste that would normally be collected by District & Borough councils. The County Council has offered alternative tipping solutions and flexibility.

5.2 The coming months will still be challenging and the recovery from COVID-19 and the supply of drivers continue to be an issue. Wage increase demands may also test the resilience of services, particularly those with contracting partners.

There does not appear to be a pent-up demand at the HWRCs which continue to run efficiently and without restrictions.

- 5.3 Whilst increased tonnages are already forecast, there are financial risks and variances to service arrangements which may need to be adopted. Commodity prices are proving beneficial to alleviating some of these financial pressures in terms of recycling volumes.

## 6. Recommendations

**Recommendation:**

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

## 7. Contact details

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