

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee	REPORT NUMBER: JOS/19/15
FROM: N/A	DATE OF MEETING: 19 09 2019
OFFICER: Oliver Faiers – CM Waste Services	KEY DECISION REF NO. N/A

WASTE COLLECTION ROUTE CHANGES JULY 2019

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report summarises the recent day and route changes to the refuse and recycling collections element of the waste service. It shows the reasons for the changes, timings, planning and implementation, communication approach, lessons learnt and missed collection statistics.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Route optimisation was the only option to take into account recent growth and future growth of the service.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS
3.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Panel notes the report.
REASON FOR DECISION
None.

4. KEY INFORMATION

4.1 Background

Our service partner, Serco, have held the Joint Waste Contract (JWC) since April 2007. During this time housing growth has been absorbed into the existing collection rounds with only minor changes to collection routes.

Housing growth between 2010 and 2019 has risen by 6240 properties across the two districts.

The existing collection rounds were becoming unworkable, with housing growth impacting on the ability of rounds to complete their work on the allocated day.

Over the last 3 years we have transferred our waste management system to a new software application; Whitespace. This has seen all collections transferred to a paperless collection system with collection crews using I-pads.

For the first time, we had an accurate set of data for the waste collection system, allowing for the review of collections to go ahead.

As part of a wider review of the JWC and part of the negotiations for a contract extension for 7 years from 2021, Serco carried out a comprehensive review of the service and collection routes in 2018.

The optimisation of collection routes and the introduction of a new collection round (vehicle and crew) was required to ensure an efficient and effective service moving forward and able to cope with current and future housing growth.

The optimisation of collection routes is a complex balance between:

- travel time (from depots to start of route and disposal points)
- time spent emptying bins x size and capacity of vehicle (certain areas require smaller vehicles)
- weight of waste collected (varies by demographic)

Serco have moved from 19 to 20 collection rounds working from depots in Sudbury and Stowmarket. 100 new collection routes were designed with each route servicing approximately 800 properties a day.

Serco led the project with a joint project group set up including Waste and Comms officers. Together, we agreed a go live date of the 15th July, avoiding bank holidays in April, May and August as these complicate comms messages, as collections are delayed.

All costs associated with the route changes have been borne by Serco.

4.2 Communication Strategy

A detailed communication strategy was developed and delivered in accordance with the plan. Key points:

- Members Briefing
- Parish Councils Briefing
- Update to Web Site including a new “collection day finder tool”
- Press Release
- Leaflets to residents
- Social Media updates

A major element of the comms strategy was a leaflet delivered to every household effected by a change to collection day (65,000 in total) this was fully funded by Serco. This proved successful with only a very few residents notifying us that they didn't receive a leaflet. The royal mail returned approximately 150 leaflets they were unable to deliver.

Aside from normal operational errors where bins aren't put out on the right day or too late, there were minimal reported issues of this happening due to residents being unaware of their new day. This suggests our comms approach was successful.

We also went live with a “find my collection day” tool on our web site, this again was a success with only a very few issues (mostly after investigation, operator error, residents confusing Mid- Suffolk and Babergh districts and choosing wrong authority)

We briefed parishes, members and cabinet leaders of the change’s 4 weeks ahead of the start date so that they had information to assist residents with questions.

Within these briefings we provided an **example flyer** of what affected residents would receive which was also highlighted within the accompanying briefing. Unfortunately, some parishes interpreted this as being the day for their area and published the information as so. One key learning point from this would be to include a watermark with ‘SAMPLE ONLY’ on attachments to briefings to try and avoid confusion or misreading of briefings as far as possible.

A press release was also issued 25th June ahead of the changes to make sure local media and residents were aware and to avoid negative press as far as possible. The coverage from this was balanced, only receiving negative coverage during the peak missed weekly collections (with 0.63% / 528 being missed compared with an average missed collection rate of 0.11% / 94).

We also put out lots of social media posts which were shared among our account followers which included the dates, links to our collection day tools and FAQs in a simple format.

4.3 Implementation

As part of the implementation phase Serco supported the JWC team with additional staff and management (4 drivers and 2 Managers) from other contracts to ensure that new routes were completed on time, missed bins and other issues could be reacted to quickly and contingency crews were in place to react to issues as they arose.

Crews were already familiar with the in-cab technology being used as this had been in operation for over a year, the new rounds transferred onto the system without issue and crews were also given paper copies and maps to support the changes.

However, it became clear that during the changes that certain crews were struggling with using the functions and notifications they were not used to seeing, such as missed assisted collections and repeated missed collections. This resulted in crews failing to successfully follow instructions sent to the device.

In addition to any delay caused by the round changes, there are also normal delays which can be caused by factors out of our control, such as parked cars, roadworks, vehicle breakdowns or weather which can add and did put our crews under additional pressure. The changes also took place during the heatwave in Suffolk.

During the period of change we suspended any criteria for residents to report a missed bin (not out for example) and took additional waste left alongside bins. Suspending the “not out” criteria has inflated the missed bin figures over the period.

The changes also brought to light special local arrangements that were in place, these arrangements such as unofficial assisted collections, bins collected from locations other than

the property address and hidden bins. When this information hadn't been passed to the new crew this has resulted in bins being missed.

4.4 Current Position

Serco are continuing to review the 100 new collection routes; minor amendments are being made to ensure the rounds are balanced and achievable.

We are experiencing less issues with Babergh Collection routes as these seems to have settled down quicker than the Mid-Suffolk routes.

Serco have identified 6 routes in the Mid-Suffolk area that are causing most issues and are working to resolve the outstanding problems; a combination of crew performance, training and operational challenges with the routes.

Missed bins rates are dropping from a peak of 528 at week 1 to 158 at week 7.

The missed bins recorded at week 7 equates to a success rate of 99.81% compared with 99.37% at week 1.

Average missed bins for refuse & recycling collections over Q1 (April – June 2019) were 94 /week a success rate of 99.89%.

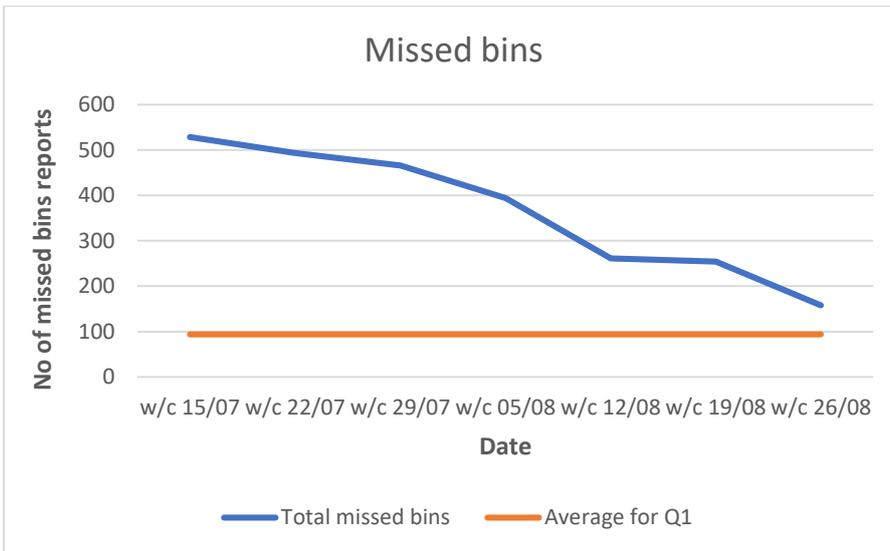
Based on the current trend we would expect numbers to get down to acceptable levels over the next 2 weeks.

Figures published in February 2019 show that the national average for successful collections is 99.8%. Meaning that we were, by week 7, back to performing better than the national average.

We have been able to locate where there have been errors with missed collections to make sure these don't reoccur, and that Serco provide waste crews with the support they need in bedding into their new rounds.

A breakdown of Serco's performance is included below.

Date	Total missed bins	Average for Q1	Success rate
w/c 15/07	528	94	99.37%
w/c 22/07	493	94	99.41%
w/c 29/07	466	94	99.44%
w/c 05/08	394	94	99.53%
w/c 12/08	261	94	99.69%
w/c 19/08	254	94	99.70%
w/c 26/08	158	94	99.81%
Total properties - minus empty properties = total number of collections per week			
83,854			

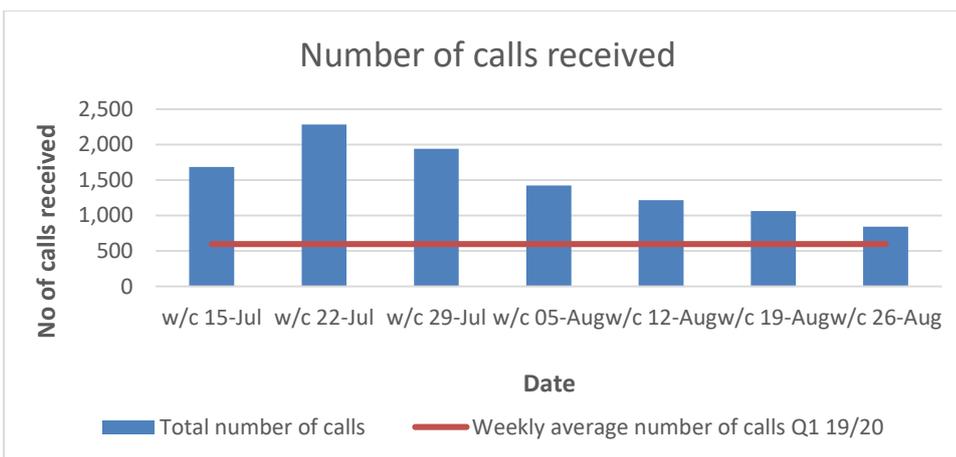


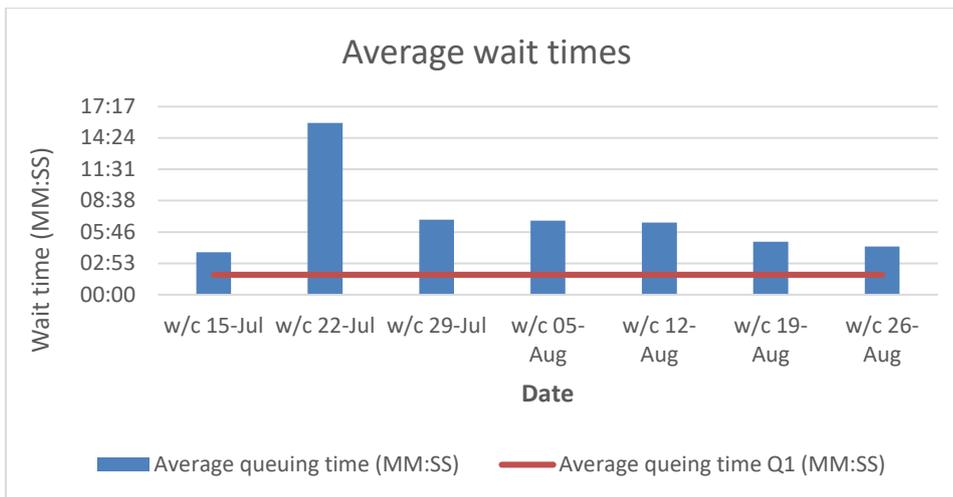
4.5 Customer Contact

As expected, we experienced a much higher volume of customer calls during the first few weeks of the changes, general enquires and missed collections. The waste admin team supported by other waste officers managed the calls. Calls peaked in weeks 2 & 3 with 2284 in week 2. Calls in week 7 are back to a reasonable level, however not yet below the normal weekly average.

We had a significant number of repeat calls where residents were double checking their online report had been received or checking exactly when their missed bin would be collected. This meant the team weren't always able to prioritise new missed bin reports over the phone, in some cases leading to further delay.

Call volume statistics over the period:





4.6 Summary and Lessons Learnt

- The first 7 weeks of the implementation has proved successful given the degree of change for both residents and crews.
- The number of residents that have experienced any disruption is relatively small, nevertheless we do not take disruption to any resident lightly and it is small consolation if it is your property that has been affected.
- We will continue to work with Serco and data analysis to identify where there are issues to be addressed and implement continual improvement to find even greater efficiencies in the coming weeks.
- It is proving that familiarity and time is needed for crews to find the optimum way of operating their rounds and performance is expected to improve.
- Customer Contract peaked in week 2 & 3 additional staff in these weeks would have improved call performance and avoided delays.
- Although an increase in customer contact was expected and no planned staff absence was allowed in the first 2 weeks, additional staff could have been factored into the planning.
- Communication strategy worked well with only minimal issues
- Repeated missed collections needed to be dealt with more effectively to avoid repeat issues. Serco could have managed the process more effectively.
- More detailed analysis of new collect routes by Serco would have avoided repeat issues with certain routes occurring.

5. LINKS TO JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN

- 5.1 An enabled and efficient organisation – The right people, doing the right things, in the right way, at the right time, for the right reasons.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 All direct costs associated with the changes are borne by Serco.
- 5.2 In the existing contract, financial penalties had not been included. They have been written into the extension from 2021. However, these penalties will apply to unsatisfactory levels for business as usual. Such a large scale change, instigated by the local authority, should be done in partnership.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 n/a

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Failure of long-term service delivery due to increase housing growth	Highly Probable	Very High	Requirement to review and re-route collection rounds to encompass growth

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 n/a

9. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 9.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required, no change to the existing service provision.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 One of the objectives of the route changes was to ensure the collection routes were as effective and efficient as possible with the reduction of non-productive travel a key aim and the subsequent reduction in diesel / co2 emissions. At the time of writing a comparison has not been carried out between the old and new routes.

11. APPENDICES

- 12.1 NONE.