



Subject:	The Waste Framework & Update on Consultation Result and Next Steps
Date:	6th November 2018
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director, City & Neighbourhood Services Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	This report is primarily to provide Members with an update on the Waste Framework and the results of the recent public consultation on the preferred, kerbside waste collection arrangements.
1.2	To highlight opportunities to work with neighbouring councils, to submit an application for funding from DAERA and to consider additional steps for Members to familiarise themselves with the revised preferred waste collection option.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>Members are requested to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the results of the public consultation exercise and agree the approach in principle for kerbside collections outlined in the report, subject to the successful conclusion of the project through the Council's capital works programme ;</li> <li>2. Prepare a business case for funding for a preferred kerbside waste collection options trial from DAERA and present this to the SP&amp;R Committee for consideration and explore opportunities to collaborate in a pilot with Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) on waste collection arrangements;</li> <li>3. Propose a Members/Officers study visit to councils in Wales in order to improve understanding of how the preferred waste collection option could work, following Welsh successes in improving the quality of collected materials, and</li> <li>4. Agree to a study visit for Members/Officers to local businesses and organisations which are demonstrating how waste and resources is actively contributing to the Circular Economy in Northern Ireland.</li> </ol>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>Members will be aware that the Waste Framework document was approved by the People &amp; Communities Committee in June 2017. This provided an overview of options regarding how waste could be collected, treated and in general managed within the city over the next decade, including what steps we (the Council) would have to take to engage with householders and some of the new approaches and equipment which are now being used in this process. The framework outlined issues around legislative requirements, changes in the local marketplace, and the need to bring about significant behavioural change to achieve challenging recycling and landfill diversion targets. To future-proof the document, the Waste Framework was developed to align with the Belfast Agenda by recognising the value inherent in waste and how this could contribute to the Circular Economy, support jobs and boost the economy. This latter point has become even more relevant in the intervening months.</p>
3.2	<p>The Waste Framework outlined four areas namely: collection arrangements, infrastructure, behaviour change and technology. This report focused on potential waste collection arrangements and outlined a proposal for a uniform, kerbside collection scheme throughout Belfast. This option, as outlined in the document, involves transitioning from fortnightly collected blue recycling bins – to a <b>weekly</b>, segregated collection of dry recyclables and food waste, combined with a three weekly collection of residual waste.</p>

## Collections - Potential Approach

Dry Recyclables  
(weekly)



Food Waste  
(weekly)



Garden waste  
(Fortnightly – seasonal)



Non-recyclable waste  
( 3 weekly or 180 bin)



3.3 This weekly/three weekly approach was based on the WRAP NI Recycling Gap analysis carried out for DAERA for Northern Ireland in 2017. This approach was re-enforced for Belfast by a bespoke options appraisal, conducted by Resource Futures using the Council's Collaborative Agreement with WRAP (see Appendix 1 for summary – the full document is available on request).

3.4 The advantages identified of rolling out such a scheme included;

1. A city wide, standardised approach which would assist with consistent communications and reduce confusion around different kerbside collection schemes;
2. Decreased contamination of recyclables which would result in higher quality materials<sup>1</sup> supporting local jobs and improved income streams;
3. Greater range of materials collected at the kerbside, including glass;
4. Recyclables used as feedstock for local re-processors which would support the local economy;
5. Increased frequency of collection (weekly) which would be of particular benefit to householders in relation to the collection of food waste;
6. Legislative compliance with regard to the need for separate collections.

### *Preliminary Engagement*

3.5 In order to gauge the suitability of the Resource Futures options appraisal, late last year the Consultation Institute and Social Market Research (SMR) were commissioned to undertake phase one of a consultation exercise on options, including the weekly/three weekly approach. The consultation comprised three elements: 6 x focus groups, 400 x doorstep surveys and 10 x stakeholder interviews.

<sup>1</sup> This issue is increasing in importance as markets for low grade recycle are rapidly reaching capacity

3.6	<p>In summary, the exercise indicated that when the benefits were clearly articulated, the level of positivity and acceptance of the potential scheme increased markedly. Support for the introduction of a smaller 180-litre grey/black bin or reduced frequency collections (3 weekly) was marginally in favour, with responses from larger households pointing out the challenges with implementing such a scheme.</p>
3.7	<p>The stakeholders group<sup>2</sup> voiced strong support for the proposals. This group were particularly aware of the Chinese Government's <i>Operation National Sword</i> which is being applied as a means to reduce the impact of low-quality (i.e. contaminated) imported waste which has resulted in trade restrictions on waste imports in order to protect its environment and support Chinese jobs. The most relevant import restrictions, affecting councils across the developed world, are (i) banning post-consumer plastics and mixed/unsorted paper (ii) setting a 0.5% tolerance level for sorted paper and (iii) restricting the number of import waste licences to China.</p>
3.8	<p>Historically, the UK has been heavily reliant on exporting large quantities of paper and plastics to China. With the restriction/cessation of this export market, alternatives are being considered but, in the process, the income for these lower quality paper recyclables has fallen sharply. In the past month, the popular press has highlighted that some councils' costs have risen by £500k to manage their (low grade) plastics and that with several countries reaching capacity for what they can process, concerns are increasing that some materials being exported are simply being dumped.</p>
3.9	<p>Locally, the Council's materials are currently finding markets but the ongoing focus on improving the quality of recyclables is gaining momentum rapidly. Top grade paper, collected at the kerbside, continues to command good prices from local re-processors such as Huhtamaki. On the other hand, the mixed materials from the co-mingled (blue bin) collections have fallen in value resulting in increased gate fees for these materials. Taking a strategic view, the Council needs to shift its focus from simply delivering ever-increasing weight based goals to generating high-quality recyclables for use by local re-processors. This approach, in line with the Belfast Agenda, will mitigate the risk of market volatility, optimise income from the sale of recyclables and support local jobs.</p>

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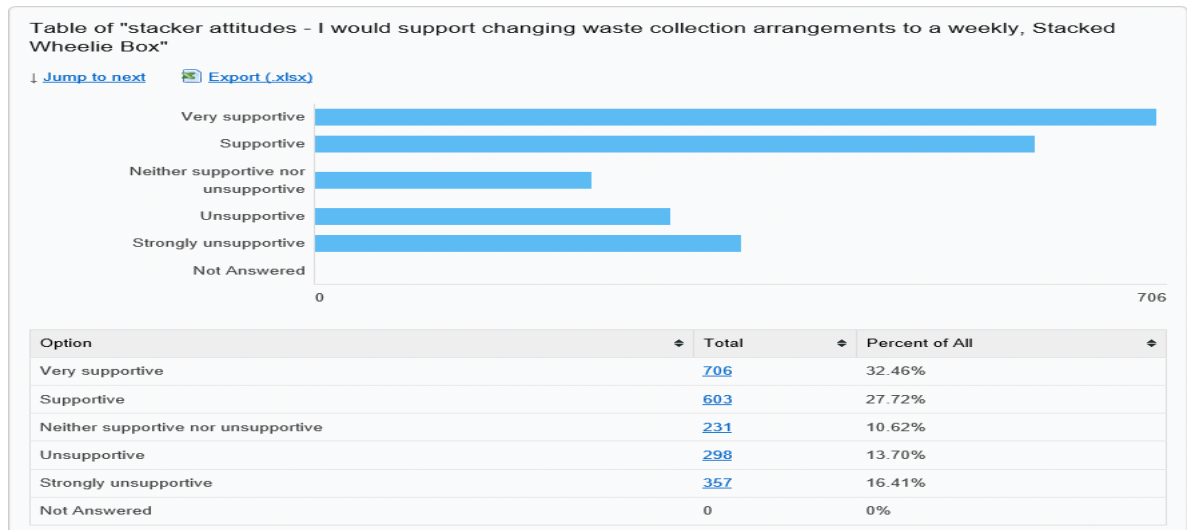
<sup>2</sup> This was made up of representative of the statutory, business and non-governmental organisations (NGO) sectors

3.10	<p>The results of the preliminary exercise were used to inform the development of a full consultation, and SMR were commissioned to assist in this process.</p>
3.11	<p><i>Public Consultation – Citizen Space &amp; Independent Survey</i></p> <p>The full public consultation exercise involved the use of the Council’s online Citizen Space portal, supported by roadshows (19 in total). As online campaigns can be skewed, in order to capture a representative sample of householders citywide, SMR conducted a statistically relevant survey (circa 1,100 respondents) and also provided a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of all the consultation responses.</p>
3.12	<p>The consultation consisted of questions on potential kerbside waste collection options and in particular the weekly/three weekly approach outlined above. Other questions were included to gather householders’ attitudes to recycling, and to gather information on how changes could impact in ways not already identified within the existing polices (e.g. assisted lifts, family size, &amp;c – see Appendix 2).</p>
3.13	<p>The 10 week online consultation period (30 July – 7 Oct) attracted considerable media coverage and a total of 2,175 responses were submitted which will inform future communication campaigns.</p>
3.14	<p>Analysis of the data demonstrated strong support for the proposed kerbside collection system for dry recyclables<sup>3</sup> with just over 60% either supportive or very supportive of the proposed change, 10% were neither for nor against and 30% were not supportive (see Table 1).</p>

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<sup>3</sup> A weekly, segregated collection of dry recyclables in a wheelie-box

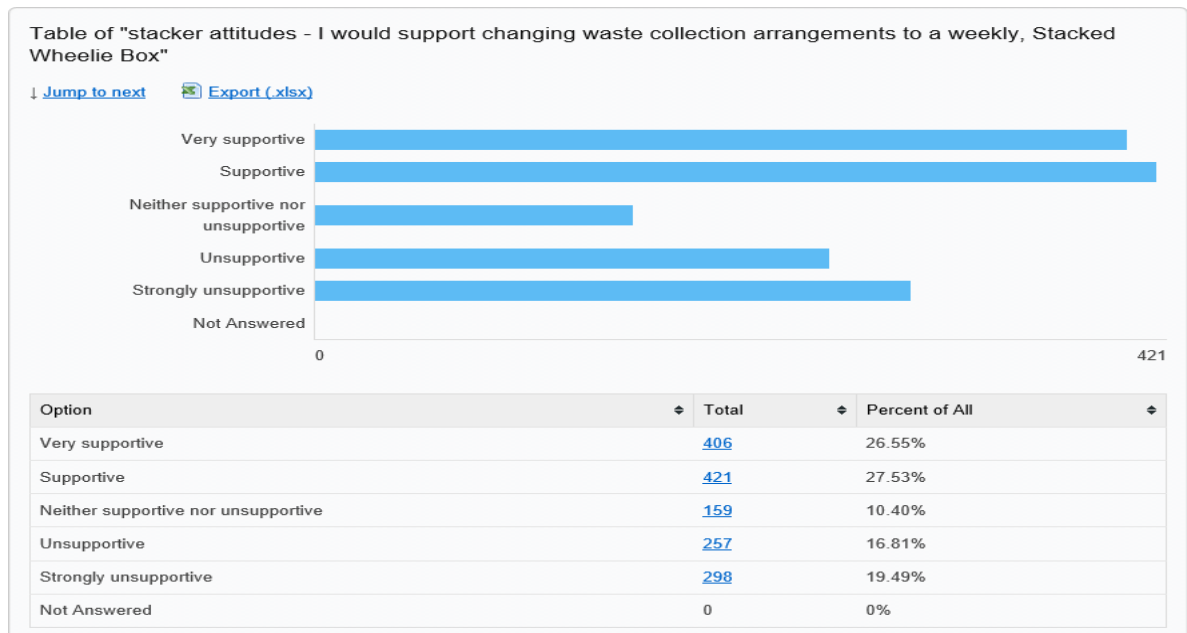
**Table 1 : Attitudes to the Wheelie-box**



3.15

The independent survey by SMR was more definitive with 77% of interviewees supporting a shift to the proposed kerbside collection system for dry recyclables. Drilling into the online results to specifically consider the views of households on the blue bin collection scheme shows a majority of respondents either supportive or very supportive of changing to the wheelie-box (54% – see Table 2).

**Table 2: Attitudes of Residents on the Co-mingled, Blue Bin Scheme.**



3.16

Considering the question of bin size and frequency of collection, both the online campaign and independent survey showed marked support for a 180 litre bin collected on a fortnightly

basis as opposed to any other collection frequency (see Table 3). This is not in keeping with the weekly/three weekly approach recommended within the Resource Futures study.

*Table 3 : Attitudes in Relation to Residual Bin Capacity*

Behaviour Change Option	Citizen Space %	Independent Survey %
180 litres residual bin collected fortnightly	75	81
240 litre residual bins collected every 3 weeks	18	16
240 litre residual bins collected every 4 weeks	7	3

3.17 Other information was gathered and responses worth highlighting include (a) strong support for kerbside glass collections, and weekly food waste collections (a feature of the proposed scheme) (b) a desire to increase re-use, recycling and re-processing capacity in NI versus exporting these materials and (c) an understanding that these materials could further support the local economy (a summary of these issues has been produced, see Table 4).

3.18 The consultation also sought the views to potential participation barriers in the proposed kerbside collection scheme; there were 1,711 comments which SMR categorised to highlight the most important:

- Space limitations within respondents' houses
- Positive changes (e.g. easier to recycle, better range of materials, &c.)
- Preference for the current arrangements (blue bin)
- Kerbside collection of glass recycling
- Concerns over weight of new bins

*Table 4: Miscellaneous issues – Glass, Food & the Circular Economy*

Question	Citizen Space %	Independent Survey %
supportive of everyone receiving a weekly glass collection	61	77
supportive of everyone receiving a weekly food waste collection	67	82
agree that they would recycle more if they knew that recycling was creating more jobs	45	81

	residents agree that each piece of waste should be collected and, as far as possible, treated in Northern Ireland for recycling, repair and reuse here	82	89
	are supportive of accepting a different waste collection system if it created quality employment and boosted the local economy	67	82
3.19	Subject to Member approval for the kerbside waste collection arrangements, these responses will help inform interventions and assist in developing targeted communications campaigns which would accompany any roll-out (see Appendix 3 for the Executive Summary, the full report is available on request).		
3.20	Nineteen roadshows were also held across the city (see Appendix 4) where householders were able to read supporting information and pose questions directly to staff. At these events, it was possible to complete the questionnaire either electronically or in paper format.		
	<i>DAERA Funding</i>		
3.21	Currently, Government is restricted in discharging many of its duties due to the Buick decision, and this has disrupted potential financial support for councils in proposing new waste collection and treatment arrangements. Recently, DAERA has indicated that limited amounts of grant aid may be available in the current (2018/19) financial year which could be used to pilot certain recycling schemes.		
3.22	Currently, to ensure that the preferred kerbside waste collection arrangements is included within the Council's potential programme of works, a project proposal has been submitted and approved through the capital works programme and is currently listed as Stage 2 – Uncommitted. An Outline Business Case (OBC) is being developed. In order to apply for DAERA support, an OBC must be made outlining within a tight financial envelope what is being proposed. Currently, an application is being prepared and, subject to Members approving in principle these kerbside waste collection arrangements, this would be submitted to the SP&R Committee for consideration.		
	<i>Collaboration</i>		
3.23	Several neighbouring councils are also considering their future waste collection arrangements and, in line with Belfast, have recognised that there is a flight to quality concerning recyclates. As a result, they are developing (or implementing) similar kerbside		



proposals and, having already worked in the arc21 partnership for many years, are now enquiring if there is scope for greater collaboration going forward. Initial discussions have shown a willingness to explore how this could be achieved, including procurement exercises which could lead to economies of scale and improved consistency across the councils' areas. Members are asked to endorse this approach.

#### *Site Visits*

3.24 In order to improve understanding of how the proposed kerbside waste collection arrangements could work, it is recommended that a Members/Officers study visit should be undertaken to councils in Wales which have already implemented similar collection schemes. Over the past decade, this has resulted in considerable improvements in the Welsh recycling rates while simultaneously improving the quality of materials collected and could be facilitated by WRAP under the Circular Economy Collaborative Agreement with the Council.

3.25 In addition, once the materials have been collected, they can be fed into local supply chains – which is already happening with the inner-city box scheme. As there are existing arrangements in place, it is also recommended that Members agree to a study visit to local businesses and organisations which are currently using several material streams in order to be able to see how waste and resources are actively contributing to the Circular Economy in NI and supporting local jobs, and to hear the scope for increasing this supply.

#### Financial & Resource Implications

3.26 Currently, the proposed kerbside waste collection scheme project is at Stage 2 – Uncommitted of the Council's capital programme and an Outline Business Case (OBC) is being developed. DAERA has indicated that grant funding of around £500k may be available for the Council in the current financial year to pilot the proposed scheme.

3.27 The Service is preparing a report for submission to the SP&R Committee regarding an application for this interim DAERA funding. Should the application be successful, it is envisaged that a procurement exercise would be initiated for the purchase of capital items (vehicles and containers) with the implementation of an in-house trial of the proposed scheme in late summer 2019. There may be benefits in collaborating with neighbouring councils as part of any procurement exercise.

3.28 Also, to inform this proposed kerbside waste collection arrangements, it is recommended that a study visit be arranged to a number of councils in Wales subject to available budget,

3.29	<p>to see first-hand how to introduce such a scheme, avoid the pitfalls and ensure householder buy-in. It is proposed to work with WRAP to develop a programme of visits.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The equality and rural needs assessments have been completed for the proposed scheme.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Preliminary Consultation exercise</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Public Consultation document</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Summary of Results of Public Consultation exercise</p> <p>Appendix 4 – List of Roadshows</p>