

Report to	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	6 th February 2025
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Barry Mellor: Lead Member for Environment and Transport, Paul Jackson: Head of Highways and Environmental Services
Report author	Tony Ward: Corporate Director for Environment and Economy / Paul Jackson: Head of Highways and Environmental Services
Title	Review of recycling service and associated waste collection functions

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 This report is about the progress made to date in delivering the waste and recycling service following the allocation of additional resources by Cabinet on 1st October 2024. It is also about process for determining whether properties should have an “End-of-Lane” waste collection service.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To enable Members to undertake their Scrutiny function by examining the progress made to date in delivering the waste and recycling service following the allocation of additional resources by Cabinet on 1st October 2024. Also, following a request to Scrutiny Chairs & Vice Chairs, the report aims to enable Members to scrutinise the process for determining whether properties should have an “End-of-Lane” waste collection service.

3. What are the recommendations?

- 3.1. That the committee consider whether it is assured that sufficient progress has been made in terms of implementing the planned additional steps enabled by the Cabinet

decision on 1st October 2024, and that the Cabinet decision is resulting in the service change achieving the required aims.

- 3.2. That the committee provide feedback on the process for determining whether properties should have an “End-of-Lane” waste collection service.
- 3.3. That the Committee consider the report and recommend any necessary actions or improvements for the waste service to consider.

4. Report details

- 4.1. On 1st October 2024, Cabinet approved an additional £1.299m in capital expenditure within the Waste Service for the purpose of procuring additional recycling vehicles funded by prudential borrowing.
- 4.2. At the same meeting, Cabinet also agreed an additional £1.067m of revenue costs to ensure the service change could deliver as planned on a sustainable footing. This included the revenue cost of the prudential borrowing to purchase the extra vehicles.
- 4.3. The approval of further capital expenditure has enabled the procurement of 8 additional vehicles to support the revised recycling rounds. These are a mixture of sizes and fuel types in line with operational requirements and corporate objectives. The vehicles have been purchased and we are now awaiting delivery from the supplier. In the interim we are still utilising hired vehicles which are being funded from the service revenue allocation. These will be off hired as soon as possible. The 4 new diesel recycling vehicles are due imminently. The smaller Single Person Operation Vehicles (SPOV) and electric vehicles are due in February and May respectively.
- 4.4. The additional revenue allocation has resulted in the recruitment of 8 additional drivers and 11 additional loaders for the waste service. These posts have been successfully filled, which enabled the implementation of the revised recycling rounds that came into effect on November 4th.
- 4.5. Changes have been made to the back-office structure to allow for full administrative and management support for the front-line functions. This has seen the introduction of two Relief Team Leaders who have been put in post to support the management of the day-to-day collection processes when required. Key posts such as Waste Operations Manager and Senior Team Leader that became vacant during the immediate post service change period have now been filled. Technical Officer

Vacancies have been filled to replace staff who had retired or had gone on maternity leave. Role responsibilities have been amended to ensure a more sustainable workload distribution and to address any single points of failure in terms of task allocations.

- 4.6. ICT issues have been a common theme since the roll-out in June 2024, due to system errors and issues that were not identified pre-June 3rd. These have been worked through by internal ICT colleagues in collaboration with our ICT contractors and appear to have largely been resolved, leading to a more streamlined and effective service. These issues included back-office software problems as well as issues with the in vehicle In-Cab technology.
- 4.7. Call volumes to the Customer Contact Centre and reports via our C360 system have reduced significantly since the revised collection rounds were introduced on 4th November. 2195 waste related calls were made to the Customer Call Centre in December 2024, which is very similar to the numbers in March 2024 (1861) and April 2024 (2328) before calls started to spike prior to the roll-out of the new service. The monthly call figures peaked at 13,080 in June 2024. The most recent figures (for December 2024), which are consistent with the figures for March and April 2024, suggest that the service is operating as “Business As Usual”.
- 4.8. Most residents are now having a regular and reliable service in line with what the service would consider to be business as usual activity. The waste service has always had, and always will have, missed collections. It is unrealistic to expect no missed collections due to the number of variables that can affect collection operations. However, the service now believes that the number and frequency of missed collections, whilst still a little higher than pre-June 2024, is now reaching levels in line with normal operations. Repeat missed collections are now isolated cases and, where required, specific actions and activities are taking place to resolve these problems locally. Appendix 1 provides a breakdown by service of the current service level situation.
- 4.9. During the collection route redesign work, 36 properties were identified as needing to move to End of Lane Collections. This is a process where we request that residents present their waste at a location determined by the service in line with operational requirements and our legal authority to do so under Environmental Protection Act (1990) Sec 46. These properties were assessed in accordance with appropriate

protocols and procedures and issued letters informing residents of the change. This is rarely a popular request when made to residents, but the majority of these requests have been accepted without complaint. However, we have been challenged by some of these residents, and we must acknowledge that the wording of our current policy is a little ambiguous, particularly in reference to adopted and unadopted roads, which hasn't helped with those discussions. The service is in the process of reviewing this wording to make it clearer.

4.10. Some Members have been critical of the fact that the service did not warn them about these End of Lane changes before the letters were issued, and that point of view is understood. However, the service felt that these were very operational decisions and, given that it affected such a small number of properties in the County, that no widespread communications were needed with Members. That said, the fact that these reviews were taking place was highlighted at several Councillor briefing sessions. On reflection, and following feedback, it is acknowledged that communications on this issue may have been handled differently. That is a learning point for the service, moving forward.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. Implementing the new waste & recycling service, and improving recycling rates, are specific pledges within the Corporate Plan 2022-27.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. There are no proposals in this report that are anticipated to require further investment.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. A well-being impact assessment is not considered to be required for this report as no decision is being sought.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. This report is to enable Scrutiny to review the implementation of the Cabinet decision of 1st October 2024. A Scrutiny Review of the planning and implementation of the service change is planned.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. As set out within the report at para 4.1 and 4.2 additional resources were required to ensure a sustainable change in service delivery was achieved. The additional revenue funding has been included in the budget proposals for 2025/26.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. There is a risk that any operational issues stemming from matters outside of our control (for example, the recent extreme weather event) result in the public losing faith in the service again. This can only be managed by good public communications and by ensuring that we have the resources in place to recover quickly from such events.

10.2. There is a risk that the focus on operational collection issues since June 2024 have resulted in less focus on education and behaviour change. We now need to increase our focus on these activities and to work with residents regarding their recycling habits to ensure that we maintain and improve the current quality of the recycling being collected which can be sold to market.

11. Power to make the decision.

11.1. Scrutiny's powers with respect of this matter are set out in Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, and Sections 7.1 to 7.4 of the Council's Constitution.