

Somerset Waste Board meeting
23 September 2022
Report for decision

Recycle More Update

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<p>Forward Plan Reference:</p>	<p><i>22/04/03</i></p>
<p>Summary:</p>	<p>The residential element of Recycle More has been rolled-out across the county. This paper provides a progress update including planning for the roll-out to schools.</p> <p>The project has received peer recognition, winning the 2022 LGC Environmental Service Award and being shortlisted for the LARAC Communications Campaign of the Year awards (winners announced in October).</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p>	<p>The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considers and comments on the following recommendations in this report.</p> <p>That the Somerset Waste Board notes the progress made in implementing Recycle More and the risks to the programme.</p>
<p>Reasons for recommendations:</p>	<p>Recycle More is the most significant element of our current Business Plan, given the environmental and financial benefits it delivers to all partners.</p> <p>The roll-out was completed while managing the risks posed the Covid-19 pandemic, a national driver shortage and continued labour market pressures.</p>
<p>Links to Priorities and Impact on Annual Business Plan:</p>	<p>Action 3.1 of the Business Plan 2021-27 concerns the implementation of Recycle More.</p> <p>All partners have declared climate emergencies and the environmental benefit from Recycle More has an important part to play in responding to environmental concerns.</p>
<p>Financial, Legal and HR Implications:</p>	<p>Recycle More has achieved break even earlier than anticipated, see Financial outturn and use of balances 21/22 report.</p>

Equalities Implications:	An impact assessment on Recycle More is maintained and updated as the project progresses.
Risk Assessment:	The residential roll-out has been completed, with significant risks from Covid-19 successfully mitigated and managed. Although it is now 'business as usual', its successful operation and the roll-out of Recycle More to schools will be subject to the wider risks affecting service delivery: a very challenging labour market (notably the underlying national driver shortage) and Covid-related absence which add to service fragility.

1. Background

1. Background to Recycle More

On 29 March 2019 the Somerset Waste Board decided upon SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK as the preferred bidder for Somerset's waste collection contract. SUEZ took over delivering services on 28 March 2020 including the phased roll-out of our new Recycle More collection service. Recycle More enables the public to recycle more through the kerbside sort system, adding the following materials to the weekly collections:

- Plastic pots, tubs and trays (including black plastic)
- Food and beverage cartons (e.g. Tetra Paks)
- Small electrical equipment (e.g. a kettle or toaster)
- Household batteries

This is in addition to what can already be recycled every week – food, paper, glass, cans, aerosols, plastic bottles, cardboard, foil and wearable clothes and shoes.

A 60litre weighted reusable 'Bright Blue Bag' provides extra space for recycling. With more recycled each week, rubbish collections will take place every three weeks.

This change is crucial part of our response to the public demand to recycle more and to achieving our aim of seeing waste treated as a resource. Communal properties (where space and access allow, adding in plastic, pots, tubs and trays and ensuring all can recycle cardboard) and schools (adding in plastic, pots, tubs and trays) will also have more options to recycle. Neither schools nor communal properties will see changes to their rubbish collection frequency, which will still be responsive to when bins are full.

We expect Recycle More to take our overall recycling rate toward 60% and reduce the amount of residual waste by up to circa 23% – with all the kerbside residual waste being used to create Energy from Waste rather than going into landfill.

Note. SWP's introduction of Recycle More saw it win the "Environmental Services"

award at the Local Government Chronicle Awards 2022. The launch of the service has also been shortlisted for the Communications Campaign of the Year awards at the LARAC awards being held in October.

1. Roll-out timetable

SWP always takes a phased approach to major service changes. It is not practical or desirable to change collection services for 260,000-plus households at one time. Phasing work allowed depots to be upgraded and gave time for public engagement, support and behaviour change work.

We have successfully rolled-out in Mendip (kerbside October 2020, communals March 2021), South Somerset (June 2021), Taunton Deane (November 2021) and Sedgemoor and West Somerset (kerbside February 2022, communals June 2022).

The separation of mainline and communal roll-outs in Phase 4 reduced pressures at a time of uncertain Covid pressures (the same approach taken in Mendip).

In October 2022 the service is due to be introduced to the 273 schools receiving SWP collection services (see section 8).

Phase 4 roll-out (Sedgemoor and West Somerset)

As well as separating communal and mainline services, various steps were taken to mitigate risks to the Phase 4 roll-out including:

- Starting delivery of Bright Blue Bags a week earlier than originally planned to build in 'catch-up' time in case deliveries were affected by staff absence or severe weather.
- Delivery of the Warm-up leaflet was paused for one week to allow for any significant post-festive spike in Covid-related staff absence to become apparent.

There were extra pressures and complications, notably Storm Eunice in February, and fuel supply problems that coincided with the launch of mainline collections. The impact can be seen in initial performance, though this has since stabilised.

Changes to communal properties involved approx. 5,600 properties, with a concentration in the Bridgwater area. As with previous phases, the space and access at individual sites were reviewed to understand the best collection arrangements.

2.2 Phase 4 communications and engagement

Stakeholder/public engagement:

The approach was consistent with previous phases, including detailed briefing packs, out of hours virtual briefings sessions for county, district, town and parish councillors.

Regular Recycle More Messenger stakeholder updates were sent to political and

community stakeholders highlighting key information, key dates and encouraging community awareness raising and engagement. Regular updates were also provided for staff and member internal newsletters at all partner authorities.

The dedicated Recycle More page on the SWP webpage was regularly updated and we have seen the expected steadily increasing traffic. Four Recycle More Facebook Q&A Days were hosted to encourage questions and provide answers, running 7am to 7pm. Our use of the Nextdoor platform, which reaches an audience of over 15,000 in Sedgemoor and West Somerset, was expanded.

As with previous phases, the most important elements of communications were the two directly mailed leaflets, in this phase delivered to more than 70,000 mainline households – a warm-up leaflet at five weeks before launch (a week later than originally planned) and the “Coming soon” leaflet, containing individual collection day calendars and a “what goes where?” guide, arrived 3 weeks before launch).

For communal properties, information postcards were sent approx. six weeks ahead of the change and more detailed direct mailing arriving three weeks before launch.

These more detailed letters set out the change for households, including expanded recycling where possible, changes to collection days and the date of the first collections under the new arrangements.

The SWP team liaised with Homes in Sedgemoor (HiS) ahead of the communal roll-out as one as a key stakeholder. Awareness posters were provided to support the change. Feedback in a post-roll-out debriefing, which included tenant representatives as well as HiS officers, was positive about the new arrangements.

3. Impacts of Recycle More on refuse/rubbish and recycling

As mentioned in previous reports, isolating the impacts of Recycle More on refuse and recycling tonnages has been challenging because of the effects of the pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions.

The new service launched in different districts at different times, so each has been affected to greater or lesser extents.

3.1 Recycle More impact on refuse/rubbish

Moving waste from rubbish bins to recycling is a key objective of Recycle More and in the longer-term reducing waste overall is the ultimate aim.

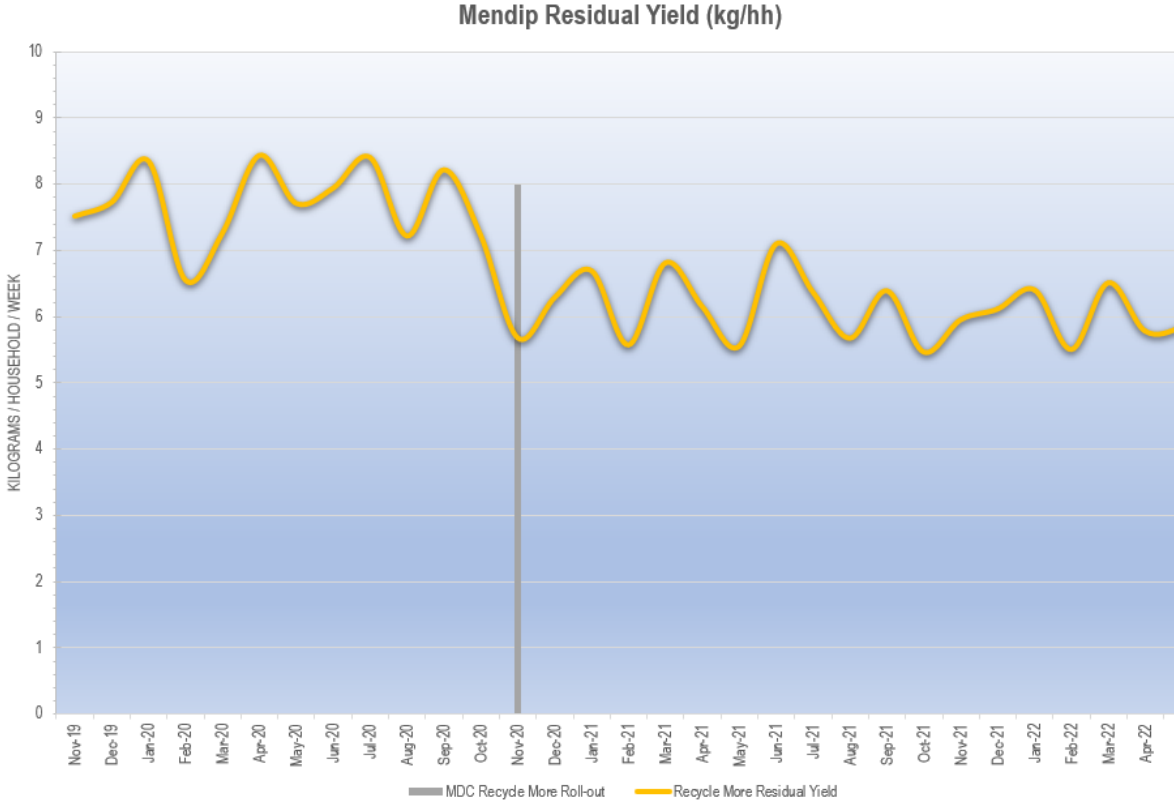
Mendip offers the best insight as it has been running Recycle More the longest (since October 2020). In the first 20 months there was an average decrease of refuse/rubbish of just over 20%, or around 1.6kg each week per household.

It should be noted that from April 2021 all figures will have been affected by the

pandemic and the related lockdown restrictions.

Figure 1 shows a the clear decrease after the launch of the service. Importantly, it also shows that these rates now appear to have become the 'new norm'.

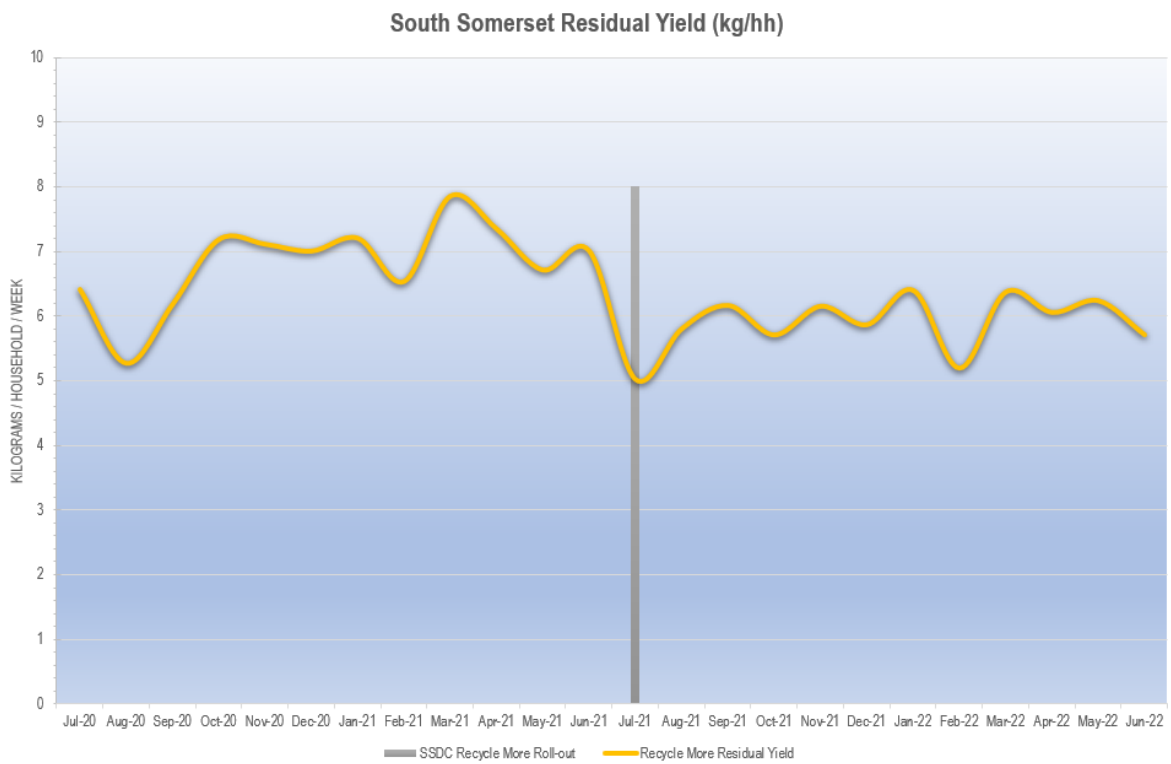
Figure 1.



Looking at other phases inevitably means looking at shorter time frames and comparing post-Recycle More tonnages to tonnages already impacted by the pandemic – making it harder to draw firm conclusions about impacts and trends.

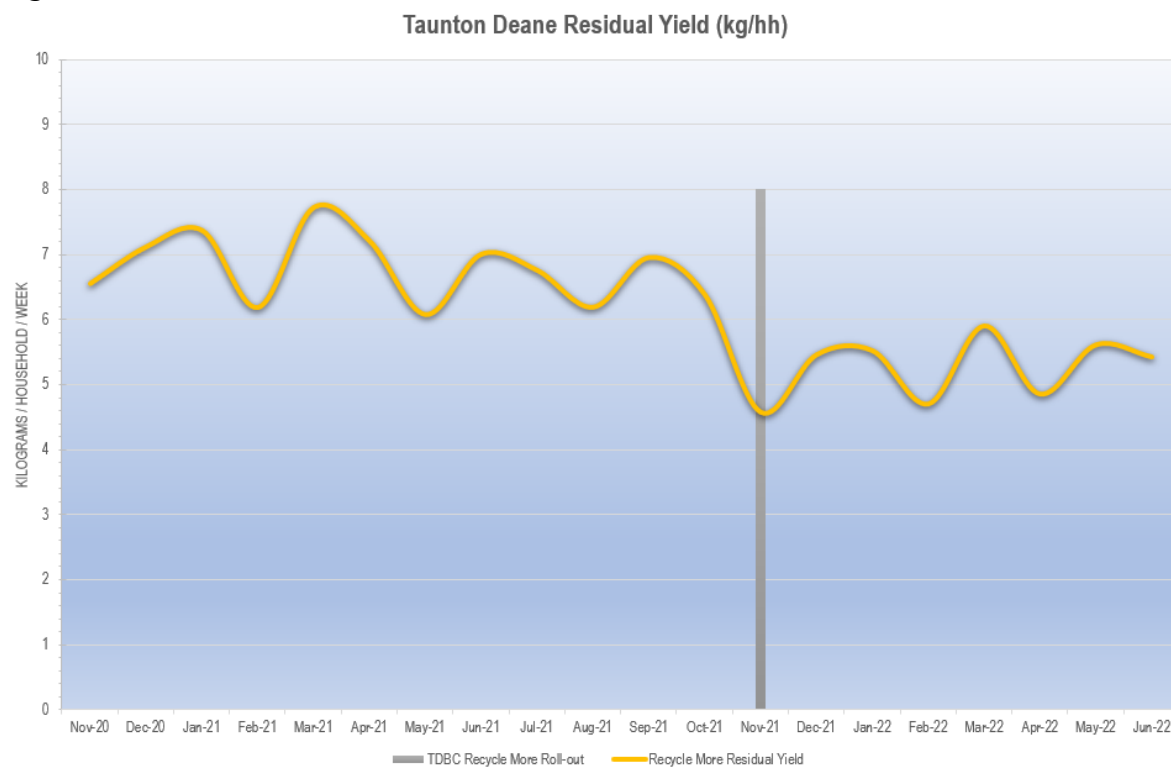
However, for South Somerset (Phase 2), where the service was launched in July 2021, we now have 12 months of data and can see a 14% reduction (around 1kg per household each week) of refuse/rubbish (figure 2).

Figure 2.



In Taunton Deane (Phase 3), the average decrease is 23% (around 1.5kg per household each week), but that is based on only eight months of data following service launch in November 2021 (Figure 3).

Figure 3.



The first four months figures for Recycle More in Phase 4 (Sedgemoor and West Somerset) show decreases of 20% and 18% respectively - though not too much

should be read into four months of data.

The longer the service is in place, the clearer the long-term trends will be. But at this stage the indications continue to be that the introduction of Recycle More is reducing refuse/rubbish by around 20%.

3.2 Recycling and 'total kerbside waste arising'

The picture for recycling is more complicated, with different trends in different material streams which affect overall tonnages.

Reporting accurate waste tonnages on a district basis is also extremely challenging for reasons previously discussed (depot tipping not contiguous with district boundaries, rounds running through multiple districts, unexpected issues like mechanical breakdown or depot problems meaning truck tip in different locations).

Any allocation of data to districts inevitably relies on many assumptions. We have not reported district-level waste data to the Board since 2016-17, acknowledging the difficulty of providing accurate information at this level.

The period of Recycle More roll-out saw other complicating factors:

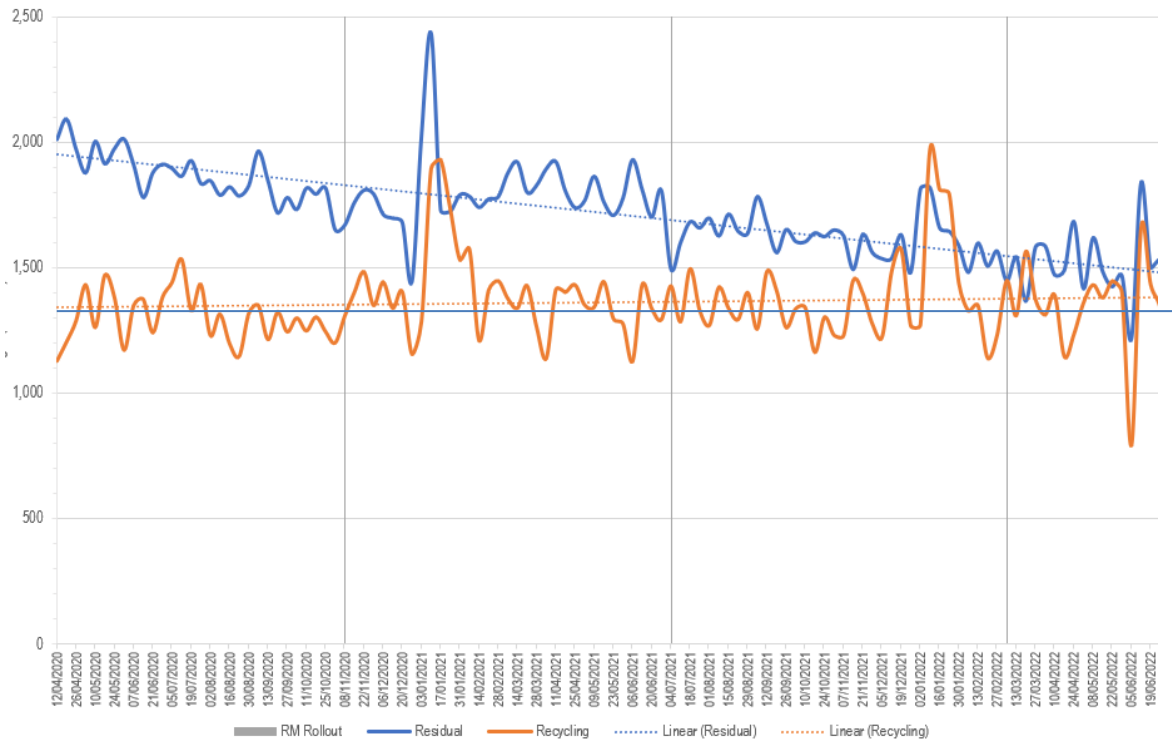
- The re-routing of many rounds means they cover different areas, undermining 'before' and 'after' comparisons.
- The opening of the Walford Cross transfer station. Routes covering parts of both Taunton Deane and Sedgemoor tip at Walford Cross. The empty depot needed to be filled before material started to be exported and this means recycling tonnages from these district areas will be understated to some extent in the first few months.
- The temporary closure of the Williton depot, which services West Somerset and 5,000 properties in Sedgemoor, means crews are tipping into Walford Cross.

We are still exploring how to track recycling increases on a district-by-district basis in a way that is consistent and accurate, but countywide figures will be more robust. It should also be noted that the longer the service has been in place across the entire county, the better we should be able to understand its impact.

Figure 4 plots the average reduction in refuse/rubbish across the whole of the county (approx 450 tonnes per week) and the increase in the recycling (approx 50-75 tonnes per week) over a 26-month period running mid-April 2020 to June 2022.

It is important to note that in this time period, phase 2 (South Somerset) will only have been contributing 12 months of impact to the county figure, Phase 3 (Taunton Deane) only eight months and Phase 4 (Sedgemoor and West Somerset) only four months. i.e. We have not yet seen the impact of a full year of the new service running across the entire county.

Figure 4



Together, this indicates a reduction in 'total arisings' from at the kerbside of around 400-375 tonnes per week across the county, around 12%.

This reduction in overall waste is a win-win: less waste is being generated and a greater proportion of what is generated is going to recycling.

We need to see more data, including from other parts of the country, before drawing conclusions about the 'new normal' and how Recycle More has affected this. However, the reduction in residual waste and significant increase in our recycling rate are clear to see already.

4. Collection performance

Performance in the weeks following launch in Sedgemoor and West Somerset show that the period of 4-6 weeks was difficult, impacted by the factors mentioned in 2.1. At the time of writing, we are seeing incremental but sustained improvements as the service beds-in and routes benefit from a period of stability.

Week	Missed recycling per 100,000 collections			
	Mendip	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	Sedge/ W Somerset
1	316	1,338	604	554
2	253	833	460	493
3	434	972	356	389
4	396	1,133	196	584
5	277	1,985	187	667
6	170	822	211	417
7	158	408	195	270
8	153	302	239	263
9	181	248	175	261
10	313	294	118	158
11	279	193	107	151
12	257	245	133	112
13	198	228	85	98
14	220	79	87	69
15	226	157	59	192
16	249	192	85	119

Week	Missed refuse per 100,000 collections			
	Mendip	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	Sedge/ W Somerset
1	526	933	607	586
2	548	679	484	352
3	405	507	469	444
4	293	355	461	570
5	558	433	349	667
6	521	302	360	559
7	320	226	188	312
8	227	206	98	312
9	307	186	20	291
10	174	169	109	247
11	284	216	80	200
12	255	190	70	258
13	114	183	73	160
14	243	128	61	128
15	261	159	104	253
16	98	147	127	346

5. Schools Against Waste

Every primary school in each of the Recycle More phases has been offered a free visit by the Carymoor team to support the roll-out of the service. From September 2020 to date, the Schools Against Waste team has visited 32 schools in Mendip, 40 in South Somerset, 31 in Somerset West and Taunton and 17 in Sedgemoor.

Carymoor will continue to offer interactive, live virtual sessions as standard, although some face to face visits have been booked. The virtual sessions were devised in response to Covid restrictions and have proved very popular.

7. Williton Depot works

Upgrading works at the Williton depot started last month and are currently focussed on water main diversion. It is expected to last three to four months, depending on progress which can, as always, be affected by unknown site specifics.

This did not substantially affect the Phase 4 roll-out and material will be handled by the Walford Cross depot until works are complete.

8. Schools Roll-out

As part of Recycle More, we will be improving recycling service for the county's 273 schools receiving a service from SWP. It will add plastic pots, tubs and trays to collections, adding capacity and improving 'binrastructure' with the aim of boosting recycling rates which currently lag behind domestic rates.

The impacts and solutions for individual schools vary depending on their circumstances and the space and access available. The improvements will be supported by the dedicated Schools Waste Management Officer.

An audit of all school sites was completed before the summer holidays, looking at the facilities currently in place and what needs to be introduced for the move to Recycle More. As part of this, recycling boxes for classrooms have been encouraged and provided. School engagement with the audit has been positive.

Existing external bins are being stickered and new bins provided where needed.

SWP attended head teacher association meetings for Secondary and Primary schools to discuss Recycle More (and wider waste topics) earlier in 2022 will be and attended meetings of school Business Managers in the coming weeks.

A supporting toolkit will be provided including labels for classroom boxes, reminder posters of what can be recycled and when collections take place, and 'waste flow' diagrams to help schools identify key pinch points and common materials.

Supporting schools to drive up recycling will be a longer term piece of work.

We will be using established channels to raise awareness among schools and seeking to learn from SUEZ experiences in other parts of the country about how schools can be supported and encouraged to improve their recycling.

9. Options Considered and reasons for rejecting them

- 9.1** Not relevant as this paper is simply an update on progress. The potentially disruptive pressures of Covid-19 have not, at time of writing, materialised to a significant degree so there is no need to delay the roll-out to schools.

10. Consultations undertaken

- 10.1** Monthly meetings of the Strategic Management Group (senior officers from each partner) have kept officers up to date with progress in mobilising Recycle More. Business Continuity arrangements in place mean there are frequent meetings with all partners (including customer services and communications). Additional meetings and updates with SW&T and SDC colleagues arranged as needed.

11. Implications

11.1 Recycle More is delivering significant environmental benefit – reducing the amount of rubbish generated and increasing recycling levels. Recycle More also results in lower emissions as vehicles will travel less distance overall (refuse collections move from two-weekly to three-weekly while recycling collections remain weekly).

11.2 Risks

The underlying risks to Recycle More (i.e. the risks of not achieving the stated objectives) remain broadly as they were and have been the subject of previous board papers (see background section). The additional risks related to Covid-19 and the impact this has had on waste services are reflected in our risk register. Covid-19 risks have diminished significantly but are still be monitored. The national shortage of drivers continues to be a risk, though the period of most acute pressure appears to have passed.

12. Background papers

12.1 All previous board papers on Recycle More are available on the SWP or SCC websites. A report on Recycle More is taken to each board meeting.