

Somerset Waste Board meeting  
25 September 2020  
Report for decision

---

Revised Recycle More roll-out timetable

Lead Officer: Mickey Green, Managing Director, Somerset Waste Partnership

Author: Mickey Green, Managing Director, Somerset Waste Partnership

Contact Details: [mickey.green@somersetwaste.gov.uk](mailto:mickey.green@somersetwaste.gov.uk)

<b>Forward Plan Reference:</b>	
<b>Summary:</b>	On 31 July the Somerset Waste Board agreed a revised roll-out programme for Recycle More which reflected the serious, unprecedented and uncertain impact that Covid-19 was having on waste services. The Strategic Management Group have reviewed and agreed our readiness to roll out the first phase in Mendip at the end of October 2020. This paper updates on progress ahead of the planned roll-out.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<p><b>The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considers and comments on the following recommendations in this report.</b></p> <p><b>That the Somerset Waste Board:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Notes the progress made in implementing Recycle More.</b></li> </ol>
<b>Reasons for recommendations:</b>	Report for information only. Recycle More is the most significant element of our current Business Plan given the environmental and financial benefits it delivers to all partners. Clearly the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic adds to the risks of the roll-out programme.
<b>Links to Priorities and Impact on Annual Business Plan:</b>	Section 1.1 of the SWB Approved Business Plan 2020-25 concerns the implementation of Recycle More. All partners have declared climate emergencies/similar, and the environmental benefit from Recycle More is an important part of achieving these.

<b>Financial, Legal and HR Implications:</b>	<p>Recycle More is anticipated to breakeven during the early part of quarter two of 2022/23 as reported to the board on 31 July 2020. At The end of 2019/20 the project balance was a deficit of £140,000. It is anticipated that during 2020/21 £2,233,000 will be spent on the roll out of the Recycle More project which will leave an anticipated deficit of £2,373,000 at outturn. These costs include the higher costs of the current service compared to Recycle More. As agreed, no savings as a result of the new contract will be taken from the Somerset Waste Partnership until all roll out costs have been fully funded and breakeven point is reached. It is still expected that the annual saving from Recycle More will exceed £2m. The financial impact of the revised roll out programme will not impact upon breakeven point as all 5 partners are funding their share of these Covid-19 related costs which will include use of MHCLG Covid-19 funding. This position will continue to be monitored and updated as phase one of roll out commences and the board will be updated accordingly. The anticipated savings figures have been shared with s151 Officers for inclusion in each partners MTFP process.</p> <p>There are no specific legal implications from the revised roll-out timetable, and the only HR implications relate to business continuity planning – ensuring that key staff are identified and contingency plans in place, and ensure that sufficient agency cover should be available should there be an elevated level of front-line staff sickness due to Covid-19.</p>
<b>Equalities Implications:</b>	<p>An impact assessment on Recycle More is maintained and updated as the project progresses.</p>
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	<p>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). New and or significantly changed risks are set out in section 4 of this report. The roll-out of phase 1 in Mendip in October 2020 has particular risks given that Covid-19 is still with us, and because of the impact that Covid-19 on mobilisation has had, meaning that aspects of the service (e.g. garden waste) are not where we would like them to be.</p>

## 1. Background

### 1.1. 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. SUEZ will roll out our new collection service model (Recycle More) in phases. This will enable the public to recycle even more through the kerbside sort system, adding in the following materials to the weekly collection:

- Plastic pots, tubs and trays (including black plastic)
- Food and beverage cartons (e.g. TetraPaks)
- 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 and foil. A verbal update will be provided to the board on the kerbside collection of textiles, which we have unfortunately had to suspend due to lack of off-takers due to Covid-19 – we are advising residents to take high quality textiles suitable for reuse to charity shops or our recycling centres in the interim.

A 60litre weighted reusable sack (a 'bright blue bag') will ensure residents have space for all their extra recycling. With so much more recycled each week, the frequency of residual waste will be reduced to every three weeks. This change is crucial to us being able to respond to public demand to recycle more, to nudge those that aren't recycling fully at the moment, to support our aim to see waste treated as a resource. Communal properties (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 increased 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 this to take our recycling rate to around 60% and reduce the amount of residual waste from around 480 kg/household to 418kg per household – with this residual waste being used to create Energy from Waste rather than going into landfill.

## **1.2. Revised roll-out timetable**

Every time SWP has rolled out a major service change it has phased the changes as it is not practical or desirable to make a change to 250,000 households recycling and waste collection services at one time, not least because we need to phase work to depots (because whilst we overhaul our depots to deal with additional recyclables we still need to continue with the 'day job') and so we can support residents to change behaviours.

On 9 April 2020 the Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership took the decision to delay the roll-out of Recycle More due to the serious, unprecedented and uncertain impact that Covid-19 was having on waste services. The revised roll-out schedule for Recycle More agreed by the Board in July 2020 is

as follows:

<b>When</b>	<b>Where</b>	<b>Households</b>
26 Oct 2020	Mendip (all)	51,768
28 June 2021	South Somerset (all)	76,653
27 Sept 2021 (fallback 25 Oct 2021)	Somerset West & Taunton (primarily old Taunton Deane)	55,207
28 Feb 2022 (fallback 28 March 2022)	Sedgemoor & Somerset West & Taunton (primarily old West Somerset)	72,312

As agreed by the Board in July 2020, communal properties in Mendip will not be included within phase 1 but will have the range of materials they can recycle expanded ahead of or part of the June 2021 phase. Some households living in communal properties access parts of the kerbside service (e.g. to recycle food waste) and these households will see changes to their service in phase 1. SWP will write to each of these households as they need a bespoke approach. Whilst days of refuse collection may change for some communal properties, the frequency of rubbish collection will not change as a result of Recycle More.

As agreed by the Board in July 2020 Schools will still roll out in two phase, and it is anticipated that we will roll out Recycle More to schools in Mendip and South Somerset on 28 June 2021, and to schools in Sedgemoor and Somerset West & Taunton in either Sept 2021 or February 2022. A finalised timetable will be brought back to the board later in this financial year.

### **1.3. Communications and Engagement**

The success of Recycle More requires behaviour change and significant communications and engagement will take place ahead of, during and after roll-out. Several key elements are already underway, focussed on the Mendip area while keeping a wider audience updated on progress. The emphasis in all communications is on raising awareness, explaining the change, telling people how they can prepare and signposting to further information and support.

Briefing packs (full and bite-sized) have been distributed to a wide range of stakeholders, including council representatives at parish, town, city, district and county level, as well as other interested organisations and groups. Electronic versions of promotional posters have been sent to stakeholders to help raise awareness. Customer Service teams have been provided with briefing materials (more detailed for the Mendip District Council team) along with frequently asked questions to ensure consistent responses to the most common queries.

By the time of the Board meeting we expect that three online meetings will have been hosted for Mendip council representatives, taking the form of short presentations followed by question and answer sessions. Council representatives at parish, town, city, district and county level were invited to attend and ad hoc requests for Question and Answer sessions are being met wherever possible.

Virtual engagement with residents is also underway and is particularly important given the impact of COVID-19 on opportunities for face-to-face engagement (face-to-face engagement is currently on hold). Two of four planned Facebook Q&A sessions have taken place, offering out of hours opportunities to respond to queries. This is on top of the significant business as usual engagement through SWP social media channels.

The first of two Talking Café Q&A sessions have also taken place, hosted by the Community Council for Somerset (CCS), to help reach, amongst others, those who are more isolated or vulnerable.

Additional resource is being put into digital/online content, including a service change film which demonstrates how to recycle with Recycle More.

Engaging with young people and their parents/carers through schools is a key component of our campaign, but one made more difficult by COVID-19. The Carymoor Environment Trust has developed interactive 'virtual' assemblies and workshop in support of Recycle More which are being offered to all 52 primary schools in the Mendip area. The challenges facing schools are well documented, and while face-to-face engagement with, including 'school gate roadshows', remain part of plan these will only progress when schools consider it safe.

The first of two critical communications will have been distributed to the 51,000 plus households in the district in the week beginning 14 September (six weeks prior to launch). The 'Get ready for Recycle More' warm-up leaflet introduces the new service, highlights the forthcoming change and signposts to further information, support and guidance.

The second leaflet, the 'Recycle More is coming soon' pre-launch leaflet, is scheduled for distribution starting the week beginning 5 October. It gives further detail and includes a clear 'what goes where?' guide and an individual collection day calendar, specific to different areas of the district. Copies of the leaflets in alternative formats are available on request. District Council contact centre staff and the website will also have the same information on changed collections.

The September edition of Your Somerset include information about Recycle More (with a version specifically for Mendip residents) which will provide key information to key stakeholders and residents, including those not digitally enabled. This is one benefit of having expanded the first phase of roll-out to cover all kerbside properties in Mendip.

Website information has been expanded and enhanced, and collection day calendars (iCal) can be downloaded from the SWP website. Display materials (display board and take away postcards) have been created and are being distributed to appropriate public spaces, such as libraries, council office spaces, so far as the current COVID-19 restrictions allow. Regular information and press releases, supported by relevant social media activity is being sent to Mendip media, followed-up with for further information or interviews followed-up as required.

Additional resources have been brought into SWP's customer service and operational teams to help deal with increased customer contact – though the district Council's customer service team and our My Waste Services system will remain the key front doors for residents. Support will be targeted for those changing days (e.g. staff reviewing rounds on their 'old' collection day and engaging with residents to inform them of changes if they have missed messages, closely monitoring participation on 'new' collection days and targeting additional support).

Enhanced processes are also being put in place to ensure that we support those residents who are concerned about whether they have enough space for their rubbish. Contacts are being triaged, prioritised and responded to by email, telephone or visit as appropriate. Where extra rubbish capacity is essential (for example with a large family or medical needs) it can be made available, and we will make that process as seamless as possible. There will be requests for extra capacity that are not considered essential and it is important that households are encouraged to engage fully with the new service – freeing up space in rubbish bins. SWP has already funded (approx. 11k) to three cloth nappy groups and these will be promoted, though we recognise that this is not a solution for all those with children in nappies.

#### **1.4. Mobilisation issues**

The challenges of mobilising a new collection contract cannot be understated – whilst the staff TUPE transferred we have a whole new fleet of vehicles, a step-change in technology and use of data, new systems and processes. The challenges of this process have been made even more difficult by having to do this through a global pandemic. Dealing with significant changes in technology, changes to safe systems of work to protect staff, key staff at SWP and Suez having to focus on our business continuity plans meaning management resources are spread more thinly, the pressures that come when services are restarted after a considerable period of time – all of these and other factors have made mobilisation incredibly challenging. The changes to the garden waste service that Suez implemented did not go as well as we expected, and we apologise for the impact this has had on customers. Suez and SWP have learnt the lessons from this and reflected this in our planning for Recycle More. However, clearly a roll out on the scale of Recycle More is going to be made much more difficult by having to do it when the world

is so far from normality.

Although the global pandemic delayed our original plans for the launch of 'Recycle More' and continues to present risks and challenges we are confident the new launch date remains achievable. Issues with data and IT integration have mostly been resolved and those issues which remain outstanding (planned for resolution by mid-September) are not critical to the planning or rolling out of the new service. By the time of the board meeting the live link up between the in-cab systems and My Waste Services/District Call Centres will have been enabled, meaning that where a valid missed collection is not being reported (e.g. because the vehicle is not out, because the waste wasn't presented at the time of collection or because of contamination) it will inform the resident of this, helping change behaviours.

Extra delivery crews have been deployed for a number of months now to deal with the high level of container order seen through lockdown and this will continue, with further additional crews deployed if necessary, to deal with increased requests ahead of Recycle More. Given the high volume of requests and challenges in the supply market (with high demand being seen across the Country) this has put pressure on deliveries of containers – for example arriving late, being unexpectedly delayed – which has had a knock on impact on our ability to meet customer expectations. In September additional storage space was secured so that we can over-order containers to run a higher surplus to ensure any ongoing stocking issues do not have a customer impact.

Robust scrutiny of Suez's operational plans has been undertaken to ensure that the new routes are robust, and that they are capable of delivering the increased level of productivity required. This also has the benefit that lower mileage (and hence emissions) will be generated from the new routes, and that opportunities to simplify the service have been taken (e.g. collecting from all of Frome on one day rather than two). Suez have been training staff to ensure they have sufficient resources to deliver the bright blue bag ahead of roll-out, to monitor issues and support residents, and bringing in extra management capacity (including those with direct experience of operating three-weekly services).

## **2. Options Considered and reasons for rejecting them**

- 2.1.** A go/no go review was undertaken by the Managing Director of SWP, in conjunction with SMG, in late August to ensure that we are ready for phase 1 of Recycle More – i.e. that the service is sufficiently stable despite the pressures of Covid-19, that the route mapping is robust, that Covid-19 isn't having undue impacts on staffing levels, and that our plans for operational support and communications and engagement are still on track. Lessons learnt exercises will be undertaken after each phase of roll-out to inform future phases.

### **3. Consultations undertaken**

- 3.1.** Bi-weekly meetings of the Strategic Management Group (senior officers from each partner) have kept officers up to date with progress in mobilising Recycle More.

### **4. Implications**

- 4.1.** Recycle More is expected to deliver a significant environmental benefit – reducing the amount of rubbish generated and increasing recycling levels, both of new materials and the half of the average rubbish bin in Somerset that could already be recycled already. Recycle More also results in lower emissions as vehicles will travel less distance overall (with refuse collections moving from two-weekly to three-weekly whilst recycling collections remain weekly). Expected financial savings are set out in the financial implications section above.

#### **4.2. 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 were reported to the board in July and are reflected in our risk register.

Contingency plans are in place to ensure we have a plan should a local lockdown or similar result in much higher waste tonnages and we are working with District Council partners to ensure that we can secure access to additional staff (e.g. streetscene) should Covid-19, and in particular the impact of track and trace, have a significant impact on our collection crews. Clearly we cannot fully predict the impact Covid-19 will have, but SMG have reviewed the SWP's Business Continuity Plans, and public health input has been sought where necessary (e.g. to changed working arrangements to ensure that we can keep staff safe whilst we support households where we identify on a round that they need to support with Recycle More).

New and or significantly changed risks are as below. Covid-19 is placing SWP, Suez and our partners under considerable pressure and the uncertainty inherent in Covid-19 means it is difficult to fully describe all the potential risks. A specific section of our Business Continuity Plan is devoted to the specific risks to Recycle More.

### **5. Background papers**

- 5.1.** All previous board papers on Recycle More are available on the SWP or SCC websites.

- 29 March 2019 Board meeting agenda and papers
- 9 June 2020 Decision to delay Recycle More
- 23 April decision on phase 1 of revised Recycle More roll-out timetable
- 30 July decision on overall Recycle More roll-out timetable