

Somerset Waste Board meeting
9 December 2022
Report for decision

Recycle More Update

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Forward Plan Reference:	<i>SWB/22/05/05</i>
Summary:	The residential element of the Recycle More roll-out is complete. This paper provides an update on its impacts and the roll-out of expanded services to schools. More information has been provided in this report on tonnages of recycling and refuse collected through Recycle More, as requested by the Board. Our upcoming waste composition and participation analysis will also help us compare to before the roll-out. Going forward it is proposed not to have a separate report on Recycle More (as roll-out is complete) and it will form part of our quarterly performance report instead.
Recommendations:	<p>The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considers and comments on the following recommendations in this report.</p> <p>That the Somerset Waste Board:</p> <p>I. Notes the progress made in implementing Recycle More and that this will be the final separate report on Recycle More now that the roll-out is fully complete.</p>
Reasons for recommendations:	Recycle More is the most significant element of our Business Plan, given the environmental and financial benefits it delivers to all partners. The residential element was successfully rolled-out while managing the risks posed the Covid-19 pandemic, a national driver shortage and continued labour market pressures. The roll-out to schools has also been undertaken, completing the roll-out.
Links to Priorities and Impact on Annual Business Plan:	Action 3.1 of the Business Plan 2021-27 concerns the implementation of Recycle More.

	All partners have declared climate emergencies and the environmental benefit from Recycle More has an important part to play in responding to environmental concerns.
Financial, Legal and HR Implications:	Recycle More has achieved break even earlier than anticipated, see Financial outturn and use of balances 21/22 report.
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 now 'business as usual', its successful operation and 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 potential 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.
- Food and beverage cartons (e.g. Tetra Paks).
- Small household electricals (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 take place every three weeks.

This change was is a 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 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 collected when 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.

1. Roll-out timetable

The residential element of Recycle More was rolled-out in four phases, allowing depots to be upgraded and gave time for public engagement, support and behaviour change work.

- Mendip - kerbside October 2020. Communals March 2021.
- South Somerset - June 2021.
- Taunton Deane - November 2021.
- Sedgemoor/West Somerset - kerbside February 2022. Communals June 2022.

In October 2022 Recycle More was introduced to schools receiving SWP collection services (see section 8).

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

As mentioned in previous reports, isolating the cause and effects on waste tonnages can be difficult, with many factors in play. This has been further complicated by 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.

2.1 Recycle More impact on refuse/rubbish

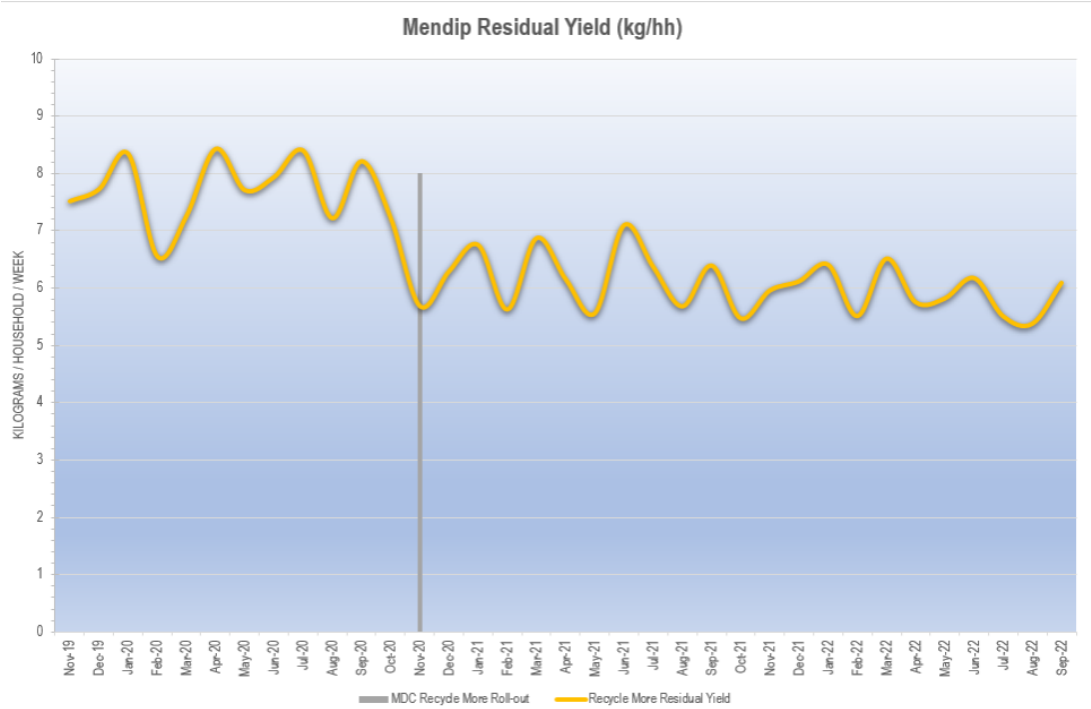
Moving waste from refuse/rubbish bins to recycling is a key objective of Recycle More and in the longer-term reducing waste overall is the ultimate aim.

Mendip offers the best insight as it has been running Recycle More the longest (since October 2020). In Mendip, over the first 23 months, up to September 2022, there was an average decrease of refuse/rubbish of just over 21%, or around 1.7kg each week per household (1% and 0.1kg up since last board report).

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 in refuse/rubbish after the launch of the service. It also shows that these rates now appear to have become the 'new norm'.

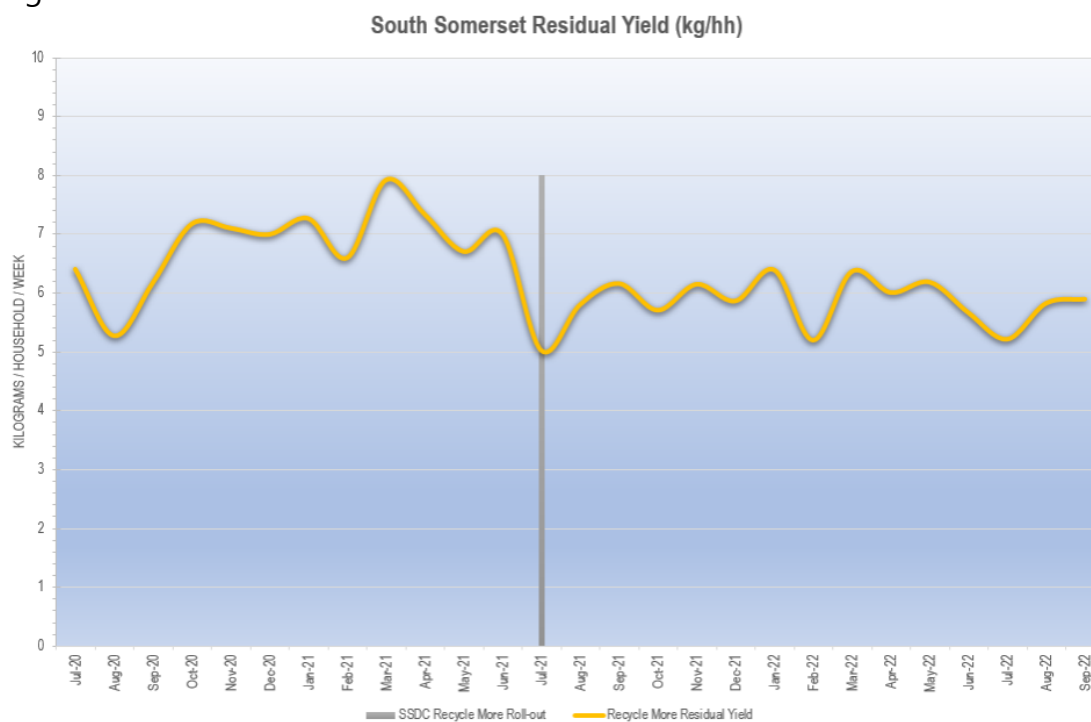
Figure 1.



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 conclusions about impacts and trends.

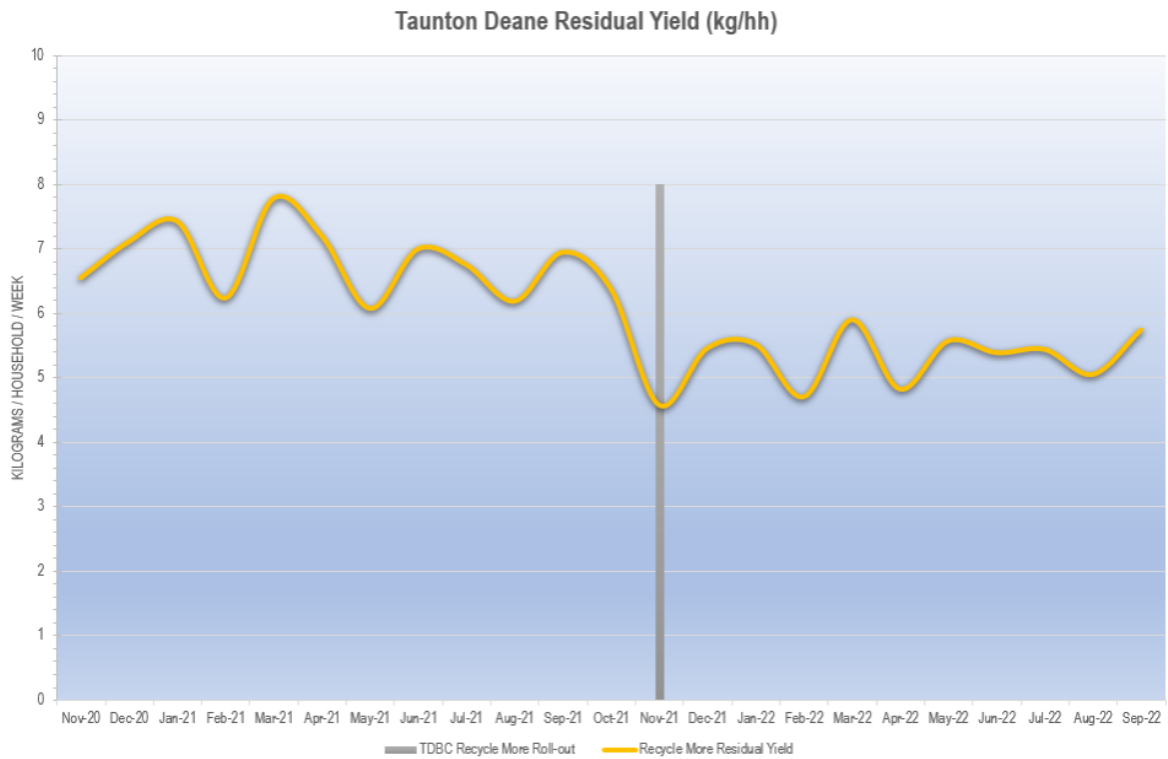
However, for South Somerset (Phase 2), where the service was launched in July 2021, we now have 15 months of data and can see a 15% reduction, around 1kg per household each week of refuse/rubbish (figure 2).

Figure 2.



In Taunton Deane (Phase 3), the average decrease is 22% (around 1.5kg per household each week), but that is based on 10 months of data following service launch in November 2021 (Figure 3).

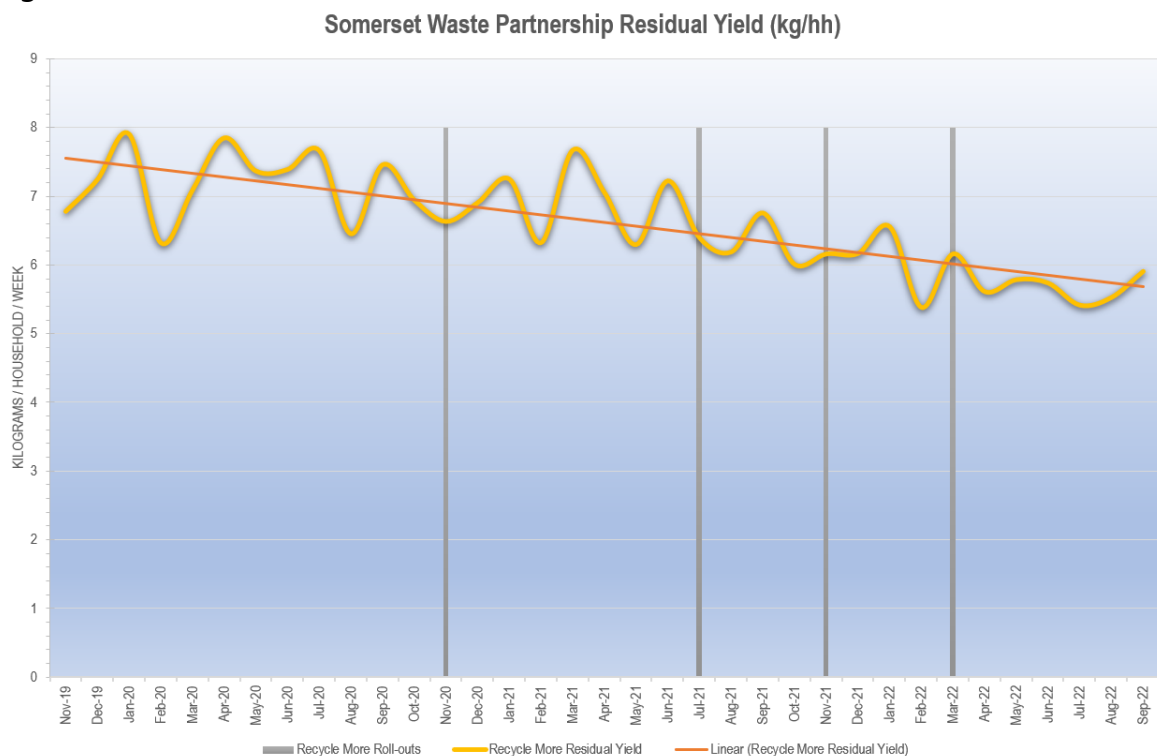
Figure 3.



The first seven months figures for Recycle More in Phase 4 (Sedgemoor and West Somerset) show decreases of 21% and 16% respectively - though not too much should be read into seven months of data.

Figure 4 shows the overall reduction in refuse/rubbish tonnages from the start of Recycle More.

Figure 4.



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%.

Since the last report to board, these percentages and weights have changed only very marginally, suggesting we are settling into the new norm.

2.2 Recycle More impact on recycling

The picture for recycling is more complicated. Reporting accurate tonnages on a district basis is very challenging for reasons previously discussed (depot tipping not contiguous with district boundaries, rounds running through multiple districts, trucks making unplanned tips in different locations).

Any allocation of data to districts inevitably relies on assumptions and we have therefore not reported district-level waste data to the Board since 2016-17.

There were also additional complicating factors during the Recycle More roll-out that make district reporting impractical:

- Re-routing of many rounds which undermines 'before' and 'after' comparisons.
- The opening of the Walford Cross depot and the associated temporary interruption of materials exported from it.
- The temporary closure of the Williton depot. It serves West Somerset and 5,000 properties in Sedgemoor so crews are currently tipping into Walford Cross.

Countywide figures are more robust. Figures 5-12 show the average kilogrammes collected per week per household (kg/hh/pw), countrywide of different material types across Somerset for the period April 2019 – September 2022.

This 42-month period gives context to the impacts of Recycle More over a what has been a turbulent time for waste. It includes a period before any impact from the Slim My Waste campaign (which substantially increased food waste tonnages and may have prompted changes in other materials), Covid (which had varying impacts depending on lockdown restrictions) and Recycle More (being introduced in phases so having an incremental, cumulative effect on tonnages).

Tonnage trends vary for different material types over this period. In broad terms, plastic has seen a significant increase. Cardboard, food, glass, aluminium cans, steel and cans have seen steady increases and these increases seem to have been amplified by Recycle More.

Paper and textile tonnages, however, fell notably.

Extra materials are collected as part of Recycle More. These tend to be moved in batches as depot levels reach certain thresholds, making monthly trends unhelpful. However, between the launch in October 2020 and September 2022, the following tonnages have been collected.

- Household batteries = 30.92 tonnes

- Cartons = 119.28 tonnes
- Small electricals = 203.24 tonnes

Overall, increases in plastic and other materials are, to some extent, offset by the reductions in paper and textiles but the net result is a notable increase in recycling (see Fig 12) at the same time as the reduction in refuse/residual waste.

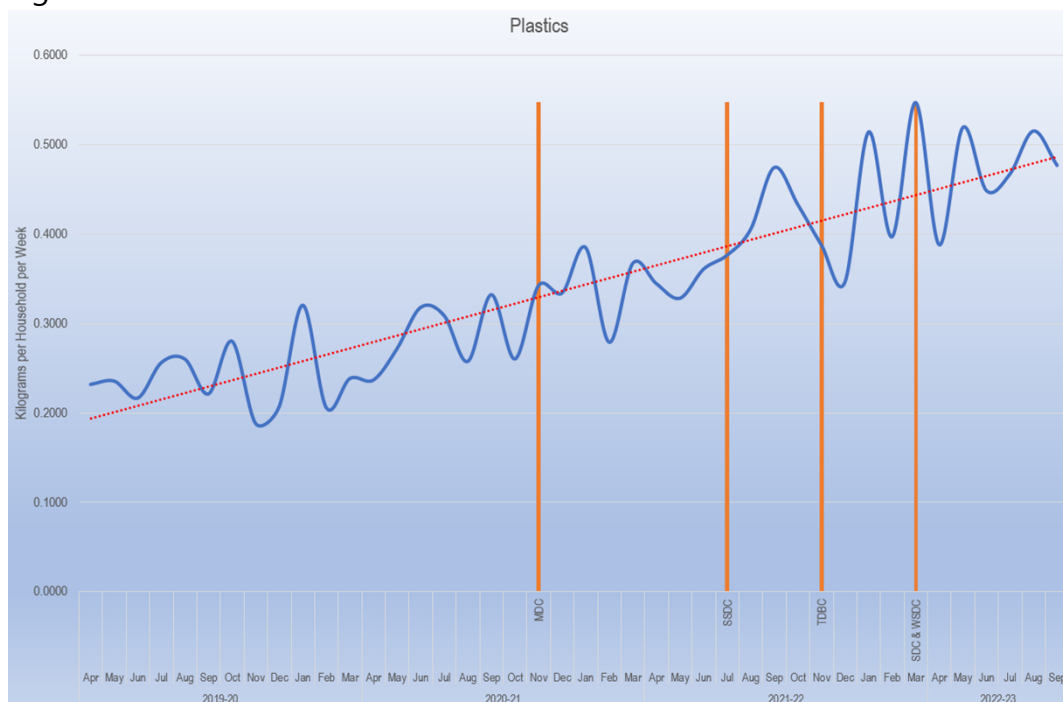
Plastics

Figure 4 shows the significant rise in plastic, with a relatively gentle existing trend of increase – complicated by lockdown restrictions - amplified by the start of the roll-out of Recycle More in October/November 2020, with the increases becoming more pronounced as more of the county received the service.

Given the introduction of plastic pots, tubs and trays; plastic is where we would expect to see most of the impact of Recycle More. It is worth remembering that plastic is very light, so weight increases equate to a considerable amount of space and number of items.

The average weight of plastic collected every month has nearly doubled between 2019-20 (265 tonnes) and 2022-23 (527 tonnes). With each tonne of plastic equating to (very) roughly 20,000 individual items that means over 10 million pieces of plastic recycled in 2022-23.

Figure 5.

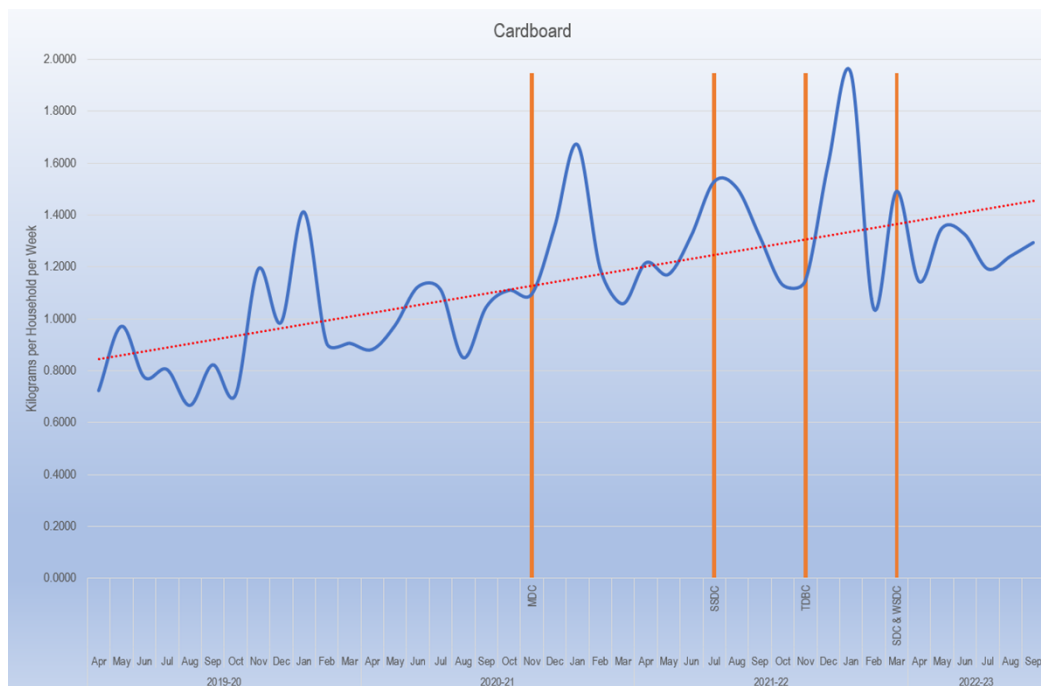


Cardboard

Figure 6 shows the increases in cardboard, again with what appears to be an existing

trend of increase amplified by Recycle More, with the usual post-Christmas peaks.

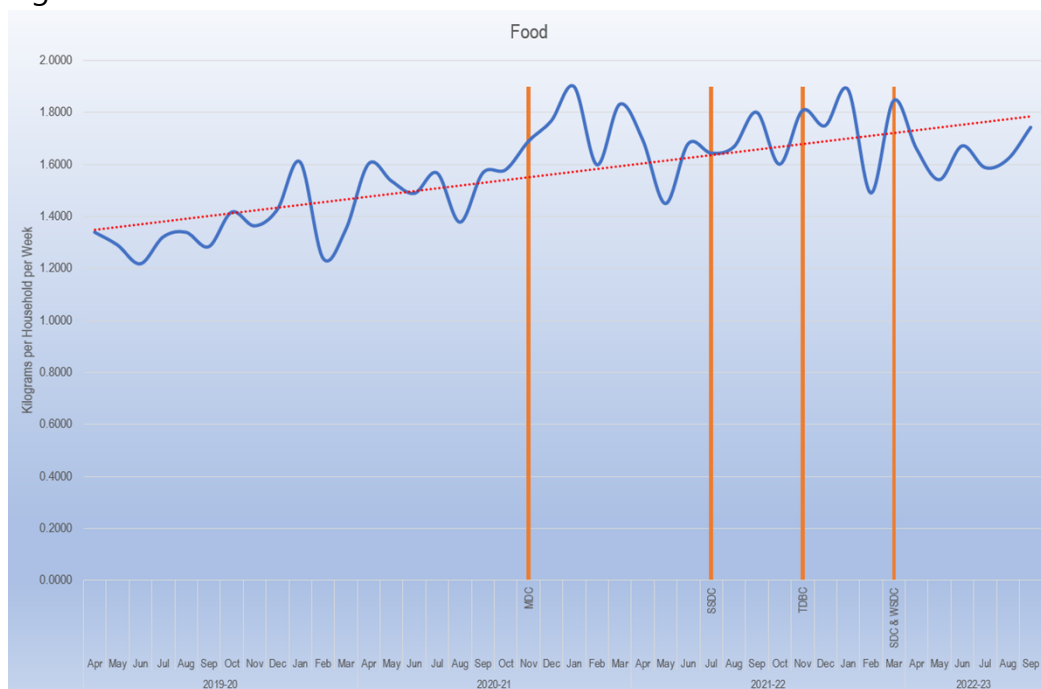
Figure 6.



Food

Figure 7 shows the increases in food across the period. As well as the expected post-Christmas peaks, a March-May 2020 peak coincides with the Slim My Waste campaign and then the first lockdown. Weights have continued to gradually increase since the start of Recycle More.

Figure 7.

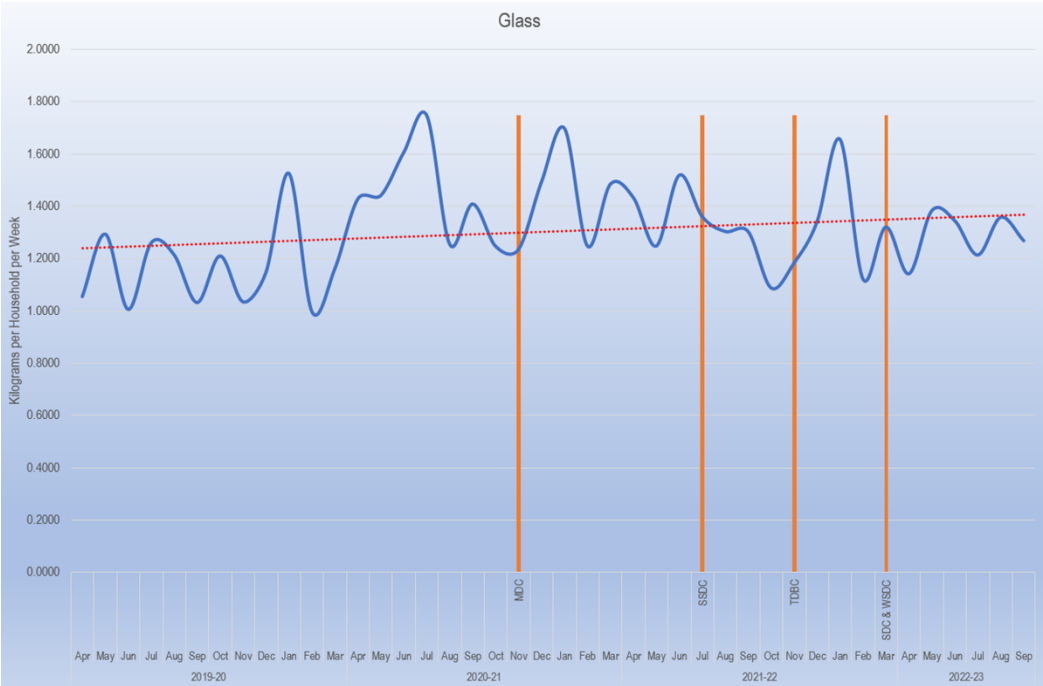


Glass

Figure 8 shows a marginal increase in the weight of glass collected, with what

appears to be a peak/increase linked with the first lockdown. Weights have tailed off slightly from that point – despite the introduction of Recycle More – but perhaps from an artificially high peak.

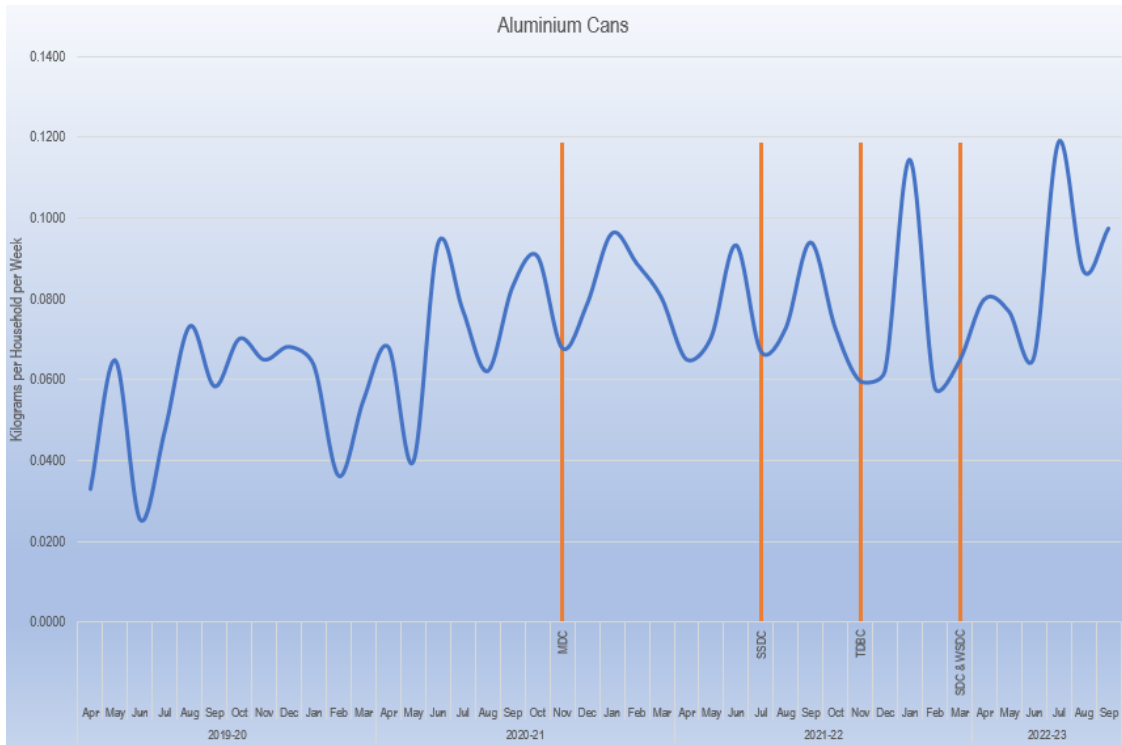
Figure 8.



Aluminium cans

Figure 9 shows the significant increase in aluminium cans collected, with what appears to be a peak/increase linked with the first lockdown, as well as the usual January peaks. The increases continue and appear to have been slightly amplified with the introduction of Recycle More.

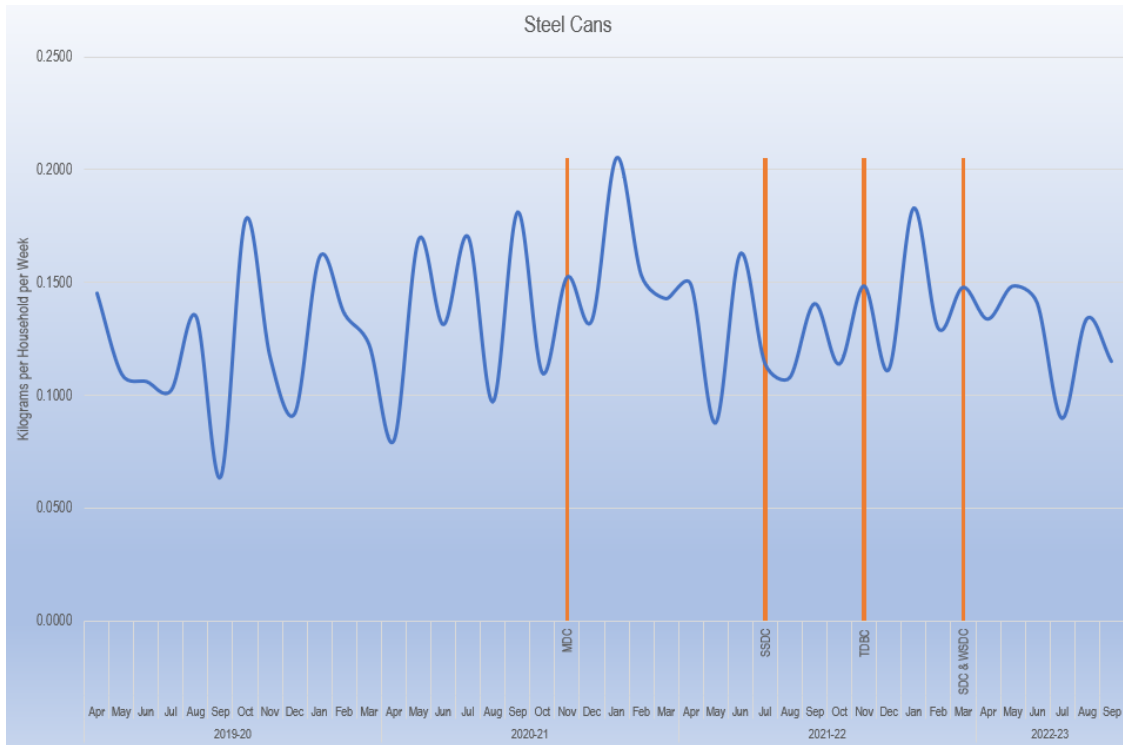
Figure 9.



Steel cans

Figure 10 shows a marginal increase in the weights of steel cans collected. Again, there is a peak that may be linked to the first lockdown. The introduction of Recycle More does not seem to have had any particular impact on these tonnages.

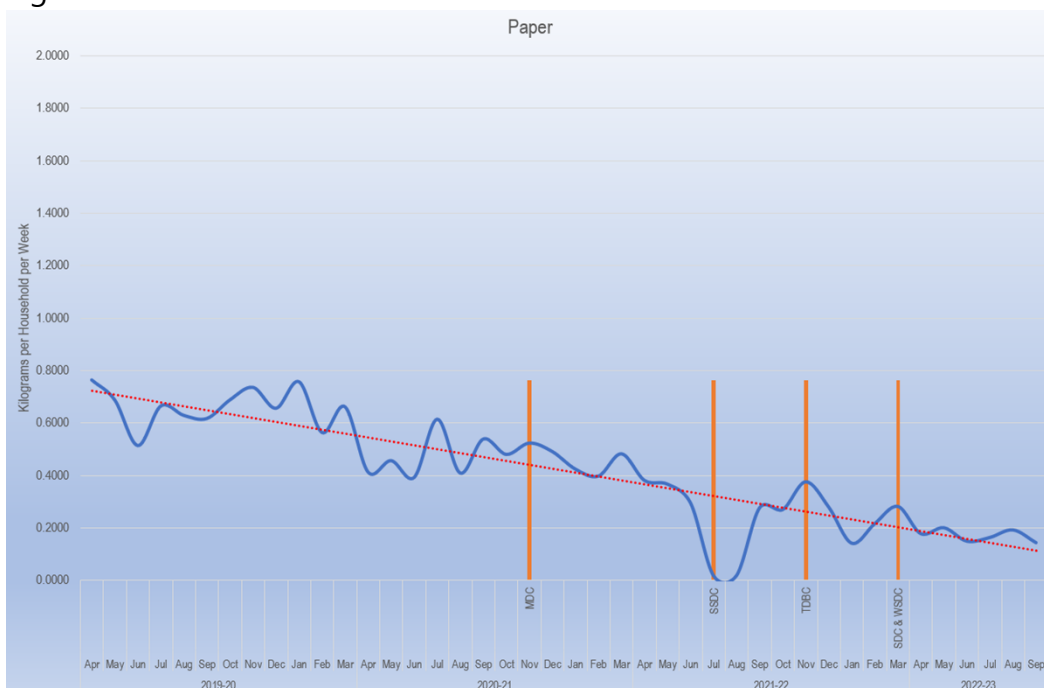
Figure 10.



Paper

Figure 11 shows the dramatic decrease in the weight of paper, falling from around 0.75kg/hh/week in April 2019 to around 0.15kg/hh/week in April 2022. Decreasing paper tonnages is a well-established trend, but this seems to have speeded up over this period. (Note the dip in July/August 2021 was due to paper being sent out with cardboard, due to operational issues which meant they had to be mixed on collection vehicles).

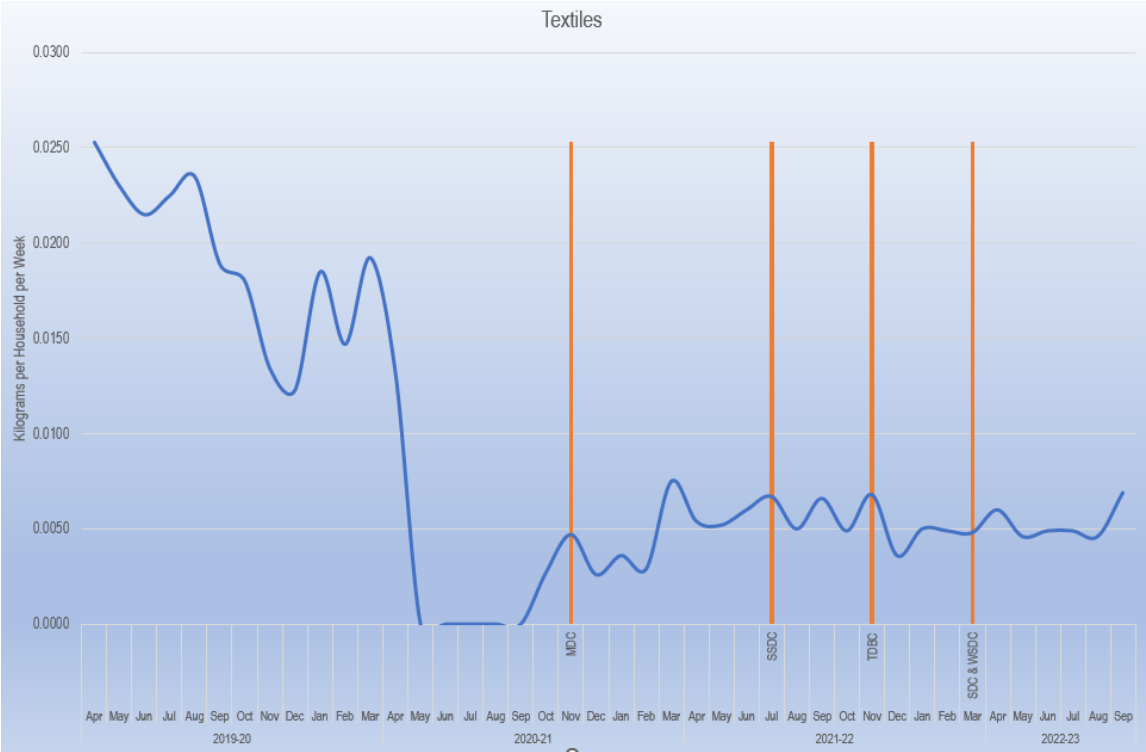
Figure 11.



Textiles

Figure 12 shows the dramatic drop off in the weights of textiles. The drop to zero represents the collapse of the textiles market worldwide and the temporary suspension of collections in April 2020. The new, lower level reflects that the service now only collects clothes and shoes of good enough quality to be worn again, and the changed emphasis in our communications which often encourage people to use charity shops.

Figure 12.



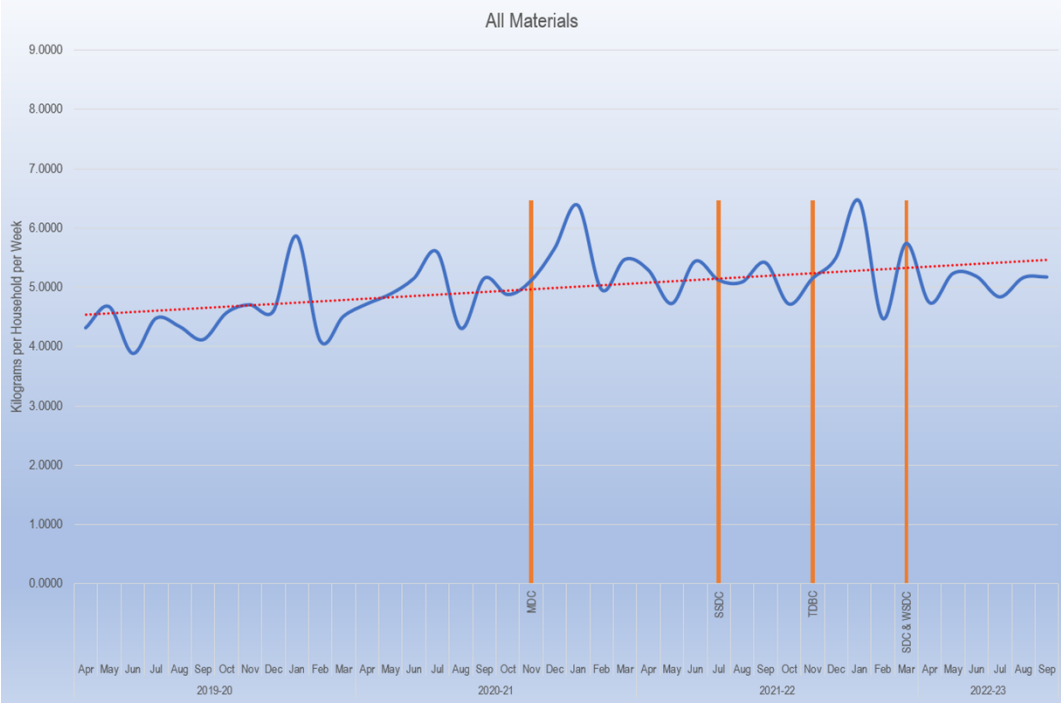
Total recycling

Figure 13 shows the total weight of recycling collected over the 42 month period. This includes tonnages of cartons, batteries and WEEE. The increase in tonnages of most materials has to some extent been brought down by falls in paper and textiles.

Although the trend line is crude, it shows that over this period total recycling tonnages rise from around 4.5kg to 5.5kg per household per week, though this includes 18 months of collections before the start of Recycle More.

Ascribing direct cause and effect to changes in waste data can be difficult, never more so than in the last two years with so many factors at work. However, Recycle More appears to have amplified increased weights of many materials and, in the case of plastic, significantly increased weights.

Figure 13.



Total arisings

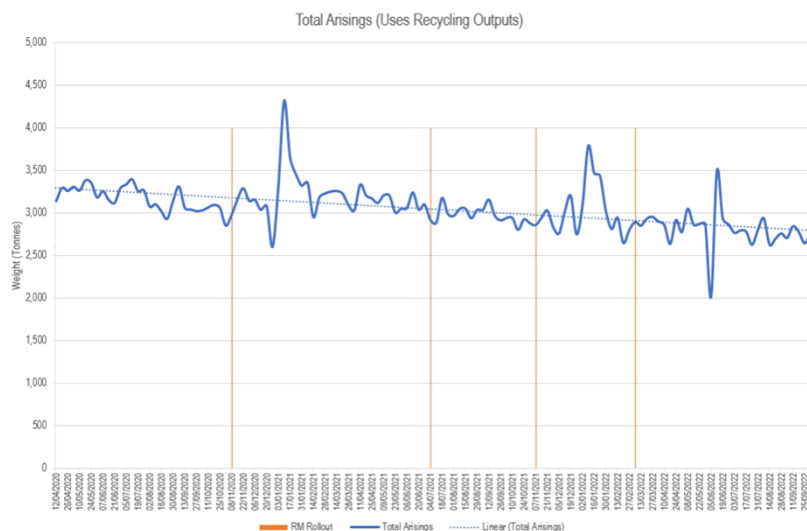
Most importantly, Figure 14 shows the reduction in 'total arisings' - the weights of recycling and refuse/rubbish collected from mid-April 2020 to September 2022.

It should be noted that in this time period Phase 4 (Sedgemoor and West Somerset) had only been on Recycle More for seven months. Therefore, we have not yet seen the impact of a full year of the new service running across the entire county.

Over this period the average total arisings fall by around 500 tonnes per week - around 15% - as the decrease in refuse (see section 2) outstrips the net increase in total recycling.

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. It was always a hoped for benefit from Recycle More, but not one that we could ever predict with confidence.

Figure 14.



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 seem to be seeing a bedding in of Recycle More across the county. Any disruption to performance should now be attributed to factors beyond the introduction of Recycle More.

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
17	116	205	78	147
18	123	186	78	59
19	147	111	60	116
20	111	105	57	136

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
17	209	351	126	276
18	134	162	125	134
19	217	311	233	202
20	170	224	96	284

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 122 schools - 33 schools in Mendip, 41 in South Somerset, 31 in Somerset West and Taunton and 17 in Sedgemoor. Of the schools visited, 95 have received more than one visit.

Carymoor will continue to offer 'live' virtual sessions as standard, although more face-to-face visits are have been requested in recent months. 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 in August but have been delayed by the presence of asbestos on site. At time of writing this is being dealt with and SWP is in discussion about a revised timescale for the works.

The closure of the site did not affect the Phase 4 roll-out and material is being handled by the Walford Cross depot until works are complete.

8. Recycle More in schools

SWP provides a waste collection service to 273 schools across the county: 36 Secondary, 213 Primary, 24 Specialist. The service is delivered by SUEZ.

Recycle More has improved the service by adding plastic pots, tubs and trays to collections, providing additional capacity and improving 'binrastructure'. The aim is to have more separation of recycling and increase recycling rates in schools which

currently lag behind domestic rates.

The 2021-22 domestic recycling rate was 56.2%. School recycling rates from 2020-21 have been affected by Covid restrictions.

Year	Average school recycling rate
2017-18	26%
2018-19	23%
2019-20	23.5%
2020-21	32%
2021-22	38%

The roll-out of Recycle More to schools started in early October 2022.

8.1 Details of the change

- Plastic pots, tubs and trays added to the materials collected for recycling.
- More separation of recycling:
Pre-Recycle More:
 - Paper, card, tins/can, foil, aerosols, plastic bottles all collected in single bin.
 - Food waste and refuse/rubbish collected separately.Post-Recycle More:
 - Paper and card collected in one bin.
 - Plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays, tins/can, foil, aerosols in one bin.
 - Food waste and refuse/rubbish collected separately.
- All schools have had a collection day change for food waste and the majority have also had a day change for refuse or recycling. This is because collection routes have been changed to be as efficient as possible.
- Rubbish and food waste are now collected on the same day by the same vehicle, but put into different compartments. Food waste is recycled (into fertiliser and electricity) and rubbish goes to Energy from Waste. Previously, food waste was collected with recycling.
- Access to more data on individual school recycling performance.
- Ongoing support through the Schools Waste Management Officer (SWMO) to help resolve issues and support initiatives to improve recycling.

8.2. Preparations and communication

The introduction of expanded recycling collections has been trailed with schools for several years.

In December 2021 SWP representatives presented to meetings of the Somerset Association of Secondary Head Teachers (SASH) and Somerset Association of Primary Headteachers (SAPH) highlighting the forthcoming change.

Between October 2020 and June 2022, the Schools Waste Management Officer

(SWMO) audited all schools' waste arrangements, visiting many for face-to-face discussions.

This involved:

- Assessing space and access – so schools could be provided with new and extra external bins for when the new service.
- Encouraging schools to request free recycling boxes for inside the school building to assist with the separation of waste. Approx. 500 were requested and delivered.

In March 2022 SWP:

- Produced and distributed to all schools a short guide to the Recycle More changes, including a timeline and other service improvements (e.g. online portal, price freeze and ongoing bin audits).
- Presented to four meetings Administrative Development Liaison (ADL) groups and the SASH Business Managers meeting, discussing the Recycle More timeline, changes and preparation.

In August/September SWP developed a pack of supporting material for schools including:

- Posters setting out what can be recycled with the new system.
- Diagrams to help identify common materials that can be recycled in different parts of a school, and show what happens to waste that is recycled.
- Printable material type labels available online for recycling boxes inside schools.

In September 2022, additional external bins were delivered, based on audit findings. Where possible, serviceable existing bins were re-stickered ready for the new service.

In September/October 2022:

- Collection day information and the pack of supporting material sent to all schools.
- SWP representatives presented to three meetings of the ADL groups (and in November presented to the SASH Business Managers meeting).

The weekly School Bulletin was used to provide regular reminders and countdown to roll-out.

8.3 Roll-out

New Recycle More collections for schools started from 10 October. The smooth introduction of the service was to some extent hampered by vehicle breakdowns and two accidents in the launch week. At time of writing, no tonnage figures were available to evaluate the very early days of the new service. These will be reportedly verbally if available. Going forward we will have better data, as whilst we don't have bin weighing equipment on our fleet, crews will be recording how full bins are which will enable us to better understand good/less good performers amongst schools and hence target support and intervention more effectively.

Initial feedback

- Some schools missed their first new collection. This was for a number of reasons, including the breakdowns/accidents and the new collection day information not finding its way to the relevant staff in time.
- Some initial confusion caused by missed initial collections and a temporary catch-up rounds deployed to mop-up.
- Heightened contact for the SWMO during the first two weeks, providing information and resolving issues.
- By week three SWMO contact levels had returned to pre roll-out levels and the service appears to be bedding in.

We expect the driving up on recycling in schools to be a long-term area of work. SWP will provide support where it can from its small resource and seek to learn from good practice elsewhere, including other SUEZ contract areas.

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. 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.