

**Report to:**

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Relevant Officer:**

John-Paul Lovie, Head of Waste (Policy and Partnerships)

**Date of Meeting:**

7 February 2024

## **WASTE SERVICES AND STREETSCENE ANNUAL REPORT**

### **1.0 Purpose of the report:**

1.1 To provide a basis for the Scrutiny Committee to review the services in relation to delivery with an emphasis on headline data and performance indicators. It will provide a brief outline of the various elements of the services delivered, identify areas of good performance and highlight any current or anticipated barriers or challenges as well as enabling opportunities.

### **2.0 Recommendation(s):**

2.1 To scrutinise the performance of the services, receive feedback from the Committee and identify any matters for further scrutiny.

### **3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):**

3.1 To ensure effective scrutiny of the Waste and Streetscene services.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

### **4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:**

- 4.1
- Request Internal Audit to schedule in to the annual work plan programme.
  - Refer to external audit.

### **5.0 Council priority:**

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

## 6.0 Background information

### 6.1 SCOPE OF THE REPORT

Waste Services and StreetScene are some of the most important, high-profile frontline public service areas responsible for delivering a broad range of specialist environmental services to the residents, business and visitors of Blackpool.

Blackpool Waste Services (BWS) Ltd, T/A ENVECO North West Environmental Services (ENVECO) Ltd, is the wholly owned company of Blackpool Council with responsibility for the discharge of these functions (with the exception of Waste Disposal) and mandate for improving environmental performance and outcomes for the people of Blackpool.

This relationship is managed via client / contract arrangement with the Council as the shareholder.

The scope of this report includes all operational activities within these functional service areas, namely;

*WASTE* - including:

- Kerbside Refuse and Recycling Collection Service delivered by ENVECO,
- Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC), including the 'The Re-Use Shop',
- Trade (or business) Waste,
- Waste Disposal (including the Lancashire Waste Partnership (LWP) with Lancashire County Council (LCC)),
- Third Sector Partnerships including Bulky Matters (bulky items collection), Rover and the Re-New Workshop (furniture reuse and refurbishment), Keep Blackpool Tidy, 'Friends of' Groups.

*STREETSCENE*– including:

- Street Cleansing and Sweeping,
- Neighbourhood Environmental Action Team (NEAT) incorporating Enforcement & Fly tipping,
- Street Litter Bins,
- Beach Cleaning,
- Weed Treatment,
- Grounds and Open Space Maintenance,
- Parks Operations (including Playground Inspections),
- Graffiti Removal,
- Building (office) Cleaning (including window cleaning),
- Pest Control,
- Alley Gate Maintenance.

## 6.2 BUDGET INFORMATION

Waste and StreetScene represent a significant proportion of annual council spend.

The combined budgets for the services are in the region of £19.2 (including waste disposal).

## 6.3 **What is going well?**

### 6.3.1 **Weed Treatment and Control**

The growing and controlling of weeds has always been difficult, and this is still the case today because of how severe weather affects treatment applications as well as issues in relation to resource allocation.

Nonetheless, tremendous progress has been made in addressing these issues, most notably with the accomplishment of the NVQ level 2 in Herbicide Treatment (knapsack and quad bike applications) by all 10 NEAT Officers/Assistants.

Over the preceding two years, there has been a general improvement made possible by the addition of trained personnel.

Additionally, this strategy is being supported by an investment in new machinery, with the purchase of two small sweepers outfitted with specialised attachments for tearing and cleaning weeds, allowing for a much faster and more effective treatment.

We anticipate that managing weeds will remain an especially challenging endeavour, but we are confident that the adjustments we have made to our strategy, planning, and resource allocation will result in long-term, yearly gains in growth management and control.

### 6.3.2 **Street Cleansing**

The introduction of a dedicated NEAT resource in the town centre/tourism/Business Improvement District (BID) zone has a significant impact on the look and feel of the area through regular quality inspections and low-level enforcement. It has also fostered closer working and integration with BID which has further enhanced the improved outcomes.

Sustained investment in an enhanced NEAT programme, which divides the borough into six zones, two of which are found in inner wards with high populations, is making a tangible difference to cleanliness levels. A multi-skilled assistant and a dedicated NEAT Officer are present in every area (two multi-skilled assistants in densely populated inner wards).

Through scheduled work programmes, this offering will proactively improve environmental quality in addition to recording all daily reactive service requests.

As part of the Cleansing Inspection and Monitoring System (CIMS), the service has maintained mechanical sweeping of residential highways and footways. Every month, all of the borough's streets are examined, and the results provide a cleansing score and notes that help determine the priorities for resource planning. Moreover, CIMS permits highway interventions such as first response letters for overhanging trees that compromise pedestrian safety and for gravel and stone that escapes property owners' driveways, contributing to the accumulation of debris and weed growth.

Although NEAT Officers are able to and do engage in enforcement actions, they will first try to use a more gentle approach to help and educate, like the "Inspect & Quote" service, to enable reasonable solutions rather than utilising full-fledged enforcement capabilities. Notwithstanding the above, the service is aiming to ramp up enforcement activity in the coming year to support the other elements of service delivery.

Another key achievement of the service over the past 12 months have been the introduction of 3 x electric trikes for more agile and effective street cleaning. Replacing the old style 'man, brush and barrow', this option has led to a much more efficient operation enabling operatives to cover a significantly greater area in less time.

Lastly, after receiving training in the use of specialised weed treatment, x 10 more staff have significantly increased their baseline knowledge for handling this season's growth contributing to a much improved position in relation to weed control.

### **6.3.3 Refuse and Recycling Kerbside Collections**

Household bin collections continue to be delivered in an effective and efficient manner across the town with a focus on ensuring and mess caused during the collection process if cleared up and bins returned to the property/collection point. The coming year will see further improvements in service delivery through the increased use of the 'Bartec Collective' back-office/in-cab technology system which will further drive down missed collections and increase round/route efficiencies.

Waste amnesties continue to be popular with Elected Members with the process recently being refined to make it easier for Members to engage with. These amnesties give locals a chance to get rid of rubbish and undesirable items, such big, heavy furniture and other items, while feeling secure that everything would be disposed of properly and safely. By offering community-based skips and other services, this helps residents who are unable to use the HWRC or who cannot afford to use the Bulky Matters service.

Increasing resident's access to better quality collections continues through the 'Bags to Bins' initiative which, this year, has focused on providing large containers for communal collections

for flats above shops in high density areas, particularly around the Claremont and Bloomfield wards. Over 250 domestic flats have now been moved from sack collections to large euro bins for a more slightly and secure service.

The ongoing issue around unauthorised additional grey bins, which can have negative impacts on recycling participation and presentation, has now been incorporated into daily operations. A rolling programme of assessing, identifying, engaging with residents and retrieval of these bins is now in place.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the service was shortlisted as a finalist for The Association Of Public Service (APSE's) Performance Networks 'Best Performer' at the recent awards ceremony on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2023.

#### **6.3.4 Green Waste Subscriptions**

Subscription-based green waste collection services are still doing very well; circa 9000 residents joined the programme this year. Between 9,000 and 10,000 subscribers is often the range that it tends to stay at from year to year.

The cost of a green waste membership for 23/24 is £40 per annum for one bin and £30 per annum for extra bins which generates in the region of £409k revenue each year. This is reviewed annually in line with the costs of providing the service.

#### **6.3.5 Marketing, Communications and Campaigns**

This year has significant progress in relation to campaigns and marketing plans developed and delivered by ENVECO. With the appointment of a Marketing and Communications Manager, ENVECO have now launched their own website and social media platforms to enhance resident engagement and communications across the range of services.

The Dog Fouling Campaign launched earlier this year has seen marked increase in challenging dog walkers to show that they have the means for cleaning up after their dogs and also encouraging the public to come forward with evidence which can be acted upon through enforcement action.

The Keep Blackpool Tidy (KBT) Campaign has also been relaunched and refreshed with different levels of membership commitment which members of the public and businesses can sign up to – fully supported by ENVECO

The Council was also successful in a bid for funding to tackle chewing gum litter and was awarded £25k from Keep Britain Tidy to develop a campaign. This was passed to ENVECO who have not only launched the campaign but also incorporated the specialist removal of chewing gum into the daily activities of its street cleaning team helping to deliver a sustained approach to this costly issue.

### 6.3.6 HWRC – Household Waste Recycling Centre

After the site was integrated with ENVECO, it underwent significant upgrades and now presents a positive image to the public by always looking clean and well-maintained. Despite having to significantly alter its operations in response to COVID-19, the HWRC at Bristol Avenue has been operating at full capacity over the last year. Now that regular operations have resumed, all waste streams and bays are working as intended. Resuming the process of sorting out recyclables from black bag waste has also helped to raise the site's overall diversion from landfill rate, which is currently at c.80%.

On January 1, 2023, a significant amendment to UK law regarding Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) went into effect, and we must comply with it. This is particularly related to the “forever chemicals” that are mostly present in waste upholstered domestic seating (WUDS) fire retardants. These dangerous substances need specialist incineration as they don't break down naturally in the environment. The need for this material to be managed separately has led to more skip movements as a result of this adjustment, although disposal tonnages haven't been affected.

The HWRC also actively supports community projects such as Project Search and Chance to Shine, which provide job placements and employment opportunities to underprivileged individuals, thereby aiding in the development of life skills for some of the most vulnerable members of society. The site has been acknowledged as a model for promoting these kinds of programmes with a recent nomination by Keep Britain Tidy.

In addition, the HWRC assists Public Health in recycling and reusing different medical devices, such crutches and wheelchairs, by giving them a thorough cleaning before reusing them to avoid the need to buy new equipment.

Additionally, the skip hauling contract has been brought in-house, which has increased flexibility in terms of maintaining the skips at Layton Depot and on site in addition to realising efficiencies.

Finally, the reuse shop on site continues to be popular with residents – reusing items that would otherwise be thrown away, saving on disposal costs while generating an income for the site which helps to off-set operating pressures.

### 6.3.7 Bulky Matters

The Bulky Matters service is provided in collaboration with Wyre BC and third-sector charity Calico. Bulky household appliances such as refrigerators, stoves, and furniture can be collected from customers' homes by appointment through this service.

Residents make good use of the service; in the past year, 5,270 collections were made, resulting in 8,475 items being recycled or repurposed (or 279 tonnes). With more than 79.3%

of reservations made online, this led to a disposal savings of over £50k.

Together with the Social Fund, Bulky Matters provides home-start packs and necessities like furniture, bedding, and beds to some of the neediest members of the community. In addition to supporting 403 households, over £67,050 in household savings were realised (savings made to households due to not having to buy new), while saving 21,712kg CO2.

The contract was renewed for a further year this year in line with the provisions set out in the contract. The Rover contract, also currently delivered by Calico, is to be reviewed in relation to how the service is delivered with a view to refreshing and making a range of improvements.

### **6.3.8 What isn't going well and why?**

### **6.3.9 Alley Gates and Unadopted Alleys**

The Council owns the alley gates, which ENVECO looks after for us. Alley gates are well-liked by residents and help to improve community safety by assisting in the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Since many alley gates have reached the end of their useful lives, they frequently require not just extensive maintenance but also complete replacement. Alley gates were previously funded by ward budgets and are not currently included in the Council's budget.

Since alley gates are crucial to preserving secure communities, we are actively investigating ways to improve the situation with ENVECO.

This is related to the problem of unadopted alleys. In comparison to the approximately 84 km of adopted back alleys, there are around 2,142 unadopted alleyways/passageways in the town, totalling over 69 km.

Alleys that have not been adopted are not Council-owned and are essentially private property. The adjoining landowners own them and are accountable for them. The Council cannot adopt all of these due to operational and financial constraints. As far as is reasonably possible, the Council and ENVECO will continue to assist local communities in taking care of their unadopted alleyways. They have helped a number of residents clean up their alleys by providing tools, materials, and rubbish collection.

### **6.3.10 Local Municipal Waste Strategy**

Lancashire does not yet have an official Local Municipal Waste Strategy in place. A number of reasons, including Brexit, COVID-19, and a lack of clarity from the central government, have led to the delay in developing a new plan, as the last one expired in 2020.

As mentioned in item 5.5.1 below, a lack of strategic clarity, additional concerns about post-pandemic changes to waste arising's, compositional variations in waste, developing policy & legislation, the future use of our major assets (Waste Treatment Facilities), and the end of our landfill contract in 2025 have all combined to create a perfect storm that has nurtured an atmosphere of uncertainty and unease both locally and nationally.

As a result, Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council are collaborating closely to make sure we are prepared for any obstacles that may arise in the future due to this dynamic environment. The two main obstacles are figuring out a non-landfill method to handle the 220,000 tonnes of residual waste that will be generated after 2025 and becoming ready for the collection and handling of food waste separately starting in April 2025.

In order to provide clarity and certainty regarding our waste collection and disposal services over the medium term, Blackpool and LCC have created an Outline Waste Processing Strategy 2022–2027.

The main objective of the programme is to “achieve the best environmental and social outcomes possible from the wastes we manage, within the realistic processing, financial, and carbon options available.”

#### 6.3.11 **What are the barriers to improvement?**

#### 6.3.12 **Finance / Inflation / Cost of Living / Impact of Savings**

As previously stated, the current economic climate, when combined with years of austerity, can have an influence on locals in various areas, including:

- A decline in the number of green waste subscriptions.
- A decline in recycling participation, affecting programmes like Bulky Matters, which increases fly tipping incidents.
- Less inclination to tackle environmental factors.

Waste and compliance with environmental behavioural standards tend to move up the hierarchy of needs as people struggle to make ends meet.

Efficiency gains are frequently applied to services since it gets harder and harder to finance the provision of public services.

Unfortunately, future pressure to cut costs in this area would mean a loss in services, which would be regrettable given that the public, businesses, and communities are now demanding more from their environmental services.

#### 6.3.13 **Depot Infrastructure**

The depot in Layton, along with management and maintenance responsibilities, were leased for an extended period of time by ENVECO as part of the phase 2 ENVECO integration.

The merging with ENVECO has resulted in several major investments that Layton Depot has profited from recently. A couple of noteworthy examples are the security CCTV control room and the HGV bay addition to the Central Vehicle Maintenance Unit (CVMU). To guarantee the site's continuous usage as an operating basis from which to provide the wide variety of specialised environmental services, additional investment is necessary to future-proof the facility.

In 2023, a condition survey was conducted, highlighting the need for capital expenditure in the infrastructure going forward to guarantee its continued suitability.

Blackpool Council and BWS will approach this jointly on an invest-to-save basis, with the two depot shareholders negotiating and agreeing on the amount of investment.

A further survey of the site has been carried out and the next steps in process are the development of a depot masterplan. With this strategy, the depot will also be able to adapt to new technologies, such as solar power and energy efficiency, by using large covered areas for solar farms, collecting, cleaning and recycling rain/grey water, and possibly building a sub-station for the eventual delivery of an electric fleet or other suitable fleet solution.

#### 6.3.12 **Absence of Strategic Coherence**

The government's strategic themes are policies pertaining to the environment and climate change, circularity and resource sustainability, increasing recycling, and reducing waste. Government has already undertaken extensive public consultations on initiatives like: • Separate food waste collections; • Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR); • Deposit Return Schemes (DRS); • Consistency of recyclable materials; • Universal free garden waste collections. Despite the fact that the delivery on these themes has been severely delayed—again because of Brexit, the pandemic, and more recently the cost of living and inflation crisis we are working towards implementing non-domestic separate food waste collections, along with recycling, from April 2025. Household food waste collections have, once again, been delayed with recent announcements citing implementation from April 2026.

#### 6.3.13 PERFORMANCE

##### 6.3.14 **In which areas are we performing well?**

##### 6.3.14 **NEAT – Neighbourhood Environmental Action Team**

Over the past few years, the NEAT service has received a substantial amount of new money totalling over £250k.

Through the deployment of 8 NEAT Officers and 6 NEAT Assistant FTE roles, this investment has allowed the NEAT service to sustain momentum on the investment introduced in November 2021 in high-demand borough wards, while also enabling the service to provide a

consistent service across all council wards. Along with this additional investment, the service underwent restructuring, leading to the deployment of fully qualified NEAT officials in a zonal ward system. NEAT personnel can programme in proactive duties to improve service and cut down on waste and duplication in addition to providing an enhanced reactive service. This includes mechanical sweeping of residential, arterial, and borough entrance roads, daily shop teams, and litter bin maintenance.

The mechanical sweeping of residential streets and the treatment and control of weeds are two specific areas where this method is showing better results.

#### 6.3.15 **Trade Waste**

The service offers a variety of integrated waste management solutions for local businesses and runs seven days a week. It also offers waste brokerage services and subcontracts on behalf of the majority of major national and multinational rubbish collection companies to service national clients. With a local market share of about around 48%, the service—a good example of best practice—remains the leading local supplier of commercial/trade waste services in Blackpool and the Fylde coast.

For the upcoming year, the service's primary goals will be to meet the mandate of the central government by introducing separate food collections, boosting trade recycling throughout the local area and generating revenue to support Council savings.

#### 6.3.16 **How do we compare with other authorities in terms of benchmarking?**

The municipal recycling rate is the primary headline statistic for benchmarking performance. It is mandatory for Blackpool Council to provide waste data to the government's waste Data Flow System. The following are the recycling rates for the last few years:

- 17/18 – 35.8%
- 18/19 – 39.6%
- 19/20 – 38.4%
- 20/21 – 27.5% [Covid]
- 21/22 – 41.6%
- 22/23 – 45.5%

At present, our recycling rate is comparable to the national average. It is worth mentioning that Councils with the best performance can anticipate having up to 30% of their total rate derived from green/garden waste. Due to the limited quantity of gardens in the Blackpool housing profile, garden waste only made up 12.5% of Blackpool's overall recycling rate prior to subscriptions. However, this shows that Blackpool outperforms many Lancashire districts in all other areas of collected waste streams.

The Council and Blackpool Waste Services are active members of the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE). Through this association we subscribe to APSE’s Performance Networks benchmarking group. This group allows us to compare and benchmark ourselves with other authorities and organizations or ‘family groups’ (in terms of demographics, deprivation indices, etc.). Attached at Appendix 2 is the most recent APSE PI Standings Report.

The number of performance indicators produced is vast and far-ranging. In essence, benchmarked against other authorities, Blackpool Council’s Waste Services is a good performer (within its constraints) however, in the spirit of continuous improvement we are always looking at how to do things better and more cost effectively.

**6.3.17 What are our priorities in terms of improving performance this year?**

Some of the main overarching priorities for the forthcoming year are listed below:

- Preparing for separate food waste collections,
- Increasing non-household recycling,
- Reducing litter and dog fouling,
- Reducing waste arising’s,
- Increasing access to recycling for hard to reach properties,
- Reducing the carbon footprint of operations,
- Transitioning to a greener fleet,
- Depot improvements and masterplan developed.

**6.3.18 FINANCE**

**Community and Environmental Services**

Waste, Street Cleansing and StreetScene  
2023-24 High Level Budget Breakdown

<b>Area</b>	<b>Value £m</b>
Enveco Phase 1 Contract Fee	3.50
Enveco Phase 2 Contract Fee	8.50
Waste Disposal (net)	10.60
Other Waste Costs	0.50
Public Conveniences	0.60
Trade Waste Income	(2.00)
Green Waste Income	(0.40)
Public Health	(1.50)
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.80</b>

### 6.3.19 CROSS DEPARTMENTAL WORKING

Due to the considerable spend within these service areas, we have fostered a wide range of inter-organisational working relationships and always seek to maximise the delivery of value through the development and maintenance of robust Management Services Agreements (MSA's) between our wholly owned companies and colleagues in support services such as Procurement and Legal. This leads to closer working relationships with key people in delivering our objectives, in key areas such as Finance and Governance services.

### 6.3.20 ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

#### 6.3.21 **How we communicate the good work we are doing to residents.**

ENVECO has recently appointed 2 x Waste Minimisation Officers and a Marketing Officer who will be responsible for reaching out in to all parts of the local community including schools, voluntary groups businesses, residents, etc. in order to engage and communicate the good work undertaken across the services. They will be a key link between volunteer groups like Keep Blackpool Tidy, and the Friends arranging and supporting local events.

In addition to this, they will be responsible for the design, development and implementation of campaigns, promotions, green messaging and supporting other national initiatives like the Great British Spring Clean.

ENVECO is very active in delivering school engagement programs which involve use of the 'mobile classroom' which is an adapted rubbish truck which visits schools and opens up to reveal a digital, interactive classroom which is really popular with school children and teachers alike.

The sides of the refuse fleet are also used to display large adverts and messages on vinyl wraps which can be changed and be adapted to reflect various campaigns.

ENVECO is nearing completion and launch of its own website, and supporting social media, which will also act as a platform for promotion, communication and engagement across the piece.

#### 6.3.22 **How do we know that the services we provide are making an impact and are valued by residents?**

The Council's lead client officer for Waste Management commissions a biannual Household Waste survey from the Councils in-house market research service, Infusion, which is used to inform decision making and drive future strategic ambition. The most recent survey was produced in May 2022, and as such, another survey will be commissioned later this year.

Some of the key findings of the latest research are listed below:

- Overall satisfaction with all types of waste and recycling collections slightly increased

from 2019 to 2022;

- Across different types of waste and recycling collection there was a slight decrease in satisfaction when it came to the size and type of bin/container/sack used for collections from 2019 to 2022;
- Satisfaction with elements of Bulky Waste Collection increased from 2019 to 2022, however, satisfaction with the Green Waste Collection Service decreased from 2019 to 2022;
- Overall satisfaction with Household Waste Recycling Centre increased from 2019 to 2022;
- Having a collection of a wider range of materials continued to be cited as the most popular action respondents felt that could persuade them to recycle more;

Getting information from Blackpool Council's website respondents cited as the most popular way they currently find out information about waste and recycling in Blackpool and was also the main preference for how respondents would like to find out information about waste and recycling.

Questionnaires from residents utilising the Rover service and the Household Waste Recycling Centre continue to be used to assist in understanding resident's perceptions and expectations of the service.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

## **7.0 List of Appendices:**

7.1 Appendix 6(a): APSE Performance Network PI Standings Report 2022/23

## **8.0 Financial considerations:**

8.1 High level budget information included at item 6.3.18.

## **9.0 Legal considerations:**

9.1 None.

## **10.0 Risk management considerations:**

10.1 None.

## **11.0 Equalities considerations:**

11.1 In the course of developing this report, the Council have considered whether there could be any unintended adverse impacts on people because of shared characteristics protected by the Equality Act. The Council believes this report will not have any indirectly discriminatory effects.

**12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:**

12.1 While Blackpool Council has adopted a target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2030, in order to help mitigate the effects of climate change, the council also recognises the importance of adopting adaptation measures and sustainable alternatives in the delivery of its services and to minimise its impact on the environment in doing so. Blackpool Council and ENVECO are aligned and focused in ensuring that sustainability, circularity and resource optimisation are at the heart of its operations.

**13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:**

13.1 None – N/A

**14.0 Background papers:**

14.1 None.