

## Recycling Briefing – November 2020

### Introduction

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, Brentwood Borough Council launched a new scheme for the collection of paper and cardboard, and cans and plastic. We said goodbye to the single use orange plastic sacks and introduced two new reusable bags instead.

The scheme has now been running for over 3 months and this briefing provides the latest updates and information on the scheme.

### Latest Waste and Recycling Trends

The first six months of 20/21 has shown an interesting trend of increased volume across all waste streams:

General Waste	↑ 20%	Garden Waste	↑ 14%
Glass Recycling	↑ 33%	Food Waste	↑ 21%

Table 1 – Waste and recycling trends. All comparisons are relative to same period 2019-20

The first lockdown resulted in noticeable increases in general waste, recyclables, and organic material. The waste operatives are still collecting an extra 9 tonnes of general waste every day, when compared to a year ago, and now we've entered a second lockdown this is unlikely to change.

### Mixed Dry Recycling

Mixed Dry Recycling (MDR) was previously collected co-mingled in single use orange plastic sacks. Since 3<sup>rd</sup> August, this has been separated into two reusable bags as cans and plastics, and paper and cardboard.

This table shows the monthly tonnages for the orange sacks we collected in 2019/20 and, more recently, the combined paper and card and cans and plastic:

	Aug	Sept	Oct	Total
<b>2020-21</b>	219.3	290.4	274.9	784.6
<b>2019-20</b>	339.1	333.1	362.1	1,034.3

Table 2 – Mixed Dry Recycling tonnages

Looking ahead, it is forecast that we will be collecting c.250 tonnes of paper and card and c.65 tonnes of cans and plastic monthly, a combined collection of c.315 tonnes.

A 20% reduction in overall MDR was forecast in the original business case, which is the predicted national average reduction when introducing a new scheme like ours. There are many factors to this reduction, including reduced contamination and more stringent acceptable materials. Therefore, just because the weight of recycling collected is down overall, this it is not a reflection on the success of the scheme.

Brentwood's overall MDR reduction for the first 3 months is 24.1% and should be comfortably in line with original forecasts by the end of the first year.

### **Raising the Quality of the Recycling we Collect**

The new recycling scheme is proving hugely successful in improving the quality of dry recyclables collected, ensuring more material is sent to the processors for recycling. Levels of contamination remained below 2% for the first three months of the new scheme. Contamination in the orange sacks often reached as high as 10%.

Increasing the quality of recycling we collect ensures it is all passed on as a useful commodity and helps generate an income.

Operational crews issue 'sorry to leave you' stickers where non-recyclable items are present in a resident's blue/white bag. In the first weeks of the scheme, around c.1250 were issued per week. This has now reduced to c.300 a week, a strong indication that residents have made a good adjustment.

### **Financial Update**

Full year's budget savings are forecast to be £180,000. This is based on last year's gate fee of c. £27/tonne. It should be noted, however, that it is understood that the gate fee charged by the Material Recycling Facility (MRF) for mixed dry recyclables has recently risen to over £70/tonne for some local authorities. This would have had a serious impact on the sustainability of us continuing to run the orange sack scheme.

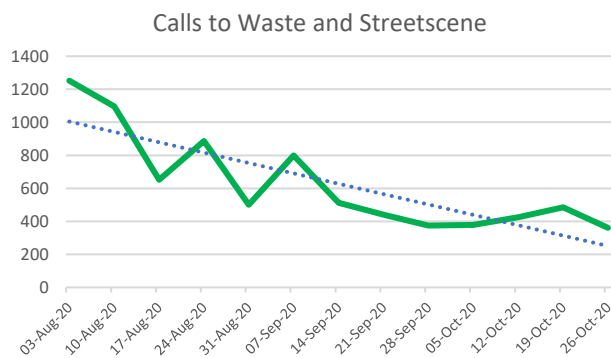
In the three months so far, we have received an average of £58 per tonne for cans and plastic and £5 per tonne for paper and card. This provides a potential positive gate fee variance of £128 for cans and plastics and £75 for paper and card.

### **Residents Response**

14 formal complaints were received in relation to the new scheme. Considering this change affected all households in the borough, this figure is very low.

For 8 weeks, Operatives were deployed to doorsteps to engage with residents whose sack contained incorrect items. This was very successful in assisting residents to adapt to the change and to ensure that they presented correct materials in the future.

The number of enquiries to the Contact Centre peaked during the first week of the scheme and has slowly decreased back to expected levels. Calls were higher during 'cans and plastics' weeks due to the list of accepted materials being more complex.



Graph 1 – Calls to Waste and Streetscene Aug-Oct 2020

## War on Single Use Plastic

There continues to be a national drive to reduce society's reliance on single use plastic. This is evident by the recent increase in charge for carrier bags.

Since the schemes launch, we have avoided the use of 875,000 single use orange plastic sacks. Plastic bags have a significant carbon footprint and this quantity alone avoids the generation of over 80 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Why are plastic bags not accepted in the white cans and plastic sack?

This is determined by the MRF (Materials Recovery Facility). Plastic films present a number of technical challenges, such as becoming entangled in equipment and causing blockages. Outlets and markets for these materials are also not as developed as those for high value hard rigid plastics. However, we have been assured that the contractor regularly reviews this material stream with a view to accepting it in the future.

## Small Bags

The blue recycling bags for paper and card are now available in a smaller version. The smaller bags are aimed at helping those who have difficulty managing the larger sacks. To order a small blue bag, residents can contact 01277 312500. A smaller version of the white bag, for cans and plastics, will be available soon

## Communal Recycling

We are working hard to change all communal areas over to the new recycling scheme. This is a rolling programme which we hope to conclude as soon as possible in the New Year. The main reason for this is that the existing stock of bins are being re-used, in an effort to promote re-use and to make the costs of this element of the project manageable.

The Deputy Operations Manager meets with managing agents to ensure that full agreement is reached in terms of what we can provide to help their residents.

Schools have also been subjected to a rolling programme; to date eleven are already on line, with the rest due to follow soon.