

# TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

02 MARCH 2021

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Increasing the District Council's recycling rate</b>
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To consider the challenges and approach to increasing the district's recycling rate to 60% and beyond
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to:</b>  <b>(1) Support the 10 point action plan as detailed in the report.</b>
<b>Financial Implications</b>	Please see Section 2.1 Chief Finance Officer Email: Martin.Flitcroft@teignbridge.gov.uk
<b>Legal Implications</b>	As set out at Section 2.2 Paul Woodhead Legal Services Team Leader and Deputy Monitoring Officer Paul.Woodhead@teignbridge.gov.uk
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	A specific risk assessment is not considered relevant for this report. Please see section 2.3 for further detail. Chris Braines. Waste & Cleansing Manager chris.braines@teignbridge.gov.uk
<b>Environmental/ Climate Change Implications</b>	Please see Section 2.4 for further information.  Chris Braines. Waste & Cleansing Manager chris.braines@teignbridge.gov.uk
<b>Report Author</b>	Chris Braines. Waste & Cleansing Manager 01626 215841 chris.braines@teignbridge.gov.uk
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr Alistair Dewhirst PH for Environmental Services
<b>Appendices</b>	A1 – Residual Waste Collection Frequency Considerations
<b>Background Papers</b>	Resource and Waste Strategy for England <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/resourcesand-waste-strategy-for-england">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/resourcesand-waste-strategy-for-england</a>  Resource and Waste Management Strategy for Devon and Torbay <a href="https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s32889/HIW-20-34.pdf">https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s32889/HIW-20-34.pdf</a>

## 1. PURPOSE

Teignbridge District Council (TDC) has historically been, and continues to be, a high performer nationally in relation to recycling, reaching the top ten of English authorities with our highest recorded rate of 57.4% in 2009.

Since then, and despite significant positive service changes, the recycling rate has plateaued at a level around 56%.

This report sets out the challenges and options available to further increase the levels of recycling in the district for waste the Council is responsible for collecting and provides 10 proposed actions for consideration.

### Summary of Proposed Actions

- **Action 1 - Work to deliver waste education and behavioural change campaigns and initiatives using available resources, with a specific campaign linked to the availability of free of charge additional recycling containers to encourage greater participation.**
- **Action 2 - Work jointly through the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee (DASWC), regionally and nationally on campaigns and initiatives.**
- **Action 3 - Deliver an intelligence led approach to compliance work focusing activities on new housing estates and other low participating areas to maximize participation in recycling services.**
- **Action 4 - Proactively seek external funding available to support recycling initiatives**
- **Action 5 - Work across departments to develop and improve systems to help deliver high levels of participation in waste and recycling services.**
- **Action 6 - Work to promote the garden waste service, including reference to the availability of additional bins and consider the option for properties to have greater than 3 garden waste bins**
- **Action 7 - Support the installation of on street recycling litter bins in line with the policy in place**
- **Action 8 - Review the additional bin policy to remove option or increase the charge levied**
- **Action 9 - Review the side waste policy to reduce the allowance from 3 times to once per year and consider introducing charges for this service.**

- **Action 10 - Continue to provide community recycling banks in recognition of the important role they play in maintaining high recycling rates within the district**

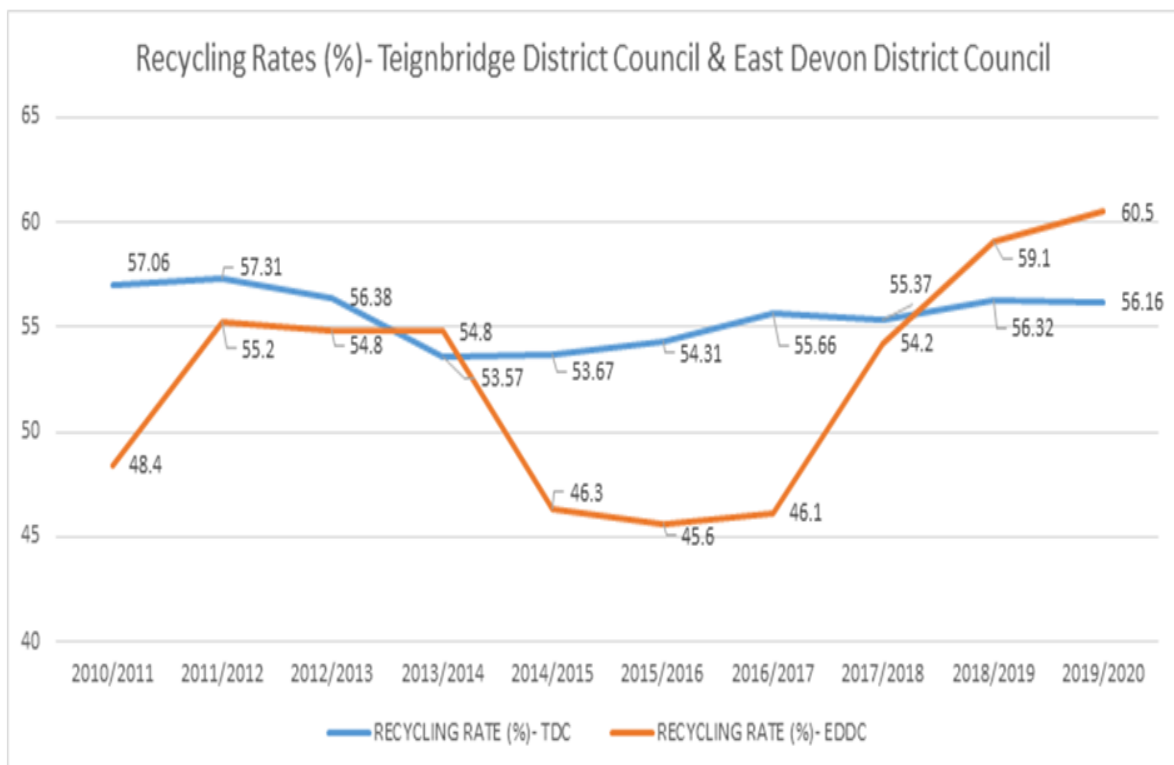
### **1.1 What is the 'Recycling Rate'?**

The 'Recycling Rate' for district councils is calculated using prescribed methodology for the previous National Indicator 192. This combines the amount of waste collected by TDC for recycling and biological treatment (composting and anaerobic digestion) as a proportion of the overall waste collected. This calculation forms part of a statutory data return using a centralized national database (Waste Dataflow) and is regularly audited to ensure accuracy and authenticity.

Commercial waste and waste dealt with through Devon County Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres is excluded from the TDC calculation. Waste arising from Teignbridge Council's street cleansing functions and the clearance of fly-tipping is included however, which serves to reduce the overall recycling rate from that collected from households alone.

### **1.2 Historical Performance & Recent Service Changes**

**Figure 1** - shows Teignbridge Districts recycling rate over the last 10 years.



In 2014 TDC were one of the first authorities to change to the 'aligned' collection service approach. This remains a strategic aim across the county to standardise

collection methodology to maximize environmental benefits, further facilitate joint working and provide opportunities for clearer communications (see Figure 2).

At this point TDC stopped collecting garden waste from all properties free of charge and introduced the charged garden waste service. This significantly reduced the tonnage feeding into the recycling rate calculation. This was countered, however, by an increase from adding additional dry recyclables (more plastics and card) and separate food waste collections on a weekly basis (previously fortnightly) resulting in a minimal overall impact on the overall recycling rate.

Included in Figure 1 are East Devon’s rates (Devon’s current highest performer) who were also running the aligned collection service yet not performing as well as Teignbridge. In 2018/19 they switched to a 3 weekly residual waste collection frequency. This change saw their rate overtake Teignbridge’s and rise beyond the 60% mark. Further detail relating to residual waste collection frequencies is included below in section 1.8 and Appendix 1.

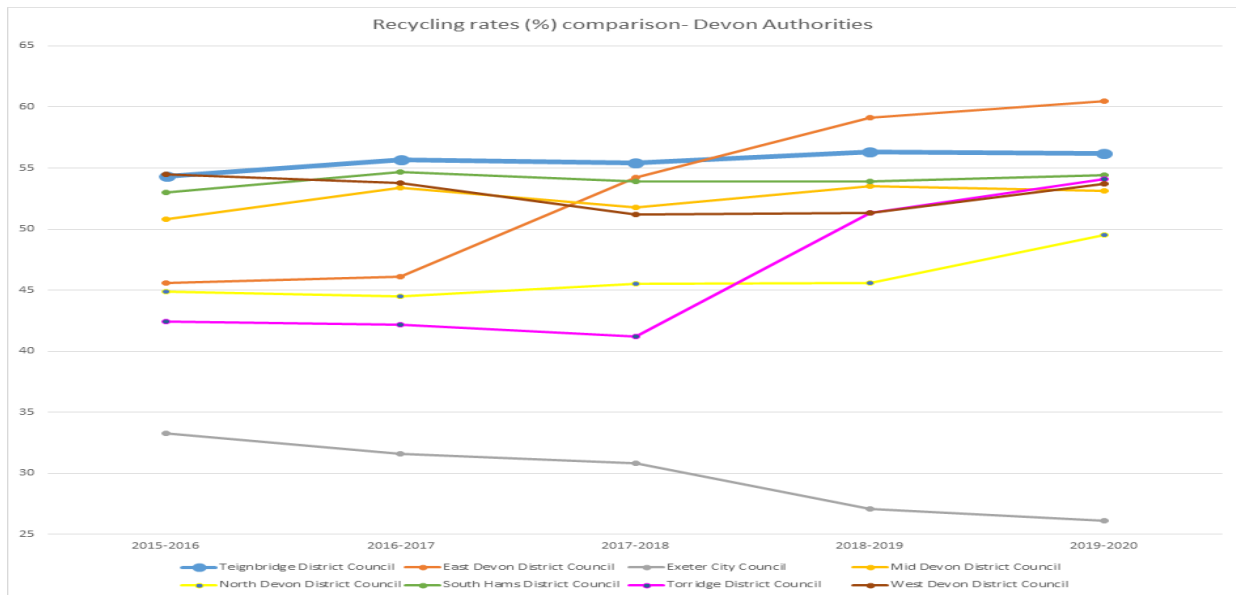
**Figure 2 – Progress towards the aligned service delivery approach 2020.**



Prior to East Devon’s switch to 3 weekly residual collections Teignbridge were consistently the highest performing Devon authority running the aligned service, suggesting that we may have been maximizing the potential of this collection approach (see Figure 3).

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Date of meeting

**Figure 3 - Devon Districts Recycling Rates**

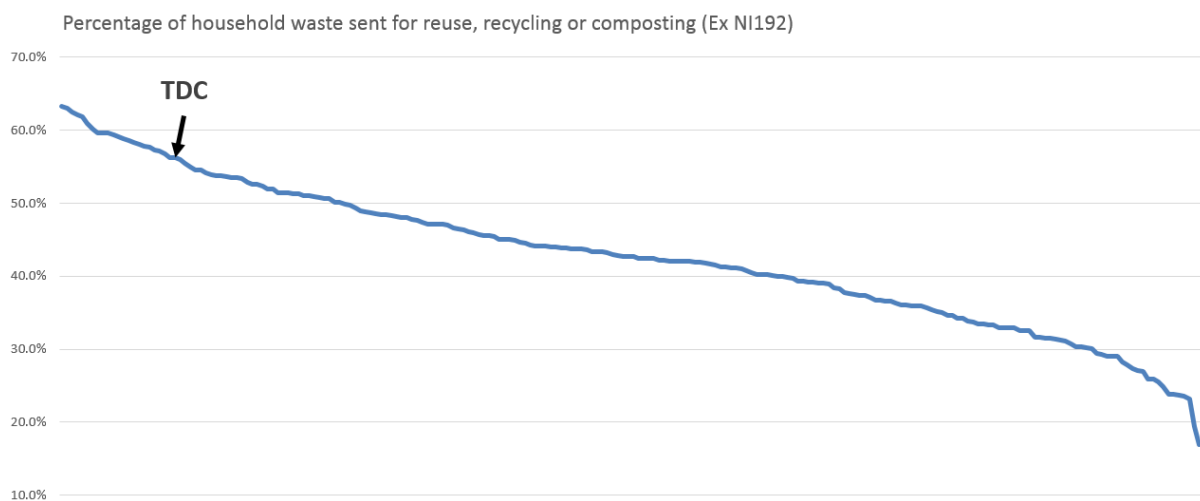


This also highlights the disparity between those offering kerbside sort collections (all other Devon authorities) and Exeter City Council who collect recycling co-mingled fortnightly and do not currently collect food waste or glass from the kerbside for recycling.

**1.3 National Performance**

TDC’s national ‘Recycling Rate’ position is plotted in Figure 4 below in relation to all waste collection authorities in England. This clearly demonstrates how well TDC is performing against this measure. TDC placed 23<sup>rd</sup> nationally out of 223 Waste Collection Authorities and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the South West.

**Figure 4 - National Recycling Rates Distribution (English Waste Collection Authorities)**



The approach taken by the 10 highest performing Waste Collection Authorities are shown in Figure 5 for the 2018/19 year (most current data available).

All collect their recycling co-mingled for later separation/sorting at large Material Recovery Facilities (MRF). Whilst this is a commonality across all of the top 10 authorities there has historically been some concern about the data as they use 'average' rejection rates at the MRF's which may not be as accurate as the data returned from kerbside sort services. It is widely accepted within the waste industry that collecting material through the kerbside sort methodology offers greater overall benefits in terms of cost and environmental benefit.

All of the top 10 authorities feed their material into 'Super MRF's'. These facilities provide the ability for glass to be collected co-mingled with all of the other dry recyclables for later mechanical separation. This often requires the waste to be transported long distances to the nearest facility for sorting, which command high gate fees and typically cost £10's of millions to build. All these facilities are operated by the private sector and require a high throughput of waste beyond the levels produced by TDC.

**Figure 5 - Top 10 recycling authorities 2018/19**

Authority	Recycling Rate (%)	Collection Method	Residual Waste Frequency	Garden waste
South Oxfordshire	63.3	Co-mingled	Fortnightly	Yes- charged
Three Rivers	63.0	Co-mingled	Fortnightly**	Yes- charged
Vale of White Horse	62.5	Co-mingled	Fortnightly	Yes- charged
St Albans	62.1	Co-mingled*	Fortnightly	Yes- free**
Surrey Heath	61.9	Co-mingled	Fortnightly	Yes- charged
Rochford	60.9	Co-mingled	Fortnightly	Yes- free
Stroud	60.2	Co-mingled*	Fortnightly**	Yes- charged
Derbyshire Dales	59.6	Co-mingled*	Fortnightly**	Yes – Free (charging from 2021)
South Northamptonshire	59.6	Co-mingled	Fortnightly	Yes- no charge
Stratford Upon Avon	59.6	Co-mingled	Fortnightly	Yes – Free (charging from 2021)

\*issue 2 containers, and separate paper and card from other recyclables

\*\* Issue 140 litre residual bins

There has been much debate within the waste management industry about whether the use of the 'Recycling Rate' is the best measure of success. It has historically incentivized 'tonnage chasing', particularly garden waste that may otherwise be better managed (cost/environment/climate) in line with the waste hierarchy and proximity principles.

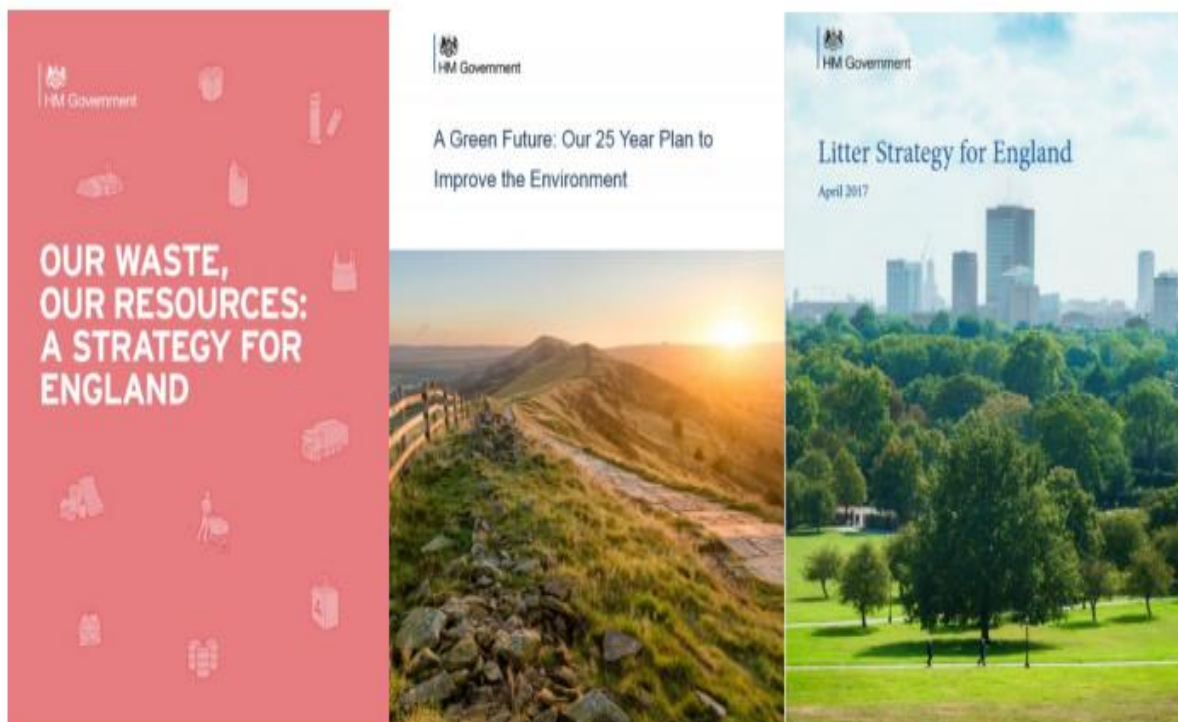
Nationally TDC fared better when looking at 'Residual Waste per Household' rates, placing 16<sup>th</sup> nationally, with a rate of 337.5kg/hh/yr. This measure is already monitored corporately by TDC and could perhaps be given more importance in relation to our performance.

#### **1.4 National and Local Strategies**

Over the last 3 years the UK Government has published a number of strategies which provide the basis for Resource and Waste Management across England for the next 25 years.

These include:

- 25 year Environment Plan
- Government Resource and Waste Strategy for England (RWS) and consultations on Extended Producer Responsibility, Consistency of recycling services, Deposit Return Scheme
- Litter Strategy



The Government RWS was published in November 2018. The key high level UK targets emanating from these include:

- Eliminate avoidable waste of all kinds by 2050
- 65% recycling rate by 2035
- No food waste to landfill from 2030
- To work towards all plastic packaging to be recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025
- Eliminate avoidable plastic waste over the lifetime of the 25 year plan
- Eliminate all biodegradable waste to landfill by 2030

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Following on from the publication of the Strategy, a number of consultations were held in 2019 on:

- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)
- Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)
- Consistency of recycling services

Some of the measures consulted on which have potential to impact on TDC's recycling rate are summarized below in Figure 6. TDC have responded to the consultations both individually and through the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee.

**Figure 6 - National Waste Strategy Key Measures**

Government Proposals under consideration	TDC Position
Weekly separate collection of food waste	This is already being implemented in Teignbridge.
Free garden waste collection	There is concern about inequality (free service for those with a garden), increase in collection and processing costs, and a significant loss of income. If implemented there would, however, be a significant increase in our recycling rate as less material is home composted, taken to recycling centres or incorrectly placed in residual waste bins.
Consistency in recycling collections including a core set of dry recyclables – glass, metal, plastic, paper, card	This is being implemented in Teignbridge.
Frequency of residual waste collection	The implication is that residual waste collections could be limited to a maximum frequency of fortnightly, effectively ruling out a switch to 3 or 4 weekly residual waste collections. TDC responded that it is important to allow councils to determine frequency of collections and that for high performing authorities this could be the only practical way to increase recycling rates to the levels required in the strategy.
Deposit Return Scheme (DTS) – this will introduce a deposit charge for all beverage containers which will be refunded when the container is returned	There are concerns about the implications on collection authorities and whether the cost of the proposed scheme is justified. The initiative could reduce Teignbridge's recycling rate by 2% as material, particularly glass, plastics, steel and aluminium moves away from kerbside collections and towards in store and community take back systems. There are also financial implications as higher value materials would migrate away from council kerbside collections leaving low value materials and reducing income generated to support service costs.



Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). This extends the range of materials for which producers are to be responsible for funding full net costs of treatment.	Producer responsibility is to be welcomed but the distribution of funding and assessment of costs needs to be fair.
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## 1.5 Resource and Waste Management Strategy for Devon and Torbay

This joint strategy describes the way in which Devon and Torbay local authorities will manage resources and waste (under their control) from 2020 – 2030 setting out waste policies and targets. The objectives are to:

- To manage Devon’s & Torbay’s waste in a sustainable and cost-efficient manner.
- To minimise the waste we create.
- To reduce the impact of resource and waste management in Devon on climate change by implementing the waste hierarchy and tailoring operations to reduce the waste carbon footprint.
- To maximise the value of the resources we use and preserve the stock of material resources i.e. Preserve natural capital and practice resource efficiency.

The revised draft strategy is out for public consultation in February 2021.

Many of the resulting actions and approaches from the strategy dovetail into work undertaken jointly across the county and within the district to increase recycling rates.

## 1.6 Teignbridge Ten Strategy - Clean Scene

Waste and recycling performance and related projects sit under the ‘Clean Scene’ program of the Council’s strategy. Performance and progress are regularly scrutinized by the O&S and Executive committees and the Executive Member with responsibility for the service area through monthly meetings.

## 1.7 Increasing Teignbridge’s Recycling Rate

Notwithstanding the fact that Teignbridge are performing at a higher level than all other comparable districts in Devon (excluding East Devon) and are well within the top quartile nationally, there are actions that should be considered to help increase the recycling rate.

Some actions fall into categories where activity has already taking place and has been for many years. The ‘red queen’ effect means that continuous effort continues to be necessary in these areas in order to sustain our current high performance levels.

The following section of the report describes current activities and possible opportunities to sustain and improve on our current recycling rate.

Figure 7 shows the results from the most recent analysis of black bins in Teignbridge. The composition of household waste changes over time and in relation to the services provided, something which has been particularly noticeable during the pandemic as more people work from home, rely on internet shopping and shift from paper to digital communications. It is important to understand the composition of the waste stream to target the materials likely to return the greatest results for practical levels of investment.

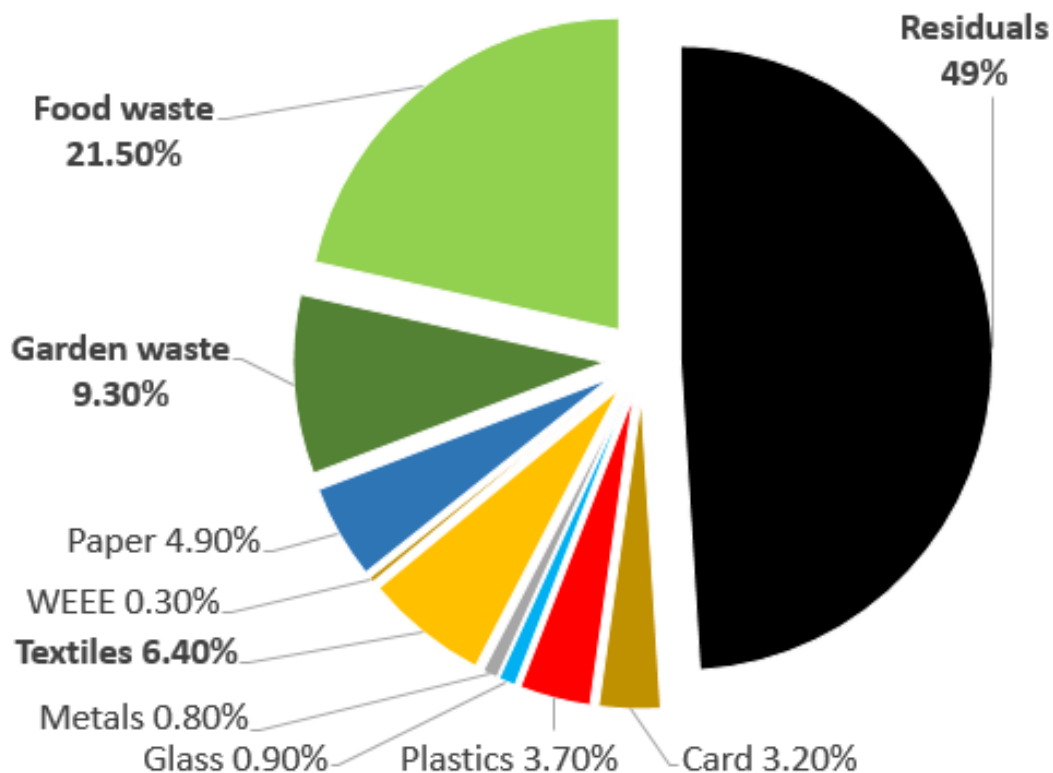
Further waste analysis is planned through the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee (DASWC) in order to provide a scientific focus to our approaches to maximize recycling levels over future years.

What is apparent from the analysis is that there are no particular 'gaps' in the current recycling service provision in Teignbridge in terms of a need to collect additional material types.

There is however, a stark presence of organic waste in the residual waste, predominantly food waste but also some garden waste (as there would have been prior to introducing a charged service).

If we were to achieve full participation in the services currently offered our recycling rate would far surpass the 60% level. This is useful to bear in mind when considering the following sections of this report.

**Figure 7 - TDC Residual Waste Analysis**



## **1.8 Residual Waste Collection Frequency**

A reduction in the frequency of the emptying of residual waste bins is likely to increase the recycling rate significantly based on the experience of East Devon and other authorities operating similar services.

Teignbridge currently empty residual waste bins fortnightly. East Devon's switch to 3 weekly residual waste collections saw their recycling rate increase beyond the 60% level having previously not matched Teignbridge's despite operating a similar service (see Figure 3).

Reducing residual waste capacity in this way forces people to consistently recycle more on an ongoing basis. There are a whole host of factors to consider in relation to reducing residual waste collections. These are considered in more detail in Appendix 1 of this report. The key issues currently faced in reducing residual waste collection frequency in Teignbridge are;

- The National Waste & Resources Strategy. This has indicated that the Government may dictate that the frequency of residual waste collections as no less than fortnightly.
- Roll out costs. There are significant costs in rolling out service changes of this magnitude, including communications costs, round rescheduling and the need for additional recycling collection vehicles and crews. Whilst some savings may materialize in years 2 onwards these will be dependent on material income levels amongst other variables.
- Corona virus pandemic. Reducing residual waste collections during the coronavirus pandemic will add significant pressure to the waste service team at a time of intense additional pressure. The success of previous service changes has in part been due to effective internal consultation, for example with crews when restructuring collection rounds, which would be difficult to replicate safely at present.

As a result it would appear prudent to delay further consideration of this measure, at least until clarification from the national strategy consultations have been finalized.

An alternative approach would be to reduce the size of the current black bins down from 180 litres and maintain fortnightly collections. At an estimated £20 per bin delivered this would still represent a significant investment (~£1.4M) if all were changed over and is unlikely to be popular with the majority of residents. Notably three out of the top 10 recycling authorities provide 140 litre bins for fortnightly collections.

## **1.9 Waste Education and Communications**

### **Campaigns**

Teignbridge have an excellent track record when it comes to securing funding and delivering campaigns to illicit behavioural change and increase participation in recycling services. As recycling rates have increased nationally the funding previously available has largely disappeared.

Examples of TDC campaigns include

- Is there a banana in your bin?
- European Metals Recycling on street recycling campaign
- Community incentive campaign
- Let's hit the 60's
- Starve your bin
- Operation stack
- Metal Matters – foil recycling
- Garden waste campaign

More recently the 'make every scrap count' campaign focused on encouraging participation in food waste recycling. Residents were also reminded that they can now use normal plastic bags to contain their food waste



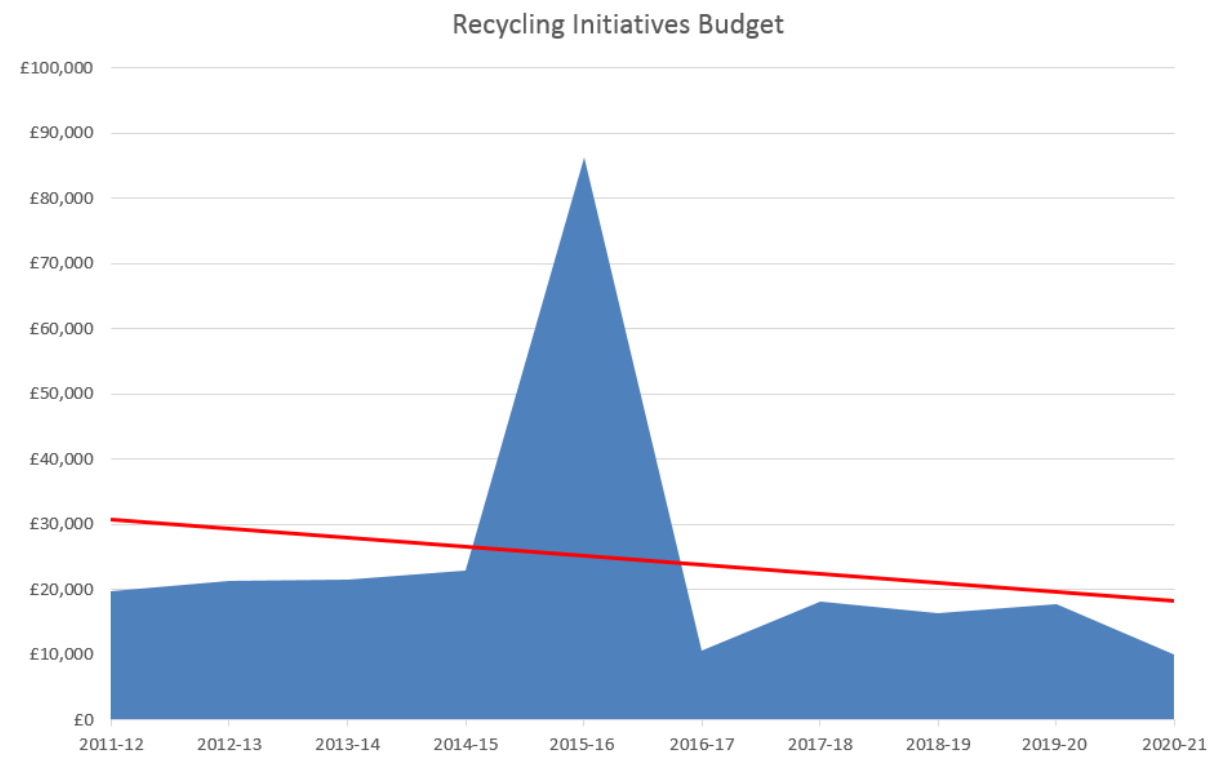
Figure 8 shows the budget allocated for recycling initiatives over the last decade. There was a spike in 2015/16 which coincides with the additional costs of the service change that year.

Overall the budget available has been reducing over time with some small increases linked to specific campaigns, for example additional funding was allocated in 2019/20 to promote the garden waste service to generate additional subscriptions.

The proposed budget allocation for the 2021/22 financial year has been set at £10k, in line with the current year's but still well below the £20k average between 2011 and 2015.

These budget savings were identified through the Best 2020 process as an area where spend could be reduced to help the overall Council financial position.

**Figure 8 TDC Recycling Initiatives Budget**



Campaigns are also regularly delivered jointly across Devon under the Don't let Devon go to waste' banner, funded largely by the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee (DASWC), Devon County Council and external bodies and arranged through officer working groups.

The Resource and Waste Management Strategy for Devon and Torbay links to a specific waste communications strategy which sets out the approach, methodology and rationale being used to engage and communicate with residents and achieve the objectives of the strategy. It covers all forms of targeted marketing and communications, including public relations, publications, campaigns and one-to-one engagement. National campaigns, typically instigated by WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) are also disseminated through available channels.

Campaigns typically involve a mixture of communications methods including leaflets, advertising (adshells, radio, bus sides etc), vehicle livery, roadshows, competitions, links with Town & Parish councils and website information. Social media plays an increasingly important role in all campaign work and the waste team work proactively

with our communications team to deliver both monthly programmed and reactive posts.

## **Waste and Recycling Advisors Contract**

The Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee have funded the Waste and Recycling Advisors contract since 2017.

The project objectives are to:

- Increase awareness around contamination
- Increased levels of home composting and reduction of food waste
- Increased capture of recyclable and compostable materials (Inc. food waste)
- Increase recycling in poor performing areas
- Decrease residual waste from households

A team of three experienced advisors work across Devon's local authority areas each mainly making face-to-face calls to residents to assist them with waste prevention, recycling and composting activities.

This work has proved extremely valuable in raising residents' understanding of their recycling collections. The nature of this work, which includes a focus on targeted face to face interactions and door knocking has suffered due to the periods of lockdown in relation to the covid pandemic.

## **Schools Waste Education**

The current Resource and Waste Education Strategy for Devon Schools was published in 2017 and runs to 2022 and will be reviewed in 2021/22.

The strategy seeks to provide valuable support to schools and families to help equip our children for a more sustainable future. See <https://zone.recycledevon.org/our-strategy/>

A significant proportion of the Waste Education Strategy and Action Plan is delivered via a contracted Waste Education Team providing curriculum linked workshops and assemblies in school. There has been significant growth in demand over the past 3 years, particularly with the significant impact of "The Attenborough effect" and a growing awareness of issues such as plastics and Climate Change. In a typical academic year up to 1,500 adults and more than 12,000 children are engaged in workshops, assemblies, audits, trips and training.

### **1.10 Compliance and Enforcement**

TDC's recycling compliance efforts are delivered by one dedicated employee (Compliance Inspector) supported by capacity from other team members, particularly the Waste & Cleansing Inspector and the Waste & Recycling Supervisor and members of the wider TDC enforcement team.

Powers are available to TDC through the Environmental Protection Act to prescribe how residents present their waste to ensure participation in recycling using 'Section 46' notices.

Arriving at the point of issue of a legal notice is, however, a lengthy and resource intensive process requiring initially establishing who occupies the premises through powers in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act.

Typically residents who have been identified as not recycling, who have not responded positively to initial letters and visits to ensure they understand the service and have the necessary containers, fail to respond to these requests for information. The decision on whether to pursue legal action in these cases becomes difficult to justify and historically there has also been a stigma associated with criminalizing participation in recycling, which reached a pinnacle when Eric Pickles, the then Secretary of State, wrote to all Waste Authorities urging them not to take a strong legal approach to encouraging participation in waste services.

The phrase 'stick and carrot' is often used when referring to the approaches towards generating the behavioural change desired, in this case participation in recycling, but the reality is that the legal stick available is somewhat difficult to wield to any great effect.

This is still an avenue we can and do follow for any particularly obstinate residents who refuse to participate without good reason. In reality it is so resource intensive that it is unlikely to yield any meaningful results in relation to the overall recycling rate even if efforts were increased to take a stronger legal approach to ensuring participation in recycling. Research points to the fact that resource would be better spent educating, encouraging and ensuring those not participating have the correct containers and information.

There have been significant improvements in the way compliance and participation monitoring is undertaken by TDC through the recent digitization of the process however. This provides the Compliance Inspector with a hand held electronic device that can log information against the property to record a picture of participation and automatically trigger a range of responses, such as letters to the property and arranging further visits.

This intelligence led approach helps us to focus the resource available and has led to some productive work focusing on food waste at new builds and improving recycling at communal properties for example.

### **Proposed Actions**

- ***Action 1 - Work to deliver waste education and behavioural change campaigns and initiatives using available resources, with a specific campaign linked to the availability of free of charge additional recycling containers to encourage greater participation.***
- ***Action 2 - Continue to support and work jointly through DASWC, regionally and nationally on campaigns***

- **Action 3 - *Deliver an intelligence led approach to compliance work focusing activities on new housing estates and other low participating areas to maximize participation in recycling services.***
- **Action 4 - *Proactively seek external funding available to support recycling initiatives***

### **1.11 Service Digitization**

Waste & Cleansing have been at the forefront of the 'One Teignbridge' digitisation project. These services generate high levels of contact from residents. In order to improve efficiency a plethora of processes have been developed which can be completed online by residents, amongst the most popular are;

- garden waste renewals,
- requests for replacement containers,
- booking bulky waste collections and
- reporting missed bins

In-cab devices linked to back office software help efficiently manage collections and provide live information to supervisors and customer support teams. Information can also automatically flow to crews to ensure rapid responses to work requests, reducing response times and increasing efficiencies by utilising crews already in the area.

One particular success has been the management of container deliveries. Prior to digitisation waiting times were typically 10 to 14 days. The majority of containers are now delivered within 7 days, with some occurring the same day as order depending on the locality of the delivery crew. These improvements help to ensure residents have the correct containers as quickly as possible to help the fully participate in recycling services.

It would be useful for all members to familiarise themselves with the digital offerings to help signpost any enquiries from their constituents in the first instance.

[www.teignbridge.gov.uk/recycling](http://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/recycling)

### **Proposed Action**

- **Action 5 - *Work across departments to develop and improve systems to help deliver high levels of participation in waste and recycling services.***

### **1.12 Garden Waste Subscriptions**

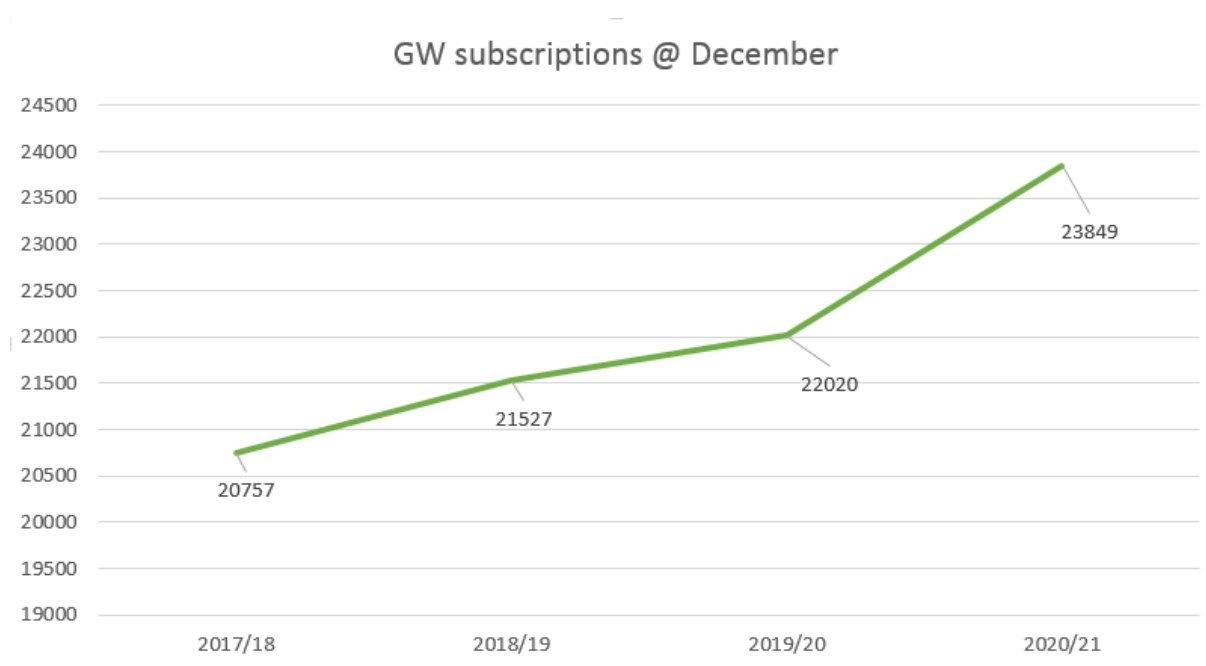
Following the introduction of the charged garden waste service in 2015 material previously collected which counted towards TDC's recycling rate was lost as not everybody chose to subscribe. Most garden waste migrated to the DCC recycling



centres (so will still count towards the overall county recycling rate) and to home composting.

Through regular promotions and increasingly sophisticated renewals and reminders we have seen the number of subscriptions (and associated tonnage of garden waste) increase year on year, with a notable spike during lockdown 1 when the recycling centres were closed. In January 2021 we reached a milestone 24,000 subscriptions. This generates much needed additional income to help offset the overall service costs. Tonnages have also risen from ~6,100 tonnes at Q3 in 2017/18 to over 7,000 tonnes at Q3 20/21 to help sustain our high recycling rate.

**Figure 9 - TDC Garden Waste Subscription Levels**



Measures that increase garden waste tonnages and subscriptions will benefit the recycling rate but should be balanced against the principles of the waste hierarchy which favour home and community composting. Part of the philosophy of charging for garden waste collections was to nudge residents towards more sustainable waste management of their garden waste through local or home composting and to move away from 'tonnage chasing' to boost recycling rates.

### Proposed Action

- **Action 6 - Work to promote the garden waste service, including reference to the availability of additional bins and consider the option for properties to have greater than 3 garden waste bins**

## 1.13 Local waste policies and services

There are a number of local policies and methods of work in relation to waste management and recycling in place including;

- Litter and dog bin policy
- Side waste policy
- Additional residual waste bins
- Community Recycling Banks

### Litter bin policy

The latest version of this policy was adopted in 2018. Much of the waste collected in litter bins can theoretically be recycled. This policy includes a section to encourage 'on-the-go' recycling stating that 'wherever practical litter bins with recycling facilities should be installed instead of standard 'waste only' litter bins'.

In reality the numerous recycling/litter bins we have across the district return limited tonnages for recycling and are often heavily contaminated due to misuse. The impact of the national waste strategy's 'Deposit Return Scheme' may also deplete recyclable materials further as people choose to dispose of them at in store/community deposit return schemes.

### Proposed Action

- **Action 7 - Support the installation of on street recycling litter bins in line with the policy in place**

### Additional Residual Waste Bins

Households that meet a set criteria in relation to number of occupants are currently entitled to an additional residual waste bin free of charge. At present households that don't meet the criteria can apply for a second residual waste bin at a charge of £126 per year but must agree to fully participate in the recycling services provided.

At present we have 834 households with additional residual waste bins, 69 of which are charged. Work is ongoing to identify unauthorized additional bins (official ones are supplied with yellow lids) and remove those from properties no longer requiring them, for example when children leave home.

The average TDC household generates around 337kg of residual waste per year. If the option to pay for a second residual waste bin was removed this could potentially reduce waste by 23 tonnes per year.

Even if we assumed that all of the waste from these bins moved away from TDC residual collections (unlikely) the impact on the overall recycling rate would be negligible.

A 1% increase in the current recycling rate requires 495 tonnes to migrate from the residual waste into the recycling collections. In the situation faced, where incremental marginal gains are required, the practice of offering charged additional bins could be reconsidered, with a view to a significant cost increase or removal as an option altogether.

### **Proposed Action**

- ***Action 8 - Review the additional bin policy to remove option or increase the charge levied***

### **Side Waste Policy**

Residents are currently able to request collection of up to five bags of side waste in addition to their black bin on three occasions in a rolling 12 month period. Any other side waste, or side waste not pre- booked, will not be collected by crews.

Restrictions are relaxed during the post-Christmas catch up to allow for delayed collections due to bank holidays and also at present due to the covid pandemic.

Additional recyclable waste properly presented is collected without restriction or booking and residents can request additional recycling containers free of charge.

Last year we received 1378 requests for additional side waste collections, amounting to an estimated 28 tonnes of residual waste. Of these approximately a third were repeat requests from the same household. As a means to reducing residual waste this service approach could be reviewed to lower the allowance and resulting residual waste tonnage.

### **Proposed Action**

- ***Action 9 - Review the side waste policy to reduce the allowance from 3 times to once per year and consider introducing charges for this service.***

### **Community Recycling Banks**

Teignbridge operate a significant number (30) of community 'recycling bank' sites to provide additional capacity for residents to recycle. All the Devon districts offer community recycling bank services. Conversely, Cornwall recently took a decision to remove all of their recycling bank sites as part of a major service change.

In 2019/20 the tonnage from recycling banks contributed 3.9% to TDC's overall recycling rate. The service also generated £215k in material income and recycling credits, resulting in a net income of £96k after deduction of service costs. This income helps to cover the overall waste and recycling service costs.

During the recent lockdown some sites experienced a significant increase in use generating a requirement for the deployment of additional resources to clear fly

tipped waste and litter. A range of enforcement and communication activities were delivered to ensure people use the sites responsibly and were aware of alternative options should they arrive to find full banks.

## **Proposed Action**

- **Action 10 - *Continue to provide community recycling banks in recognition of the important role they play in maintaining high recycling rates within the district***

## **2. REPORT DETAIL**

### **2.1 Financial**

Increases in the collection and resale of dry recyclables generates additional income for the Council from Recycling Credits (paid to TDC by DCC) and through the sale of material to reprocessors. Material income levels vary with global and national markets and have to be balanced against the additional costs of collection, processing and onwards transportation.

Measures to increase the recycling rate may generate additional costs through staff costs, education, communication and enforcement campaigns and service changes. These additional costs may be beyond the levels of additional income likely to be generated from increases in recycling credits and sale of materials. Careful consideration will need to be given to any specific actions taken in relation to the overall service budget and financial pressures faced by the Council.

### **2.2 Legal**

There are no specific legal implications in relation to this report.

### **2.3 Risks**

There are no specific risks associated with this report.

### **2.4 Environmental/Climate Change Impact**

Increasing recycling levels has a positive overall impact in relation to environmental and climate change impacts in the majority of scenarios. Actions taken to increase the recycling rate would therefore support the Council's related aspirations.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

There are no additional alternative options identified that could be pursued at this time, acknowledging that the most likely way to make significant increases to the recycling rate is to reduce the residual waste collection frequency.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

At a time of extreme financial pressure for the Council any actions that require additional budget, resources, or reduce income should be carefully considered before being implemented.

Increasing the recycling rate may generate additional income in some scenarios but not others and the cost/benefit relationship is not always straightforward. For example it is clear that the primary target material is food waste. Increasing the amount of food waste we capture for recycling will not, however, generate any additional material income for the Council as there is a cost to reprocess this waste, covered by a DCC contract. We would, however attract additional recycling credit income. Conversely increasing the quantity of garden waste collected would not generate any additional material income or recycling credits.

There is a greater question worthy of consideration relating to whether the recycling rate is the best indicator of success. Its attraction is its simplicity and its ease of use for comparisons locally and nationally. Chasing an increased 'recycling rate' without proper regard for the cost and principles of the waste hierarchy should be avoided if sustainable waste management practices are the priority.

Nevertheless the actions identified in this report could be pursued and should generate increases in the recycling rate.

## Appendix 1 – Additional information relating to reduced residual waste collection

### Reduced residual waste collection frequency service considerations

A significant amount of preliminary work is required to inform the decision for a reduced frequency residual waste collection system to ensure our current position is fully understood, how the change may be of benefit and highlight the challenges it would create.

Several additional factors are also pertinent to the current position, both in relation to the CV19 pandemic and the [National Waste Strategy](#) and associated Environment Bill, as follows;

- Consideration should be given to the timing of any decisions to progress reducing residual waste collection frequencies in relation to perceptions of the impact on public health during the CV19 pandemic.
- Consideration should be given to the timing of any decisions to progress reducing residual waste collection frequencies in relation to the National Waste Strategy and related Environment Bill following indications that fortnightly residual collections may be stipulated as the lowest frequency required by Government.
- There are additional challenges for the staff responsible to deliver a complex project whilst the current pressures exist in managing and maintaining normal services in testing times, coupled with changes to working practices and arrangements (remote/home working, limited external support available etc).
- The timeframes for ordering additional recycling vehicles required to rebalance rounds were already challenging at 12 to 18 months from date of order. This is likely to be further impacted by the CV19 pandemic.

Irrespective of these specific issues there are a number of key considerations that need to be examined to establish the cost and performance of the current service and how this is likely to change as a result to properly inform any decision making. The key considerations will include the need for work in the following areas;

- Service costs and savings

There will be significant costs in year 1 relating to the planning and roll out of a service change of this magnitude, linked to communications, project management and roll out. We could expect to generate some savings from year 2 onwards. The level of savings is dependent on a number of factors, particularly linked to improved recycling rates, collection round change requirements and the stability of global commodity markets which dictate the levels of income we can generate from the sale of materials collected. The savings generated specifically relating to the reduced frequency of residual waste collection rounds may be better described as 'avoided additional costs' as additional capacity will be required to service the growing number of households in the district, particularly if residual waste tonnages continue to rise as more people work from home.

This is particularly difficult to predict at present as the impact of the CV19 pandemic on global markets and the measures being implemented through the Waste Strategy, linked to [Extended Producer Responsibility](#), [Deposit Return Schemes](#) and [Consistent Collections](#) remain unclear. Work will need to be undertaken to estimate the impacts on projected service income to inform financial projections but would be caveated with greater than usual variability due to the uncertainties currently being experienced by the waste sector.

- Staffing

Whilst there would be a need for less staff to collect residual waste this needs to be balanced against the additional recycling staff required to collect and process the extra recycling materials that will be diverted as a result of reduced residual capacity for households. Kerbside sort recycling collections are more labour intensive than residual waste collections and the pass rates (number of houses typically collected from on a round) are lower meaning

they are less efficient than residual waste collection rounds in terms of time and resources required.

In addition we have historic employment contracts in place for many 'Refuse' drivers meaning switching them to recycling collections may not be straightforward and could add to the costs of change. There will also be the need for additional staff resource during the planning and roll out stages to assist with the project planning, communications and customer contact.

Engaging with the waste collection operatives from the outset to facilitate constructive two-way communications will be essential. This will provide the opportunity for operatives to highlight particular real life issues on their rounds that may be intensified should the collection system alter, and will allow mitigation to occur early on in the process if required. It would need to be emphasised at an early stage that no decisions have been made in terms of changes and any consultation is to help us consider future options.

- Collection rounds

Implementing a different collection system can help to drive operational efficiencies as collection rounds are scrutinised and rescheduled to implement the new system. Operational efficiencies can have the benefit of delivering both environmental improvements and financial savings (e.g. reduction in fuel use).

Adjusting residual waste frequencies, whether to 3 or 4 weekly, will require all waste and recycling rounds to be reconfigured. This is a complex task that needs to factor in a range of variables linked to pass rates, estimated participation and set out levels, tipping locations, vehicle capacity triggers and seasonality. The pass rates for the current residual and recycling rounds would be lower as they will be collecting more material per household on each collection. This would be amplified on a 4 weekly cycle. The correlation is not as straightforward as 'halving the collection frequency halves the number of collection rounds required'.

Similar levels of waste will be generated by households in any scenario it will just result in a shift of some of that waste to the recycling collections (which are less efficient to collect than residual waste due to sorting requirement/more containers etc) and mean that residual bins will contain more per collection due to the reduced frequency meaning less bins can be emptied before the vehicle needs to tip, thereby reducing the round size achievable.

This means that whilst there is likely to be a reduction in the number of rounds/vehicles/crews operated this may not be significant as there is a balancing exercise to factor in using less efficient rounds. There would also be significant disruption to residents as their usual days of collection change and initial teething problems with rounds are addressed.

- Vehicles

At present there are particularly long lead times for the procurement of specialist recycling vehicles (12 to 18 months). This was an issue prior to CV19 as demand outstripped supply, with only a small number of manufacturers in the market. This is forecasted to worsen in the short term, both as a result of CV19 but also due to the Waste Strategy outcomes dictating that food waste should be collected separately by all waste collection authorities, increasing the demand for specialist vehicles further.

Reducing residual waste frequencies will lead to a need for additional recycling collection vehicles (beyond those planned to deal with housing growth) to manage the migration of material from residual bins to recycling collections. There is no capacity within the current recycling fleet to absorb additional materials as well as that forecast by additional households. The procurement timescales need to be factored in to any plans to reduce residual waste collection frequencies accordingly.

Some of the anticipated savings would be linked to reducing the number of residual waste collection vehicles required. As these are supplied through a contract hire arrangement the soonest savings linked to their supply could be made would be 2022/23.

- **Waste disposal and handling**

The current bulking station facility in Newton Abbot has limited capacity to deal with significant increases in recyclable materials and no clear opportunities to expand on the existing site. Informal talks have begun with Exeter City Council about utilising their planned waste depot infrastructure changes (linked to their forthcoming move to the 'aligned' collection model) to offload recyclable material from the north of the district. This would take some pressure away from our own facility and provide some round efficiencies, particularly for the anticipated significant new developments in that area. ECC's changes are several years away however and formal discussions will need to take place to agree terms and conditions, costs etc.

At present we also generate income from DCC through a shared savings agreement which began in 2015 for a 10 year period (subject to review). Whilst a change to a reduced residual waste collection frequency should produce a positive effect in relation to this agreement discussions will be needed with DCC to ensure there are no perverse consequences linked to a reduction in residual waste supplied to EfW facilities inadvertently increasing costs by triggering contract clauses. TDC are not privy to this information so this will need to be understood to advise any financial modelling work.

### **Rollout and communications strategy**

There will be a requirement for a communications strategy and associated costed action plan to deliver both internal and external communications. The upfront cost of communications is likely to be significant with the need to effectively engage with all households in the district. This may need to be offset by future anticipated savings.

Other authorities that have moved to 3 weekly residual collections have typically run initial trials in defined areas to gather feedback on operational issues and from residents on their experience and concerns. A public consultation exercise may also be required as part of the Business Impact Assessment. Additional temporary customer support staff will also be required during the roll out phase to handle increased levels of contact.

### **IT and system changes**

With the recent digitisation of many waste related processes there will be a need to review these in conjunction with STRATA. There will be resource and timing implications to incorporate in relation to the work required on this.

### **Conclusion**

It is recommended that consideration of a change in residual waste collection frequency is not progressed at this stage and should be revisited once the CV19 pandemic is resolved or stabilises and there is clarity in relation to the National Waste Strategy requirements.