

**Title of meeting:** Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness

**Date of meeting:** Friday 15th September 2023

**Subject:** Local Authority Housing Communal Bin Store Improvement Project

**Report by:** James Hill - Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

**Report Authors:** David Emmett - Head of Waste Management Services  
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**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision:** Yes

**Full Council decision:** No

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## 1. Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to

- 1.1 Update the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness on the work to prepare Portsmouth City Council (PCC) local authority housing properties (LAH) with communal collections for the implementation of twin stream recycling collections.
- 1.2 The report sets out the bin store improvement works which will improve the waste and recycling opportunities for residents, reduce issues associated with misuse of bin stores, and prepare PCC communal properties for future collection system changes.
- 1.3 To agree the strategy for the programme of works to ensure all LAH communal bin provision is ready once the collection system changes.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The report recommends that the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness approves the approach and indicative programme of improvement works to be able to improve the waste and recycling opportunities for residents,

reduce issues associated with misuse of bin stores, and prepare PCC communal properties for future collection system changes.

### **3 Background**

#### **3.1 PCC Communal Waste Provision**

- 3.1.1 There is an under provision of recycling facilities and opportunities to recycle in communal properties in comparison to properties on kerbside collections. Due to the age profile of PCC housing stock, the majority of communal properties are not designed for modern day waste management - this includes the provision of recycling facilities and larger volumes of waste produced by residents.
- 3.1.2 Bin stores are often unsecure, attracting abuse and misuse from some residents of the blocks and neighbouring properties, including fly tipping, excess waste and bulky items around the bins.
- 3.1.3 Due to bin stores being small, they are not able to accommodate the required number of bins or recycling facilities fully in all locations, especially as additional services have been introduced such as food waste. This has meant bins at communal properties are not always in the best location for residents to use fully, resulting in overuse or underuse of some bins and waste streams.
- 3.1.4 Housing Estate Services have dealt with 554 demand jobs associated with excess waste and contamination of recycling across all PCC housing estate areas since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. In these situations, the team will investigate where the excess waste has originated from and why and educate the residents of the block on recycling and waste management if needed. They will look to resolve or reduce the issues by increasing recycling capacity if there is not enough at the block.

#### **3.2 The Environment Act 2021**

3.2.1 Under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Portsmouth City Council (the 'Council') is classed as a Waste Collection and Disposal Authority. Section 45(1) states the waste collection authority has a duty to arrange for the collection of household waste from any premises unless satisfied that

- (a) the cost of doing so will be unreasonably high; or -
- (b) comparable alternative arrangements are available

Under Section 46(4) of the Act, the Council has specific powers to stipulate:

- the size, construction and maintenance of the receptacles
- the placing of the receptacles for the purpose of facilitating the emptying of them, and the access to the receptacles for that purpose



- the substance or articles which may or may not be put into the receptacles
- the time when the receptacles must be placed for that purpose and removed

3.2.2 The Environment Act 2021 will introduce compulsory separation of more recycling streams and increase the recyclable materials to be collected kerbside.

3.2.3 In July 2021, the Cabinet noted the Environment Act 2021 (previously the Environment Bill 2020) and agreed to the principle of providing a twin stream recycling collection service in the future - this is the collection of fibre (paper and cardboard) and dry mixed recycling (DMR) separately, with separate food waste and refuse collections. Future DMR is likely to include glass, plastic pots, tubs and trays, flexible plastics, foil trays and cartons as well as plastic bottles, tins, cans and aerosols currently recycled in Portsmouth. A new materials recovery facility (MRF) is being developed to enable a twin stream recycling collection service.

3.2.4 At the Environment and Community Safety decision meeting in December 2021, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety took a decision to adopt the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy which aligns the direction of travel of Hampshire authorities and highlights a twin stream collection system being the preferred option for PCC.

3.2.5 In July 2022, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Preventing Homelessness noted a report updating the Cabinet Member on the upcoming changes as a result of the Environment Act 2021, the administration's ambitions to increase recycling rate to support the city in meeting its net zero carbon commitments by 2030 and how PCC, as a social housing landlord, is preparing for these changes.

3.2.6 In February 2023, Cabinet approved the requirement for a new Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) at Chickenhall Lane in Eastleigh and associated necessary works to the Waste Transfer Station Network to enable the delivery of a new twin stream recycling system for the collection of dry recyclable waste across Portsmouth, Southampton and Hampshire.

3.2.7 PCC is a social landlord with approximately 1,200 communal properties in Portsmouth and Havant. The Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy approved in December 2021 aligns all Hampshire Collection Authorities to a twin stream collection system. Although PCC housing stock in the Havant Borough Council area has their waste collected by Havant Borough Council, it is a landlord responsibility to ensure waste is available for collection as stipulated by the Collection Authority. When the MRF is completed, Havant Borough Council will have to introduce separate recycling collections for DMR and fibre - it is the responsibility of PCC as the landlord to ensure this can be accommodated at our communal properties in the district.

### 3.3 Trial

- 3.3.1 In August 2022, Waste Management, Housing and Building Services began to trial the twin stream collection system to understand the changes that may be required in the future, and information/support needed for residents.
- 3.3.2 The teams identified that there was a significant under provision of recycling facilities at PCC communal properties and this could be improved immediately where practicable ahead of any collection system changes to offer residents the opportunity to correctly recycle and manage their household waste.
- 3.3.3 The project trialled these changes at 5 PCC communal properties, so each block now has a weekly collection of refuse, food waste, DMR (tins, cans, aerosols and plastic bottles) and fibre (paper and cardboard) recycling. The blocks involved in this trial were Mill Gate House, Berry House, Gerard House, Leominster House and Picton House.
- 3.3.4 Ahead of the trial starting, the Waste Management, Estate Services and Housing teams carried out a door knocking and engagement exercise at the communal properties to ensure all residents received the information about the trial, why it was happening and what it meant for them and had the opportunity to talk to the teams about the changes and any concerns they may have had. Minor building works were undertaken at the 5 blocks in the trial - these included improvements to lighting, removal of concrete steps, new hard standings, painting and new signage.
- 3.3.5 Three further blocks were added to the trial early 2023 - these were Kingsley Court, Loring House and Ponsonby House at the request of residents in these blocks for improved waste and recycling facilities. No improvement works were undertaken at these blocks however as they will be included in the wider project scope.
- 3.3.6 The changes have been on the whole, received well at the blocks in the trial and where needed waste management have been able to make changes based on learning and feedback received. This has included removal of aperture restrictor plates from recycling bins and increasing the minimum size of recycling bins. The refuse collection frequency at all these blocks has been reduced to once a week.
- 3.3.7 Estate Services have adapted well to the proposed changes. Training of Estate Wardens has improved the interaction and engagement residents. Standard operating procedures have been designed to help improve consistency in approach, communication (including standard letters for predictable circumstances) and response to outcomes such as the removal of side waste has been established. Whilst the focus of the report is the expansion of the mentioned trial sites, Estate Wardens have already applied the learning beyond these sites when addressing misuse of bins where side waste has been



generated or where recycling could be improved. Meaning the future expansion work completed by building services should mean Estate Wardens are ready to work with residents in a way that will be close to business as usual. Learning to date does show that the trial site provides the best circumstances for successful use by residents, albeit misuse or reason to engage with residents does still occur. In such circumstances the work by the Estate Wardens is proving effective.

- 3.3.8 After the trial had been in place for six months, waste management carried out a survey for residents of the trial blocks. Constructive feedback was received from trial and concerns around the appearance of bin stores/areas due to the bins being small were actioned by changing the minimum size recycling bins from 360L to 660L - comments indicated that although capacity should have been sufficient, the volume of recyclable materials such as paper and card took up more space in the bins resulting in overflow. Concerns around overflowing refuse bins have been actioned by changing the bins to 660L rather than multiples of 360L and Estate Wardens working with residents to ensure waste and recycling is going into the correct bins. Feedback regarding the information provided in advance, stickers and signage on bins was positive and will be carried through the project. Comments regarding food waste bins has resulted in trialling the lining of communal food waste bins to improve participation and in addition, we have removed restrictor plates from recycling aperture lids to make them easier to use for residents.

### 3.4 Project

- 3.4.1 The Building Services team identified the need to expand the learning to understand how the changes, works and resources required for waste facility improvements be implemented on a wider scale. Portsmouth City Council is a social landlord of approximately 1,200 communal properties, with housing stock in Havant Borough Council that will also be impacted by the changes as they will have to change to a twin stream recycling collection system in line with all Hampshire Authorities.
- 3.4.2 Portsea area was selected by Building Services to review and propose changes to first - further learning opportunities would be identified as the project progressed. The area consists of approximately 50 communal properties with communal waste provision and is made up of a mixture of property types with different requirements. There are high and mid to low rise blocks, bin chutes and properties with very limited communal space to consider.
- 3.4.3 Waste storage solutions need to be easy to use for residents, maximise the opportunities to recycle and meet the requirements of Waste Management, Estate Services, and Building Services set out below:



- Enable recycling and reduce issues with contaminated recycling, excess waste produced and fly-tipping
- Be no more than 25m from the agreed collection point
- Be no more than 30m from resident property access point
- Have enough space for bins to be moved independently of each other
- Adequate lighting, well ventilated and room to display clear signage
- Secure so only accessible by residents of the appropriate block or subblock
- Have enough space to provide for weekly collections of each waste stream where possible
- Enable recycling and reduce issues with contaminated recycling, excess waste produced and fly-tipping
- Take into account fire risk assessments and proximity to buildings

3.4.4 Refuse and recycling capacity for the communal properties was reviewed by the Waste Management project team to understand the number of bins required for each block - the waste allowance has been calculated using the BS 5906:2005 but reflected to consider more up to date information on waste volumes and post-pandemic ways of living. The allowance was apportioned into refuse, DMR and fibre using Portsmouth waste composition analysis data and waste/recycling tonnage data.

3.4.5 The buildings project team have undertaken a survey of all of the blocks to understand the facilities that are already in place and what is required to bring these in line with the requirements of the project. Waste Management and Estate Services identified blocks where recycling provision has been under provided for and installed more recycling bins at these properties where practicable without additional improvement works.

3.4.6 Proposals were drawn up for each block, considering;

- use by residents
- the waste allowance required for the future twin stream collection system,
- any issues such as fly-tipping, use of bins by non-residents, and other ASB currently experienced on the estate and ways to mitigate these,
- proposals maximise and encourage recycling
- the waste collection points.

3.4.7 A small number of the proposals include closing refuse chutes at some blocks and relocating the bin stores. Refuse chutes were designed for small amounts of waste at a time when Local Authorities were not required to provide a recycling service to households - this was brought in with the Household Waste Recycling Act 2003 which required Local Authorities in England to provide every household with a separate collection of at least 2 types of recyclable materials by 2010. The project recognises that removing access to refuse chutes may not

be favourable and if required, will explore options to retain use of chutes if deemed feasible.

3.4.8 'A Really Rubbish Event' was planned for the purpose of resident consultation on the waste collection changes and proposals for their housing block bin provision/store. It aimed to support the education element of the project to engage with and remind residents about waste collections and recycling in Portsmouth, and how they can help make a difference. A letter drop was completed to inform residents of the event and upcoming changes to waste management blocks. Waste proposals were displayed in the communal areas of the housing blocks ahead of the event date and residents were encouraged to attend to share their views with the waste management and building services teams. Unfortunately, the event had to be relocated to an indoor venue due to adverse weather conditions. A door knocking exercise for residents of all blocks where changes are expected to be more significant has been planned.

3.4.9 Work is programmed to start in Autumn 2023 at housing blocks in the Portsea area and expected to complete in early 2024. Once the works at each block are completed, new bins will be installed, and communications shared with residents to start separating their recyclable materials. Communications will be clear that until the new MRF is operational, recycling will be collected in the same vehicle however at the point the collection system changes across the city separate vehicles will collect the separate recycling streams at which point residents will be asked to put the additional recyclable materials (glass, cartons, plastic pots, tubs and trays, foils and flexible plastics) in the green recycling bins - however in the meantime the improvements will improve the waste facilities for residents and reduce anti-social use and behaviour associated with bin stores.

3.4.10 In addition to the improvements to waste facilities for residents and reduction in anti-social use of bins and bin stores, reviewing capacity and recycling provision will mean blocks are provided with enough refuse and recycling capacity for once weekly collections. Many LAH communal properties in Portsea, and across the City, have their waste collected twice or three times a week. By reducing collections to once a week across all PCC communal housing stock, there would be an annual saving of 0.8 tonnes CO2 equivalent.

### 3.5 Roll out

3.5.1 The indicative programme for the works in Portsea is as follows:

- Tender return: August 2023
- Commencement on site: October 2023
- Completion on site: Early 2024

3.5.2 The evaluation of Landport and Buckland housing areas has commenced and initial phases will be programmed to commence in 2024. Learning from the work in Portsea to date means any issues that arose in the initial phase can be addressed sooner.

3.5.3 The programme of works should not be impacted by any delays to EPR funding or the development of the MRF and subsequent transition to a twin stream collection system - separating recyclable materials ahead of the transition will improve waste behaviours and reduce contamination rates, benefiting the local areas and the City. Residents will benefit from safer, cleaner, and tidier communal areas and bin store as improvements will help prevent miss-use of the bins and abuse of bins and bin stores by non-residents of the blocks and reduce fly-tipping.

## **4 Outline of changes**

4.1 The changes for residents will be:

- Increase in number of recycling bins and recycling streams, improving recycling provision
- Change in number of refuse bins to allow for once a week collection
- Introduction of separate food waste collection if not in place already
- Improved signage for bin stores/areas
- In some cases, a change in location of bin stores/areas
- In some cases, the removal of refuse chutes as a way of refuse disposal

## **5 Reasons for Recommendations**

5.1 The reasons for the recommendations made in 2. are to ensure PCC communal properties, residents and Housing, Estates and Waste teams are prepared for the changes required by the PCC response to the Environment Act 2021.

5.2 Improvement works to LAH bin stores will improve the waste and recycling opportunities for resident and reduce issues associated with misuse of bin stores.

## **6 Integrated Impact Assessment**

6.1. Integrated Impact Assessment appended.

## **7 Legal Implications**

7.1 Improvements to the bin stores are required in order to accommodate waste collection changes to meet legislative requirements stipulated in the Environment Act 2021.

7.2 Leases for any properties that are leased by PCC will be reviewed so that any bin stores / chutes that are within a leaseholder demise are not moved without the leaseholder consent (by way of variation to their lease). It is highly unlikely that any bin stores are demised to individual tenants as opposed to being within communal areas.

## **8 Director of Finance's comments**



- 8.1 The allocation of a £620,000 budget in the 2023/24 HRA Capital Programme for waste collection improvement works to PCC housing bin stores was agreed by the Cabinet Member on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 and subsequently approved by the Director of Finance under Financial Rules, Section B11. Tender costs for Portsea will inform the budget requirement for further phases of the Communal Bin Store Improvement Project to be considered for capital allocations in future years.
- 8.2 The number of bins that need to be replaced will depend on the final specification of works. The maximum cost, for full replacement in the pilot area, would be circa £60,000 and would need to be funded from the HRA Capital Programme. However, a significantly lower cost is more likely. Any damaged bins would normally be replaced by Estates Services using existing revenue budgets.

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Signed by: James Hill - Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

**Appendices:**

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
Environment Act 2021	<a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk">Environment Act 2021 (legislation.gov.uk)</a>
Cabinet 27 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	<a href="#">Future of Waste Collection Services.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)</a>
Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)	<a href="#">Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)</a>
Housing and Preventing Homelessness Cabinet 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	<a href="#">Environment Bill and landlord preparation.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)</a>
Cabinet 21 <sup>st</sup> February 2023	<a href="#">Recycling infrastructure update report - decision final.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)</a>

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

.....  
Signed by: