



COUNCIL: 16 October 2024

Report of: Assistant Director of Environmental Services

Lead Member: Councillor Neil Furey

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SUBJECT: Food Waste Collections – Capital Transitional Grant Payment

<p>NOT FOR PUBLICATION BY VIRTUE OF PARAGRAPHS 3 OF PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 12A TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972</p>
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Wards affected: Borough wide.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek authority to spend the Transitional Capital funding through Section 31 grants received from DEFRA on 11 April 2024, for the procurement of new vehicles, to deliver mandatory food waste collections on a non-ring-fenced basis.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

- 2.1 That the Assistant Director of Environmental Services be authorised to procure specialised food waste vehicles and food containers to deliver mandatory food waste collections by 31 March 2026. The cost of which will be taken from the capital grant payment of £1,072,995 from DEFRA under Section 31 of the Local Government Act.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Resources and Waste Strategy for England was published in 2018 and sets out the Government's ambition to improve recycling rates and transition to a Circular Economy. The Environment Act 2021 sets out the legislation requirement for waste collection authorities to provide a mandatory weekly food waste collection to all households by 31 March 2026.

- 3.2 West Lancashire Borough Council are the Waste Collection Authority for the Borough, and all waste streams are taken to the Robert Hodge Centre in Skelmersdale for processing through the Waste Transfer Station. Lancashire Renewals (owned by Lancashire County Council) collect the waste for disposal from Robert Hodge Centre.
- 3.3 It is anticipated that large numbers of local authorities will implement new or extended food waste collection services between 2024 and 2026. There will be a very high demand for new vehicles and food containers during this period, to meet the Government deadline. It is therefore important that the necessary steps are taken to obtain the required food waste vehicles and food containers as soon as practicable to secure the necessary items that are needed by the Council to fulfil its obligations.
- 3.4 Discussions with Lancashire Waste Partnership support the options to explore joint procurement for vehicles and containers. Officers will evaluate the feasibility and benefits to jointly procure with other District Councils with similar requirements where appropriate.

4.0 Current Position

- 4.1 Funding in the sum of £1,072,995 has already been secured from DEFRA. Unfortunately, the capital funding allocation falls short of the actual anticipated costs of procuring all the vehicles and containers that the Council will need. The Lancashire Waste Partnership (on behalf of all District Councils) wrote to DEFRA on 15 March 2024 to seek assurances that all reasonable capital costs will be funded in full by Government. A response was received from DEFRA on 8 May 2024 advising that the funding allocation is for capital expenditure only and is intended for the purchasing vehicles and food containers.
- 4.2 The Assistant Director of Environmental Services and the relevant Lead Member wrote separately to DEFRA on 29 April 2024 requesting a review of the indicative capital transitional costs for the introduction of weekly food waste collections. DEFRA are engaging with the Council regarding the capital funding allocation, however, to date, DEFRA have not confirmed any additional funding.
- 4.3 As the financial position is not currently clear, there is still a need to procure the food waste vehicles and food containers as soon as possible. This report seeks to utilise the funds already provided by DEFRA to purchase the said items up to the value of £1,072,995.
- 4.4 A further update will be provided to Members once the financial position is clear, and when there is a clearer picture on whether additional vehicles/containers will be needed. It is anticipated that any future requests for funding will be included in the annual budget process.

5.0 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

- 5.1 A full Communications Strategy for Food Waste Implementation will produce information and education to all households, members of the public, staff, and elected members to advise of the new food waste service for all households.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are sustainability impacts associated with the roll out of food waste. Due to the funding from DEFRA, procurement of electric vehicles is not viable. This has been raised directly with DEFRA in April 2024, for a response to the Government's targets relating to the Climate Change Emergency and reaching Carbon Net Zero by 2050. Equally, the Council's vision to be carbon neutral by 2030 will be impacted by the introduction of mandatory weekly food waste collections and from further CO² emissions due to the increases in fuel costs incurred by the Council. DEFRA have provided an update and advised 'the vehicle provision is for a standard, fuel powered vehicle. The cost of electric vehicles is not considered a reasonable cost'.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 DEFRA made a capital transitional grant payment under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 to the Council to support the delivery of weekly food waste collections on 11 April 2024 for a total sum of £1,072,995.
- 7.2 There are financial implications arising from this report in respect of a possible shortfall of capital grant funding from DEFRA to deliver mandatory food waste weekly collections from 31 March 2026. Therefore, there may be a requirement from Council to approve any shortfall in funding to deliver this mandatory service.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 As advised, it is anticipated that many local authorities will implement new or extended food waste collection services between 2024 and 2026. The high demand for new vehicles and containers during this timeframe. Procurement bottlenecks are inevitable and could create supply delays and impact the implementation timescales of a new service. The Council must act quickly to determine requirements and to proceed with procurement as early as possible.
- 8.3 There are many interdependencies with Lancashire County Council (LCC) as the waste disposal authority. Waste collection authorities in Lancashire are reliant on sufficient food waste recycling capacity being put in place by LCC. LCC have indicated facilities at Farrington Waste Park should be ready to accept the County's food waste in 2026, albeit the facility may need to be ramped up to full capacity in phases to deliver within the agreed timeframes.
- 8.4 The risks associated with in this report have been uploaded to the relevant risk register in Ideagen.

9.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The introduction of food waste collections to all households by 31 March 2026 will achieve the Council Vision and Priorities:
- Foster inclusive and healthy communities, by reducing health and wellbeing inequalities
- 9.3 The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan: Awareness of climate change and Action by the community is vital to the borough reducing its greenhouse gas emissions and become resilient to extreme weather. This is linked to Priority 6: Community Action
- 9.5 The Health and Wellbeing of the staff is to be addressed through robust risk assessment and safe systems of work.
- 9.6 In line with the Health and Wellbeing of the staff, the design of vehicles and food containers will be considered during the procurement process.