

17. Waste Collection & Street Cleansing Specifications (For New Contracts From 1/9/2026)

Steve Bird, Assistant Director of Communities and Street Scene introduced the report and made the following key points:

- a. presented a report to provide an update on the specification of the waste collection and street cleansing contract prior to commencing procurement, with specific reference to comments received in the All-Member workshops.
- b. explained that the Council had two contracts for street scene services: street cleansing and grounds maintenance, and waste collections. Both of these contracts would end on 31st August 2026.
- c. further explained that the new contracts would commence on 1st September 2026 and would be realigned and packaged as two separate contracts: waste (which included recycling and other domestic waste streams) and street cleansing, and a separate grounds maintenance contract.
- d. explained that there were specialist vehicles required, and that the lead-in time for procuring the vehicles was currently two years, therefore procurement needed to commence in November 2023.

Caroline Bird, Community Services Manager (Programme) gave a detailed overview of the proposed waste/cleansing contract specifications and covered the following key points:

- a. advised that the Council would require its contractors to pay their staff in accordance with the Real Living Wage as a minimum.
- b. explained that the waste/cleansing specification had been drafted and was summarised at Appendix A of the report.
- c. further explained that the changes in Appendix A were just material changes which may be noticeable to service users. Many other changes had been made in the interests of cost control, clarity, ease of navigation, ease of operational use and understanding.
- d. detailed the issues highlighted at member workshops, actions taken to address these issues and the anticipated impact on cost.
- e. updated that since the publication of this report, the contract had been amended to reflect that side waste collections were unlikely to be allowed by 2026.
- f. invited members questions and comments:

Question: What was side waste?

Response: Side waste was rubbish that had been put at the side of the bins rather than inside of the bins. At the moment recycling was collected from side waste. However, due to the risk of contamination it was unlikely to be allowed to continue by 2026.

Comment: There were issues with collections at narrow roads within Boutham Ward. It would be interesting to see how this would be addressed and written into the contract.

Question: What was the length of the contract?

Response: The contract was for 8 years and 7 months, which would bring it in line with the financial year. There was the option to extend the contract for a further 8 years if both parties were happy to continue.

Question: It was currently expected that separate collections for paper and card would be introduced in the future, and it would be likely to change in future to have other separate collections. How would this affect the contract?

Response: There was a flexibility clause in the contract. The Council and the contractor would be obliged to work together to address any future changes.

Question: Would there be an extra charge for changes or additional collections?

Response: Yes, the contractor would be required to provide costs to ensure value for money. The type of contract meant that the contractor could look to make changes to improve efficiency. If there were fundamental changes to the service, suggested by the contractor, the benefits would be shared between the contractor and the Council.

Question: How would the "in cab" technology work?

Response: A tablet would be integrated into each cab which would instantly report updates from the cleansing and collection crews. This would enable customer services staff to have the relevant information much faster to deal with customer enquiries.

Question: To what extent were the changes to the service driven by costs rather than providing a better service?

Response: The contract would provide best value for money whilst reducing the risk to contractors. We were trying to achieve a balance between value for money and providing a statutory duty. There was no expectation there would be a deterioration in the service provided.

Question: Why had the routine sweeping of car parking bays been removed from the specification?

Response: The sweeping of car parking bays referred to some council housing areas, it was an anomaly in the current contract and a decision was made by the Director of Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing to remove this from the specification.

Question: Would there be a smaller charge for garden waste collections if there was a reduction in the service?

Response: This would be a decision to be made by Members through the democratic process.

Question: Should the cleansing of bridges, lifts and stairs be maintained and paid for by Network Rail?

Response: Yes, but their response times were slow and it did not reflect well on the City. The lifts, stairs and bridges would be treated the same as the surrounding streets. It was not a significant part of the contract cost.

Question: What was on-street recycling bins?

Response: It was where litter bins in the street gave recycling options to people disposing of waste while out and about. The Council was not in a position to offer this service yet but it was hoped to introduce the service in the future. It would need to be agreed with Lincolnshire County Council.

Comment: People often did not know what to do if they received a label on their bins for contamination.

Response: It was a balance between discouraging contamination but also not making it too difficult for people to recycle. Some more work on education and enforcement was required.

Question: Would it be possible to move to compostable refuse bags in the future?

Response: The Lincolnshire County Council waste handler had to be able to handle the materials. We were currently waiting for a reply from Lincolnshire County Council regarding the bags. It had been written into the contract that we would like to use alternative bags such as compostable material in the future. The contractor would be expected to work with us to identify alternative bags.

Question: Had any consideration been given to re introducing the Saturday waste service (Civic Amenity Service) where residents could take their waste to a nominated point?

Response: It was not possible to reintroduce this service due to health and safety legislation. There were also issues of businesses taking advantage of the service and an increase in fly tipping at the sites. People would leave their rubbish at the site even if they did not know the collection day.

Question: Some residents did not know what contamination was. What was the communication plan to address this?

Response: With regards to the changes to the contract, a communication plan would be drawn up in due course and would provide plenty of time to advertise any changes. In general terms we were mindful that levels of contamination were high and we would be taking steps to address this. There would be a campaign running up to Christmas.

Question: Currently refuse sacks were provided inside a bag rather than a roll, the bag was not needed, could this be changed?

Response: This would be discussed with the current contractor, and the wording in the new specification would be amended.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be supported and referred to Executive for consideration.