

## Report to Executive

Agenda  
Item:

A.1

Meeting Date: 5th August 2013  
Portfolio: Environment and Transport  
Key Decision: Yes: Recorded in the Notice Ref:KD 01/13  
Within Policy and Budget Framework YES  
Public / Private Public

Title: PURPLE SACKS REVIEW  
Report of: The Director of Local Environment  
Report Number: LE22/13

### **Purpose / Summary:**

Improving the quality of the local environment is a corporate priority for the City Council and the Council adopted the "Clean up Carlisle" campaign in 2012. Significant efforts have been taken to improve the quality of street cleansing and keeping the streets clean through investment in new street cleaning machines, new programmes of work and in education and enforcement to prevent littering and dog fouling. Despite these improvements, complaints have continued to be received about litter from torn refuse sacks in areas without a wheeled bin collection and important resources are diverted to deal with the high levels of litter created by the sack collections.

This report sets out proposals to change the purple sack service and so minimise the litter currently created by the purple sack collection (often being split open by seagulls other animals, vermin and would be vandals/criminals) so supporting the 'Clean up Carlisle Campaign' and significantly improving the quality of the local environment.

It is proposed to move, where possible, most of the remaining 5,538 properties on a weekly purple sack refuse collection to wheeled bin fortnightly collection of refuse. Where it is impractical to move residents from a weekly collection, it is proposed to replace disposable purple sacks with reusable polypropylene sacks- '*Gull sacks*'. This is a more labour intensive means of collecting waste so it is preferable to move as many collections as possible to the wheeled bin collections to ensure that the service is as cost effective as possible.

A further benefit expected is that the improved service will increase the levels of recycling in these areas to meet the good performance in other wheeled bin areas, thus reducing the residual waste presented for collection.

**Recommendations:** That Executive approve the proposals in Option C to move properties currently provided with a weekly purple sack refuse collections to either fortnightly collections of refuse from a wheeled bin or where this method of collection is not possible a weekly collection of refuse contained within a reusable 'Gull Sack'.

That the Executive consider and recommend to Council to approve the Capital cost, £69,539, of the purchase of additional wheeled bins and gulls sacks required to make the changes detailed in Option C is added to the Capital Programme and to approve the use of salary turnover savings to fund this addition.

### **Tracking**

|                        |                                   |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Executive:             | <b>5<sup>th</sup> August 2013</b> |
| Overview and Scrutiny: | <b>8<sup>th</sup> May 2013</b>    |
| Council:               | <b>16<sup>th</sup> July 2013</b>  |

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Carlisle City Council operate a fortnightly kerbside refuse collection from wheeled bins however there are currently 5,538 properties in the district on weekly purple sack collections.

One of the Councils key priorities is to ensure that Carlisle is clean and tidy. There is a shared responsibility between the Council and the community to achieve this by being proactive rather than reactive. By providing residents with the means to minimise the litter that can be created by their residual waste it will help to increase pride and respect for neighbourhoods and so improve the quality of the local environment.

The initiative to move properties provided with a purple sack collection to wheeled bin collections will support the “Clean-up Carlisle” campaign also having a positive impact to the ‘Love Where you Live’ Campaign.

A report regarding the negative *impact of seagulls* on the local environment has already been considered by the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The proposal to change collections from a purple sack to wheeled bins will prevent damage by seagulls however it is not practical for all properties to have a wheeled bin due to storage or collection issues. Where a wheeled bin collection is impractical it is proposed to instead move to robust reusable ‘Gull Sacks’ which will reduce the opportunity for the gulls to rip the bags open in search of food hence creating the high levels of litter illustrated in the picture at **Appendix 1**.

Some of the negative impacts associated with the existing purple sack collections, are highlighted below;

- Sacks are susceptible to damage causing high level of litter complaints compared to wheeled bin areas creating an avoidable demand on street cleaning services and dissatisfaction with Council services (**Appendix 1**)
- Poorer recycling rates for purple sack properties (**Appendix 2**). Purple sack areas generate extra side-waste and the recycling tonnage, as illustrated, is low as there is less incentive to recycle with a weekly collection;
- High costs and inefficiencies associated with delivering the refuse sacks to properties, and collecting waste on a weekly basis and clearing the associated litter.

- As well as the other issues highlighted, purple sacks are single-use, and therefore not as environmentally sustainable as re-useable receptacles.

## 2.0 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

### 2.1 Current Costs Associated With The Purple Sack Delivery:

- Purchase of purple sacks (supplying 5538 properties purple sacks) is £34,380 per annum which is more than is available in the budget.
- Resources to deliver of purple sacks is 7 days, 6 times a year at a cost of £7,200 per annum
- Fuel costs of delivering the purple sacks 7 days, 6 times a year (30 litres x 42 days = 2940 litres) at a cost of £2664 per annum

TOTAL COSTS are £44,244

### 2.2 Annual Budget

|                                     |         |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Purple sacks                        | £28,100 |
| Labour (delivery of sacks: 42 days) | £7,200  |
| Fuel (delivery of sacks:42 days)    | £2,664  |
| TOTAL                               | £37,964 |

£29,000 of the savings are required to be retained in the budget to off-set budget pressures within waste services and £7,200 will be required for additional resource to empty the gull sacks. Therefore the proposal is not suitable as an invest to save project but is needed as a service improvement to address the high levels of litter and to release capacity in the team to improve the response to general equipment requests and provide additional refuse collections.

### 2.3 Costs of the proposed service changes

|                          |        |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Cost of 240l wheeled bin | £17.90 |
| Cost of Gull sack        | £5.10  |

|  | Capital Costs        | Option b) 3,900 bins | Option c) 2,629 bins |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|  | Cost of wheeled bins | £70,848              | £47,059              |
|  | Cost of Gull sacks   | £8,354               | £14,565              |
|  | Cost of 14 Euro bins | £2,857               | £2,857               |
|  | Revenue Costs        |                      |                      |
|  | Delivery costs       | £2,200               | £2,200               |
|  | Postage              | £2,857               | £2,857               |
|  | <b>TOTAL Costs</b>   | <b>£87,116</b>       | <b>£69,539</b>       |

## **2.4 Capital Funding**

In order to purchase the additional wheeled bins, gull sacks and Euro bins detailed in the previous paragraph, it will be necessary to identify resources so that these can be added to the capital programme.

One option is to increase the capital programme and fund from existing capital resources. During 2012/13, the early termination of the green waste contract with Eden Council resulted in the sale of two collection vehicles that generated £103,500 in capital receipts. These receipts were added to general capital receipt balances and utilising them for this purpose would reduce the available balance of £522,000 at the end of the MTFP.

Alternatively, it is proposed to use savings currently being generated in the Local Environment section from vacant posts. These would ordinarily go towards the Council's salary turnover savings target. However, the salary turnover savings are forecast to significantly over achieve its target, so there is capacity within the savings being generated by Local Environment to utilise some of these resources for this review.

## **3. PROPOSALS**

That Executive consider and approve the proposal to move the properties currently provided with a weekly purple sack refuse collections to either fortnightly collections of refuse from a wheeled bin or where this method of collection is not possible a weekly collection of refuse contained within a reusable 'Gull Sack'.

That the Capital cost of the purchase of additional wheeled bins and gulls sacks are met through the use of savings from vacant posts in Local Environment as set out in paragraph 2.4 and this item to be added to the Capital programme.

### **3.1 Three options have been considered in relation to purple sacks:**

- a) Do nothing and leave the service as it is and continue to manage the high levels of litter associated with the collection
- b) Move the original proposal of the maximum possible number of properties, 3,900 properties onto a wheeled bin collection including properties with front street storage and collection of wheeled bins. Therefore 3,900 properties to move to wheeled bins and 1,638 properties to be provided with reusable Gull sacks

- c) Move 2,629 purple sack properties identified during the public consultation onto wheeled bins and supply the remaining properties including those that could have a wheeled bin with a front street storage and collection with re-useable polypropylene “gull sacks.” 2,629 properties to move to wheeled bin collection, 2,856 properties to be given reusable Gull sacks

**Option a)** would mean that the Authority continues to run a less efficient service that significantly contributes to the a high level of litter and customer dissatisfaction due to littering issues caused by the split bags.

**Option b)** will significantly reduce the littering issues currently caused by the split purple sacks and be consistent with “Clean-up Carlisle,” one of the Councils key initiatives. Some terraced properties proposed for the wheeled bin collection have very little garden space to the front and no side or rear access for a refuse collection vehicle. Those properties will store their wheeled refuse bins at the front of the street which may lead to practical issues for the customer and some visual dis-amenity. It would however provide the maximum number of properties with the incentive to recycle more and would minimise the number of properties on gull sacks so reducing the level of operational handling issues associated with the collection from gull sacks.

**Option c)** will significantly reduce the littering issues currently caused by the split purple sacks and be consistent with “Clean-up Carlisle,” one of the Councils key initiatives (**Appendix 3-** illustrates the effect of this option choice). This option does not include the properties with a front street storage and collection of wheeled bins and so is a good compromise in terms of visual amenity, however it does not minimise the number of properties on Gull sack collections so there will be increased levels of handling issues associated with the collection from the gull sacks.

## **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1** The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny panel were consulted on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013 and made the following comment:-  
“That the Panel believe Option C to be the preferred option”
- 4.2** Consultation proposed:  
Properties affected by the changes proposals were consulted and a summary of the consultation responses is attached at Appendix 4. Investigation of the consultation

responses was carried out with more than 500 follow up site visits which resulted in a more modest proposal for wheeled bin collections detailed in Option C

## **5. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1** Option c) is recommended as it is more acceptable to the customers who do not have enough room for the wheeled bin but would still contribute to significantly reducing the mess that can be caused by the current system of waste collection but will not achieve the full benefits operationally as set out in option b

**It is recommended that the Executive choose Option C - Move 2,629 suitable purple sack properties onto wheeled bins and supply the remaining properties with re-useable polypropylene “gull sacks.”**

- Would significantly reduce the littering issues currently caused by the split purple sacks and be consistent with “Clean-up Carlisle,” one of the Councils key initiatives;
- Increased levels of recycling in these areas;
- Better for the environment by supplying re-useable containers for waste (Gull Sacks and wheeled bins);
- It is safer to collect a wheeled bin than a purple sack, therefore the welfare and Health and safety of the crews will improve.
- Provision of wheeled bins should reduce instances of identity theft;
- More cost effective and efficient than the current system;

## **6. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES**

- 6.1** One of the Councils key priorities is to ensure that Carlisle is clean and tidy. There is a shared responsibility between the Council and the community to achieve this by being proactive rather than reactive. By providing residents with the means to minimise the litter that can be created by their residual waste it will help to increase pride and respect for neighbourhoods and so improve the quality of the local environment.

The initiative to move existing customers from purple sacks to wheeled bins are consistent with “Clean-up Carlisle,” one of the Councils key initiatives also having a major positive impact to the ‘Love Where you Live’ Campaign .

**Contact Officer: Angela Culleton**

**Ext: 7325**

**Appendices  
attached to report:**

**Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:**

- None

#### **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:**

**Chief Executive's -**

**Community Engagement –**

**Economic Development –**

**Governance –** The Council has a legal obligation to collect refuse. The changes proposed in the report are simply a revised methodology of fulfilling that obligation. The alterations have been properly consulted upon and the responses considered and acted upon as appropriate in accordance with best practice.

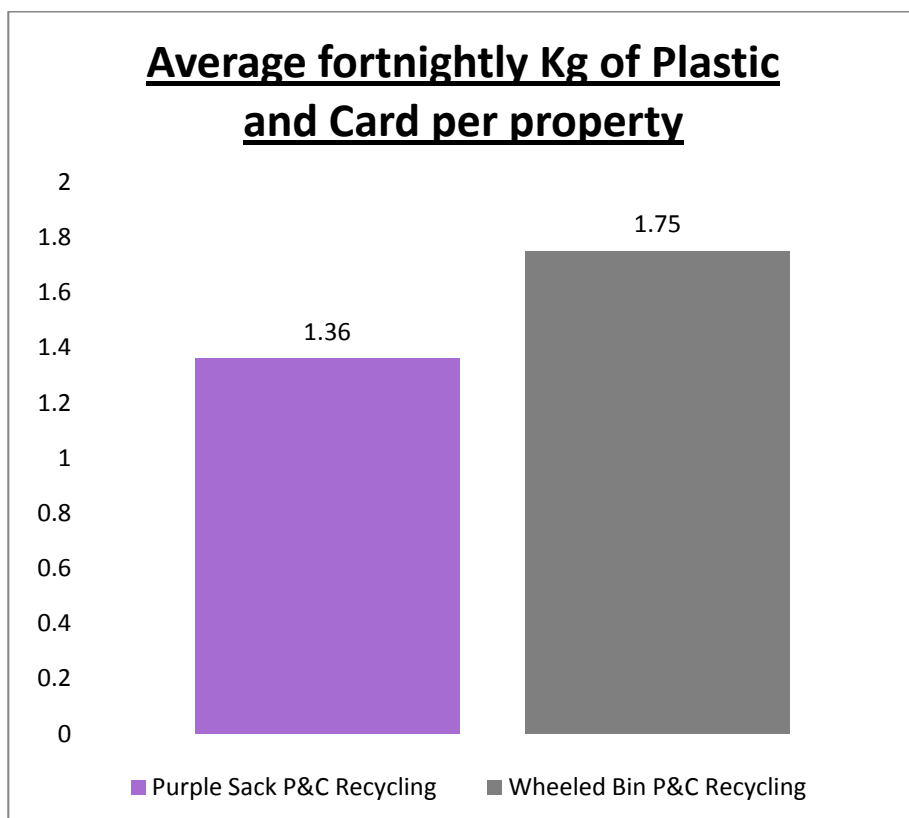
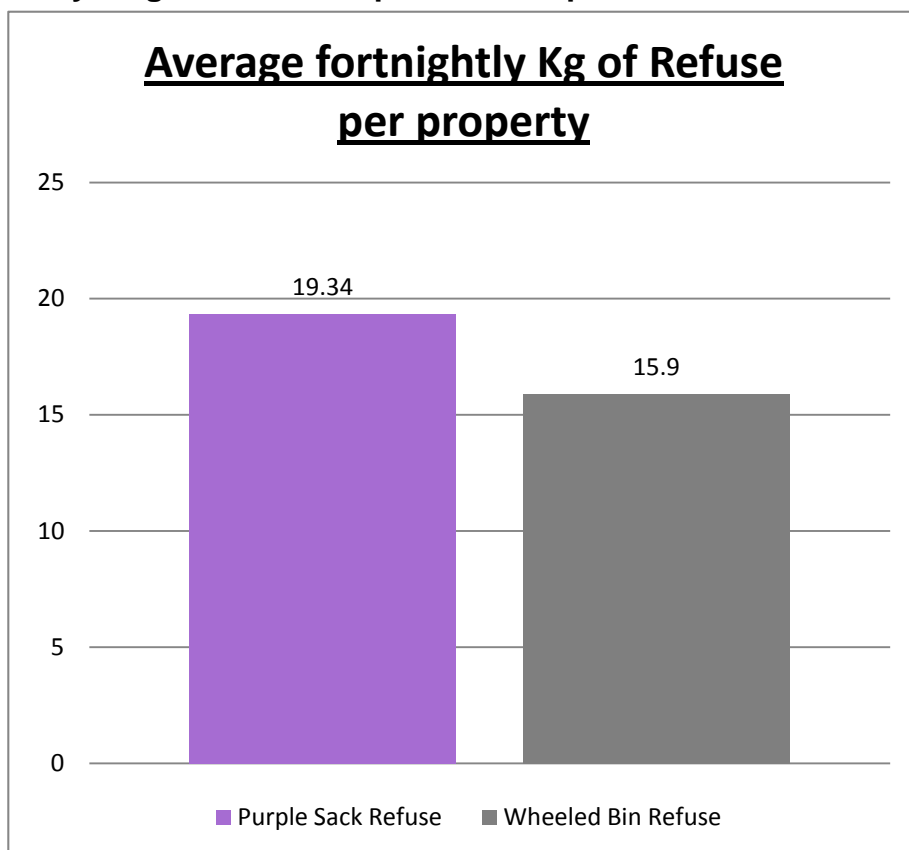
**Local Environment –**

**Resources -** The review of Purple Sack collection outlined in this report requires an increase to the Council's capital programme of £69,539 for new bins and gull sacks. The review of the service will generate a small amount of revenue savings, but pressures that already exist within waste services can be extinguished by these savings, so that no savings will be released through this review. The proposal to utilise salary turnover savings to fund the capital cost will mean that there is no reduction the Council's overall capital resources, and currently, the amount of salary turnover savings being achieved is expected to far over achieve the budgetary target, meaning there is scope to release funding for this project. The Council has a framework agreement that it can use for the purchase of wheelie bins and due to the value being purchased, this would be the procurement route to be taken.



**Littering Resulting from Purple Sack Collections**



**Recycling Rates for Purple Sack Properties**

Example of Terraced Properties on Wheeled Bin Collections





---

## Purple Sack Review – 2013

### Consultation Results

#### Background:

We want to make our refuse collection service more efficient, reduce littering, improve the storage of waste and bring all collections in line with other provision within the city. Where possible, we would like to increase the number of wheeled bin collections.

This could result in some properties switching from purple sack collections to wheeled bin collections. Those that cannot be transferred will be offered seagull-proof bags. In other areas, seagull-proof bags have proven to be a secure and effective way to collect non-recyclable household refuse waste and have helped to reduce the amount of litter. These are foldable, reusable and easy to store after collection. Weekly collections will continue for those households with a seagull-proof bag.

We appreciate that some residents may be concerned about the switch from weekly to fortnightly collections; however our alternate weekly collection scheme, first introduced in 2007, has proved to be a popular and successful collection system.

Recent surveys have shown that the majority of our customers are now satisfied with the household waste collection and household recycling services we provide. These services are provided for as little as £52/Household/year.

We are always trying to improve the service and the increase the opportunities for household recycling collections, the majority of our customers are now enjoying a doorstep recycling collection.

Results from our ongoing residents' survey (Carlisle Focus), customers have commented on the need to encourage more residents to recycle their waste to help keep Carlisle clean and tidy and we need your help to make this happen. You and your household on your street can help us makes these improvements happen. With your support, we can make our waste and recycling services more efficient, effective and economic.

### **Consultation process:**

A consultation process took place between Friday, 3 May and Tuesday, 28 May.

Letters were sent to 6,000 affected properties. Parish Councils and City Council Ward Members were also sent some consultation information.

Consultation responses were requested by Tuesday, 28 May 2013.

### **Results of consultation:**

In total, 1,841 householders responded to the consultation. Resulting in a 30.58% response rate.

The responses we received showed that 590 households felt they were not able to support the proposal and some raised concerns, whereas 780 were supportive of the changes. 471 households did not raise any concerns.

When comments were provided within the responses, site visits were undertaken in the areas where issues were raised. The findings of the site visits helped determine what waste service was most appropriate to the needs of the householder.

### **What happens next?**

Since the end of the consultation period we have been in the process of identifying the most appropriate waste collection service for each of the properties affected by the review. These will either be a fortnightly wheeled bin collection or a weekly seagull sack collection.

When these new collection services are put in place, we will provide affected householders with their own free wheeled bin or seagull sack. The provision of purple sacks will therefore no longer be provided.

Your collection date may also change, if it does, we'll let you know well in advance of the new dates coming into operation.

If you're affected by the new arrangements, you'll receive a letter from us in August. This will set out what new waste service you'll have. The new service will then start in around September this year.

Assisted collections are also in place for elderly or disabled residents who need help putting their wheeled bin or seagull-proof bag out for collection.

---

## EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 8 MAY 2013

---

### **EEOSP.28/13 PURPLE SACKS REVIEW**

The Director of Local Environment submitted report LE.13/13 that set out proposals to change the purple sack service and minimise the litter currently created by the purple sack collection. The Director gave a presentation that expanded on the issues raised within the report.

The Director explained that the purple sacks were often split open by seagulls and other animals and would-be vandals. The proposed changes would support the Clean Up Carlisle campaign and significantly improve the quality of the local environment.

Where it would be impractical to move a property onto wheeled bin collection it was proposed to provide “gull sacks”. The Director showed Members a sample of a Gull sack currently used by another authority.

It was anticipated that an increase in the number of wheeled bin collections would result in an increase in the levels of recycling in those areas thus reducing the residual waste presented for collection.

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder thanked the Director and her team for the work undertaken. The Portfolio Holder hoped that the consultation would encourage people to comment on the proposals. No decision had been made and the discussions at the Panel were the first to be undertaken. It was important to get the balance right as purple sacks being ripped was detrimental to an area but rows of wheelie bins at the front of properties could also cause visual disamenity and should therefore be stored off the street where possible and where that was not possible then gull sacks could be used. Those were the reasons for the consultation.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

*A Member offered to trial the gull sacks as he believed they would be a great improvement on the purple sacks.*

*A Member agreed with looking at the principle of bag collections and believed that part of the problem was that bags were put out for collection too early. With regard to recyclates the Member stated that some plastics were light and were blown out of the sacks; he did not believe gull sacks would address that problem. With regard to health and safety the Member informed that the fire service had advised that wheelie bins should not be placed at the front of properties as they could impede emergency vehicles accessing the property. The Member stated that care was needed by refuse vehicles accessing back lanes and reminded Members*



*of an incident some years ago when a resident was injured by a refuse vehicle reversing along a back lane.*

The Director of Local Environment explained that crews were fully trained and if a vehicle had to reverse the crew assisted the driver. If it was not safe to access the back lane the bins would be wheeled to the end of the lane and replaced when emptied.

*A Member advised that some authorities had carried out a small pilot to gain a response to the changes and queried whether that could be considered.*

The Director explained that due to the small number of properties involved it would not be appropriate to carry out a pilot. Therefore, dependent upon the decision made by Executive, the scheme would be rolled out and monitored.

*A Member queried what the consequences were if residents continued to put out purple sacks.*

The Director explained that the Council had powers to specify how household waste should be presented and action could be taken by the waste team if not presented properly. Residents would be advised of the requirements by letter and if waste was presented incorrectly a Section 46 notice could be served on the resident.

In response to a comment by a Member the Director confirmed that the gull sacks would not prevent identity theft but would make it more difficult.

The Portfolio Holder advised that her property had been converted to wheelie bin collection and there had been no problem.

The Director confirmed that if a resident presented a purple sack the correct approach would be to provide support and advise. She believed that most householders would be supportive of the proposed changes and that was part of the purpose of the consultation. If the Executive agreed to the proposed changes residents would be advised how to present their refuse.

*A Member believed it was right that the refuse rounds were reviewed but he did not wish to see bins on the front of streets. The Member suggested that Euro bins could be used in some areas where wheelie bins were not suitable.*

The Director explained that Euro bins would also be considered and they would be classed as a wheelie bin.

*A Member suggested that sponsorship on the gull sacks could be a way of reducing costs.*

The Portfolio Holder agreed to look into the issue.

*A Member queried what the handling implications would be of the gull sacks.*

The Director advised that the cost may change in the final report to the Executive due to ongoing investigations into the proposal. The Director advised that Option c would have more impact on crews than Option b as with the gull sacks there were more handling issues and better gloves would be required due to the higher risk of stabs and cuts from sharp objects.

The Director explained that the sacks could be folded and stored by the resident and filled at the front door on the day of collection.

RESOLVED – (1) That Report LE.13/13 – Migration of Purple Sacks to Wheeled Bin Refuse Collection be noted.

(2) That the Panel agreed that change was required and agreed that Option a (to do nothing) was not an option. With regard to Options b and c the Panel agreed that their preferred option would be Option c as they did not want wheelie bins stored at the front of houses.

(3) That consultation should include Cumbria Fire Service for their advice on storage of waste receptacles at the front of houses so that the Executive were informed of this when they made their decision.

(4) That the recommendations from the Panel be submitted to the Executive for inclusion into the Executive Report “Migration of Purple Sacks to Wheeled Bin Refuse Collection”.