

Waste and Recycling Committee Meeting

Date: 13th January 2021
Subject: Biowaste Management Strategy – Part A
Report of: Paul Morgan, Head of Commercial Services, Waste and Resources Team

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out the steps the GMCA plans to take in relation to developing a strategy to manage kerbside collected biowaste from across the conurbation in light of potential service changes arising from the implementation of the English Resources and Waste Strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members of the Committee are recommended to:

1. Note the report and provide any comments on the proposed biowaste strategy.

CONTACT OFFICERS:

Paul Morgan – Head of Commercial Services (paul.morgan@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

Equalities Implications:

There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

Climate Change Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures:

Food and garden waste (biowaste) when not collected for composting or anaerobic digestion can generate a significant volume of greenhouse gases if landfilled instead. The GMCA and its constituent districts already collect a significant quantity of biowaste for composting thereby eliminating the generation of methane and creating a carbon-rich resource that can be applied to land for agricultural benefit.

The strategy proposed here continues the GMCA’s record of climate change mitigation through the proper treatment of biowaste and the Authority’s wider communications work seeks to increase the capture of biowaste reducing climate change impacts further.

Risk Management:

As part of the development of the proposed biowaste strategy a risk assessment will be undertaken of options.

Legal Considerations:

Procurement law – final options will be assessed to ensure compliance with applicable procurement legislation.

Financial Consequences – Revenue:

Affordability of options is a consideration but work will consider the whole life costs to inform our future new burdens claim.

Financial Consequences – Capital:

As with the revenue consequences, work will consider the whole life costs to inform our future new burdens claim.

Number of attachments to the report: None.

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

1. [Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England](#)
2. (Draft) Biowaste Treatment Assessment – WRM Ltd

TRACKING/PROCESS		
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		Yes
EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?		
GM Transport Committee	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
12/02/2021	HPE O&S 04/02/2021	

1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 Mixed biowaste collections form an important part of the recycling services provided by the authorities across Greater Manchester with different districts currently adopting different collection frequencies to suit their local circumstances (and currently in response to any local COVID-19 staffing pressures). The material collected is delivered to GMCA facilities for bulking up before being treated at contracted merchant facilities.

1.2 The English Resources and Waste Strategy proposes that food waste should be collected separately from garden waste and on a weekly basis. If this approach is mandated (it will feature in forthcoming consultations anticipated to be released in March 2021) then that would require a significant change of services across the conurbation.

1.3 This report summarises:

- The implications of a move to weekly separate food waste collections on the district councils;
- The consequential impacts on GMCA facilities and contracts; and
- Proposals for a strategic approach for agreement to examining alternative contractual and infrastructural approaches to managing biowaste in the future.

2. CURRENT CONTRACTUAL POSITION

2.1 The biowaste collected at the kerbside is delivered by the districts to our network of biowaste transfer loading stations and distributed to merchant treatment facilities (in-vessel composting sites) through two different contractual routes:

- Around 80,000 tonnes is managed by Suez through the Waste and Resources Management Services (WRMS) contract; and
- A framework of contractors is in place and through call-off arrangements two 'packages' of biowaste quantities are composted - an annual 'baseline' of around 136,300 tonnes and a seasonal amount of c.36,300 tonnes.

2.2 The Suez biowaste treatment contract is part of the WRMS Contract and the initial term expires in March 2026. The biowaste framework expires in March 2023 with the current call-off contracts expiring in May 2022.

3. IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESOURCES AND WASTE STRATEGY

3.1 As mentioned above and in other reports presented to the Committee, the Resources and Waste Strategy proposes that food waste should be collected separately from garden waste and on a weekly basis. This proposal will be explored further through consultation by Defra in the Spring. In anticipation of this requirement, the GMCA commissioned research to assess the implications of this proposal on waste collection and treatment across Greater Manchester.

- 3.2 If our Waste Collection Authorities are mandated to change to the weekly separate collection of food waste there are clearly significant implications not only for those authorities but also for the GMCA as Waste Disposal Authority and the wider market.
- 3.3 Currently it is not believed that there is sufficient capacity in the market place (especially in the North West) to treat the potential increase in separately collected food waste that is likely to be generated (food waste as a separate stream is more appropriately treated using the anaerobic digestion [AD] technology).
- 3.4 The GMCA commissioned a consultancy, WRM, to investigate and quantify the implications of a number of scenarios.
- 3.5 In brief the biowaste study found that in the scenario where collections change to a service where food waste is collected weekly using a new fleet of vehicles, overall costs would increase by around 36%.
- 3.6 For treatment, cost increases changed by a relatively small amount – a change to treating mixed biowaste using dry AD saw a modelled 6% cost increase and a saving (but not enough to offset additional collection costs) could come from treating food waste via AD and garden waste via open windrow composting.
- 3.7 The treatment of commingled biowaste via dry AD creates the greatest carbon savings (as gas from digestion of the material is collected and converted to electricity). Scenarios using IVC have a lower carbon saving compared to AD-based technologies.
- 3.8 These results and the thinking around them will form the central evidence base for our biowaste strategy going forward. The study did not look at any consequential opportunities of options (such as the opportunity to charge for the collection of garden waste if that stream is collected separately at source), this will be considered in the further modelling work on wider collection systems being undertaken by Wood.

4. POTENTIAL OPTIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF GREATER MANCHESTER'S BIOWASTE

- 4.1 It is clear that one way or another the collection of biowaste will continue to form a key service which we will be required to provide. If the English Resources and Waste Strategy mandates the separate collection of food waste there will be fierce competition for market capacity resulting in inflated gate fees as demand exceeds supply. The worst-case scenario would be landfill of biowaste if market treatment capacity cannot not be sourced.
- 4.2 In the development of a future strategy for Greater Manchester's biowaste we need to explore our options and their implications in greater detail. There are measures we will need to take in the shorter term to ensure continuity of services and others that have a longer development period which will require business cases to progress to fruition.

4.3 The strategy will take into account the 'whole system' impacts such as the purchase of containers, promotion and communication and the impact of our residents as well as identify any opportunities that may arise from options.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1 To develop the strategy the GMCA needs to understand the Government's position on food and garden waste collections and that will not become clear until it has analysed and responded to the Spring 2021 consultation. However, this understanding is not likely to be gained until late 2021 which does not give enough time to make changes within the lifetime of the current non-Suez biowaste contracts.

5.2 Through informal discussions with WRAP and Defra we have sought insight into current thinking which has and will inform the development of our strategy.

5.3 In the first instance a scope to ensure this work is captured is required which will commence on approval of the recommendations contained within this report.