**Consultation on future waste collections and street cleansing services**

The ‘Preferred Service’ and alternative options considered [Information Document]

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# **Introduction**

The contract we have to pick up your waste and recycling and to clean our streets is coming to an end in Spring next year. We’ve invited companies to bid for the new contract.

We want to take this opportunity to propose some changes to the service you have received for the past few years. There are a few reasons for this:

1. The government is likely to change the way it asks us to provide recycling services over the next couple of years, to align with changes to national policy resulting from the Environment Act 2021.
2. We’re working together with local people to make Brent a carbon neutral borough by 2030. We know lots of you want to do your bit to live more sustainably and through the Let’s Talk Climate conversation, you told us that we could help by making it easier for you to do the right thing and recycle – including making it easier to know what can and cannot be recycled.
3. The council’s budgets have been stretched by the pandemic, rising prices, a growing population and a reduction in the funding we get from government. We need to save money and so have to think differently about how these services are delivered in the future.

This document provides further detail on the proposed changes (the ‘Preferred Service’) and some alternative options considered by the council that are not favoured. It is intended to be used for context to the public consultation on future waste collections and street cleansing services and to help Brent residents understand the proposed changes.

Please note, all proposed changes are at the formative stage and are subject to both change and alteration as part of the procurement process for the new street cleansing and waste collections contract, and also the feedback received from residents during this consultation.

# **The Preferred Service**

## **Changes to Collections**

### Recycling Collections

At the moment, you put all your recyclable cardboard, paper, plastic, tin cans and glass into one bin and we collect it once a week.

We are proposing giving you a separate, reusable sack to separate out ‘fibre’ (mixed paper, cardboard, newspapers, etc.) from ‘containers’ (e.g. plastic, tin cans, glass, etc.) which would continue to go into your usual recycling bin.

We would collect the two material types on alternating weeks. For example, on Week 1 we would collect your fibre sack, and on Week 2 we would collect your recycling bin, and repeat.

By doing things this way, you would still have weekly collections, albeit with a different material collected each week.

The proposed changes would apply to all street level households – those who currently put their recycling in a blue-topped bin that is collected at the kerbside – and some communal households (flats) where there is space at the property to provide a separate bin for fibre.

All other communal households, flats above shops, and households along the North Circular Road would continue to put their recycling in one bin as usual. This is due to lack of external space for an additional bin at these properties and other challenges with collecting waste from them.

General waste would continue to be collected fortnightly and food waste weekly – remaining as they are now.

Other London Boroughs have tried this approach and found that people recycle more when this service is introduced. This is better for the planet and on balance would likely save the council money because it’s more costly to dispose of general waste and we can sell good quality recyclable material at a better price.

We think that moving to this approach would save the council around £1.2m per annum on annual disposal costs for waste when compared to existing weekly commingled recycling collection (where all your recycling goes in one bin).

### Small Items Collections Service

In addition, we want to introduce a new, separate free Small Items Collections Service which would enable you to book a slot to have the following items collected from your property for recycling:

* Textiles
* Small electrical items (WEE)
* Batteries
* Coffee Pod
* Paint

This new, free of charge service would make it easier for residents to correctly recycle the above materials, which should have a positive impact on the environment and our recycling rates.

### What if I have assisted collections?

Assisted collections would not stop and the contractor would continue to help those that need it with their waste.

## **Changes to the support you’ll get to recycle**

We’re bringing in-house a team which will be dedicated to educating residents on the proper disposal of their waste and recycling and helping people to understand how to do their bit for the environment.

While this service is currently delivered by our waste collections provider, by bringing this team in-house we think we can do a better job of supporting residents due to our greater understanding of Brent’s local communities and the residents we serve. We’ll also have much more control to decide how and where the team are deployed on the ground in order to achieve the most impact and best support our residents.

Combined with the changes proposed to collections, we believe this change would help make it easier for residents to do the right thing and recycle – a key outcome that you asked of us during the Let’s Talk Climate conversation.

## **Changes to street cleansing**

At the moment, streets are cleaned on a rota basis, regardless of whether they need to be cleaned or not. We’re proposing switching to an intelligence-led approach to cleaning Brent’s streets.

Here’s how it would work:

A rapid response team would be based in each Brent Connect area and would plan their cleaning around reports from the Council’s Neighbourhood Managers, Environmental Enforcement officers, councillors and residents. The idea is to tailor street cleaning to meet the particular needs of each neighbourhood and to be flexible enough to respond to changing demands as these arise.

Some scheduled street cleaning would still take place in order to maintain a good standard of cleanliness and this would supplement the intelligence-led approach.

Data management would be improved within the new contract with a new dedicated Digital Manager post sitting with the contractor and a live dashboard shared with the Council’s contract monitoring team. This would be jointly monitored on a daily basis and would be used by the council to spot trends to determine locations which require changing levels of resource. The new regime would therefore be flexible meaning that resources can be reallocated where required across the borough.

Joint regular inspections on street cleanliness standards (NI 195) between contractor and client staff would continue in line with the current service.

We think this approach would allow us to use cleaning resources more efficiently and provides better value for money, without greatly impacting the overall level of cleanliness in the borough.

# **Other options the council considered but does not favour**

We considered a number of other options, but found that the ‘Preferred Service’ offered the best balance in terms of service quality, benefits for the climate and affordability. The other options that we looked at were:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Service Option** | **Additional cost per year compared to the ‘Preferred Service’**  | **Not favoured because…** |
| **Maintaining the service specification in the current Public Realm contract**, including weekly single stream (commingled) recycling collections | £3.5 Million | * We cannot afford this service without making significant cuts to other council services.
* Alongside a fortnightly residual collection service, can encourage contamination of material going into recycling bins
 |
| Introducing **fortnightly single stream (comingled) recycling collections**  | £1.8 M | * Would mean residents could only recycle once every fortnight
* Benefits of improving material quality by separating ‘fibre’ from ‘containers’ would not be realised
* Additional cost over the ‘Preferred Service’ would require cuts elsewhere to other council services
 |
| Introducing a **fortnightly twin stream recycling collection** service *(i.e. ‘containers’ and ‘fibre’ separate, but collected at the same time every fortnight)* | £0.6 M | * Would mean residents could only recycle once every fortnight.
* Similar to the ‘Preferred Service’, but would require separate vehicles to collect food waste which comes at an increased cost
 |
| Introducing a **weekly twin stream recycling collection** service *(i.e. ‘containers’ and ‘fibre’ separate, but collected at the same time each week)* | £1.4m | * Additional costs are prohibitive without greatly impacting the likely return from material income or improved recycling rates compared to the ‘Preferred Service’
 |
| Moving from a two weekly to a **three weekly residual waste collection** | Not costed | * This was considered as a potential saving option, however, it is not considered to be viable for an inner London Borough such as Brent due to the density of our housing, concerns over space for storing waste over that period, and the potential negative impact on street cleanliness.
* No other London boroughs have or are planning to have a three weekly residual waste collection
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