

# Members Recycling Working Group (MRWG) 11 February 2021

## Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Update

### 1. Background

- 1.1. The Authority agreed on the 3 December 2020, to grant a 24-month extension to the core element of the existing WEEE contract with European Recycling Platform (ERP). The core of this contract is the collection and treatment of WEEE delivered by residents and boroughs to our network of reuse and recycling centres (RRC's).
- 1.2. The contract also allows for two optional services, the first is the collection of small WEEE items from a network of bring banks situated across the NLWA constituent area. The second is a door-step collection service for larger items of WEEE, that is offered, free at the point of service, to residents of the constituent boroughs.
- 1.3. Members requested Officers review optional services in connection with their continued feasibility and suitability and report back to MRWG with recommendations for the two optional services.

### 2. Door-step collection Service

- 2.1. The door-step or kerbside collection service currently operates across all constituent boroughs at a total cost of £xx per annum. As has been previously discussed at MRWG meetings, the service experiences bookings exceeding supply - with waiting times during 2020 peaking at 24 weeks. But only around half the bookings lead to waste actually being collected. Service metrics and performance details are set out at Appendix A.
- 2.2. Officers have consulted extensively with colleagues from the constituent boroughs over plans for this service. Haringey and Hackney have both indicated that they no longer wish the service to cover their boroughs or for costs to fall to them. Officers from the remaining boroughs have generally indicated that they would wish to see the service continue to provide a free of charge service for residents. Based on the differing views of the boroughs, officers have set out two options for consideration with an Officer recommendation to take forward option 2.

### 3. Options

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| Option 1 | To stop the service from the 1 of July, this provides sufficient time to serve contractual notice required and allow the constituent boroughs to make any additional arrangements for the collection of WEEE.  |
| Option 2 | To continue the service on an annual opt-in basis for boroughs that wish to receive the service. This would result in the participating boroughs receiving both the additional cost and additional capacity of the service left by the non-participating boroughs. It is also recommended that we release booking slots no further than three weeks ahead. This will help to reduce the number of visits that are currently made where it is subsequently reported that no items were presented. |

### 4. Detailed Options

#### 4.1. Option 1 - To stop the service

- 4.1.1. The optional kerbside collections service can be stopped after 31 March with three-months' notice. However, if this option is taken forward, we would serve Notice to cease the service on 31 March to effectively end the service from 1 July.
- 4.1.2. This would provide the required time for borough officers to make any necessary alterations to their existing collection arrangements. All residents would still be able to

bring large electrical items to RRCs. For residents who wish to have equipment collected, the options would be to use alternative collection arrangements – eg borough bulky waste services or services provided by retailers. This would likely involve a cost although boroughs' services generally have exemptions for people in receipt of certain benefits and credits. More information is provided in section 5 below.

- 4.1.3. Each boroughs will receive a reduction in the levy payment for 2021/22 equal to 9/12<sup>th</sup> of the full year cost £xx - which equates to a 2021/22 rebate of £xx. With the full year saving being delivered in 2022/23.

#### **4.2. Option 2 Opt-out**

- 4.2.1. Should a borough decide to Opt-out of the service, they will effectively cease to receive service from 1 April 2020. The Boroughs that leave would see a saving in the levy of £xx 11,429 for 2021/22.
- 4.2.2. The participating boroughs will see a slight increase in the annual charge – to £xx – as the costs would be met by a smaller number of boroughs. The booking slots would be available only to residents from within the participating boroughs.
- 4.2.3. Officers from every borough have been made aware through the extensive consultation exercise of the fact two boroughs have indicated a preference to leave the service and have opted to remain part of the service in the knowledge their annual cost will increase to £xx.
- 4.2.4. Clearabee Limited have agreed to increase the number of slots from 20 per day to 25 per day on a non-contractual basis. This additional capacity spread across five participating boroughs will help reduce oversubscription of the service.
- 4.2.5. Additionally, limiting bookings to no further than 3 weeks in advance will reduce the number of appointments that are made that result in a report of 'no items being presented'. With increasing metal values items placed on street ahead of the collection day are often removed by 3<sup>rd</sup> parties for their scrap value.
- 4.2.6. Services generally work best and communication with residents is most effective if there is a consistent service being offered across north London. It is a disadvantage that this option would mean that different arrangements would apply to different boroughs. However, as the service is delivered through a specific Clearabee website, the change would be less stark to individual members of the public seeking to book collections.

### **5. Continuing work**

- 5.1. Officers will continue to explore the feasibility of incorporating the WEEE kerbside service into the main waste contract with London Energy Limited (LEL). It is hoped that this could be concluded by the summer of 2021 after we have completed the move from Hendon to Wembley TS, have bedded in the new traffic arrangements at the Eco Park and the threat to service delivery posed by Corona- Virus has subsided.
- 5.2. The recommended opt-out option is not impacted by this continuing feasibility study. This is due to the flexible three months' notice period in the existing arrangement with ERP/Clearabee.

### **6. Alternative ways of disposing of large WEEE**

6.1. Alternatives to using the kerbside service for disposing of large WEEE items such as washing machines and fridges are to:

- Take the items to one of the re-use and recycling centres in the NLWA area.
- If a new appliance is being purchased, arrange for the supplier to remove the old equipment. For a large domestic appliance this usually incurs a charge of around £20. Alternatively, items can also be accepted in store if residents are able to take them there. From January 2021 only distributors (retailers) turning over more than £100k in sales of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) are required to offer in store take back. This includes free of charge take back from customers of discarded items on a one-for-one basis.
- Use their own borough's bulky waste collection service (all boroughs provide this and large WEEE items are included). Costs for this service are between £10 and £40 according to boroughs. Boroughs also offer concessions for varying groups which can include elderly residents and/or those in receipt of certain benefits.

## 7. Review of on-street small waste electrical and electronic equipment (SWEEE) banks

### 7.1. Background

- 7.2. WEEE banks for small electrical and electronic equipment (SWEEE) were first provided to NLWA boroughs in 2010 as an optional extra in the DHL contract at that time. They have continued to be part of subsequent contracts as a legacy arrangement, including the current one with European Recycling Platform (ERP).
- 7.3. The SWEEE banks are available to all Boroughs at no cost and the contractor is responsible for undertaking collections from the banks as often as necessary, ensuring the containers are in a good and safe condition and providing monthly tonnage data.
- 7.4. The current number of banks in November 2020 is 37 and they are distributed across the NLWA Boroughs as follows in table 1 below:

**Table 1: Distribution and performance of SWEEE recycling banks 2019/20**

Borough	No. of banks	Tonnes 2019/20	Comments
Barnet	0	0	All on-street recycling sites removed in 2018/19
Camden	3	4.05	
Enfield	5	0.63	
Hackney	16	8.1	
Haringey	4	2.38	
Islington	4	4.26	
Waltham Forest	5	3.53	

These facilities generated a total of 22.60 tonnes in 2018/19 and 22.94 tonnes in 2019/20.

## 8. Benefits of the SWEEE banks

- 8.1. SWEEE banks are popular with residents as they are more accessible than the reuse and recycling centres in areas where a kerbside service for these items does not exist.

## 9. Disadvantages

- 9.1. Although these banks are popular for users, operationally they attract a wide range of challenges. They are often broken into for their contents and to repair them is expensive depending on the extent of the damage. The cost of a new bank is in the region of £xx and

to repair a vandalised bank can be over £xx excluding parts such as replacing a door or bullet locks which are more resistant to being broken than standard locks.

## **10. Proposed service options**

10.1. To continue the service without change

10.1.1. We will liaise with ERP and LEL to use the existing budget and stock of old damaged banks to repair and keep the existing stock in service.

10.1.2. Where a bin is unserviceable and beyond repair, we will discuss with the constituent borough the options to continue the service.

End

## Kerbside service details 2020

### Performance

From the start of the contract in 2019 the performance of this service has seen the bookings and the quantities of WEEE vary between 3 and 15 tonnes per month and successful collections from 146 to 434 a month when comparing January – December 2019 with the same period in 2020. See table 1 below for details.

**Table 1: WEEE kerbside collections January to December 2019 and 2020**

Month	2019		2020	
	No. of collections	Tonnes	No. of collections	Tonnes
January	191	5.06	169	4.1
February	208	10.72	202	5.8
March	207	2.82	230	3.1
April	257	7.38	248	4.04*
May	397	3.64	294	10.66*
June	349	2.32	434	11.36*
July	342	5.76	306	8.44*
August	313	9.62	227	7.2*
September	313	6.92	249	5.96*
October	323	13.1	201	14.42*
November	254	15.82	197	6.68
December	171	11.4	152	8.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,325</b>	<b>94.56</b>	<b>2,909</b>	<b>90.12</b>

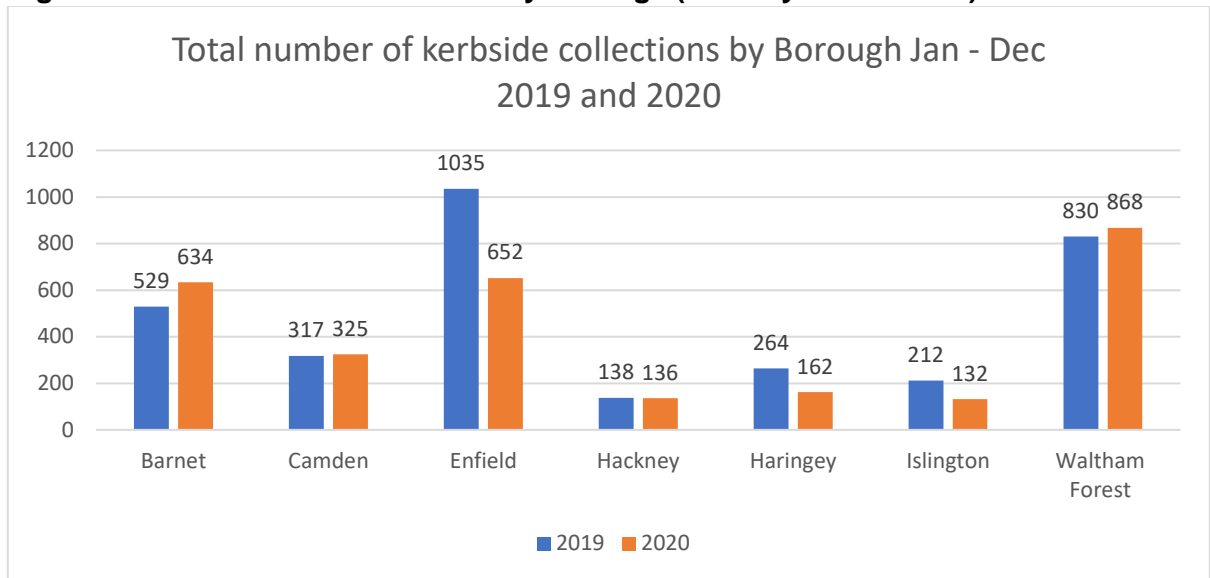
\*Due to the impact of COVID-19 -19 restrictions these figures are not representative of the service as it normally operates. Additional bookings were taken in June and July 2020.

There are on average 426 slots that can be booked each month and the actual completed collection rate is just over 50% of this amount. The discrepancy between the initial booking numbers which are at capacity and successful collections are because some items booked for collection are not available when the crew arrive as they have already been taken by third parties and Clearabee have not been updated. Residents also cancel bookings at short notice, and it is not always possible for Clearabee to reallocate these slots quickly enough to take advantage of them.

The measures put in place because of Covid-19 since March 2020 such as closing the reuse and recycling centres and capacity issues at fridge / freezer treatment facilities, caused disruption and increased pressure on the kerbside WEEE service. Tonnages and collection numbers during this period should not be considered representative of the service as it normally operates.

When comparing the service by Borough, demand has decreased across all Boroughs in 2020 except for Barnet and Waltham Forest. The highest uptake of the service is by residents in Barnet, Enfield and Waltham Forest.

**Figure 2: Total Kerbside collections by Borough (January – December) 2019 and 2020**

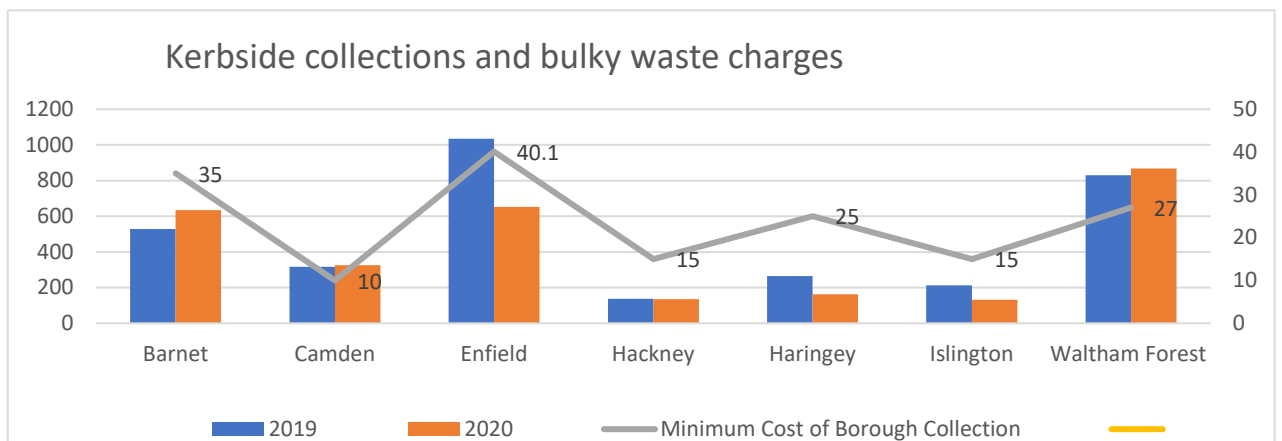


The total collections in 2020 compared with 2019 are slightly down and it is believed that the disruption caused by Covid-19 is likely to have affected the performance of this service.

**Factors affecting performance of the WEEE kerbside service in 2020.**

The demand for the kerbside collection service varies between Boroughs and there is a correlation between the cost of bulky waste collections and the kerbside WEEE service. See figure 3 where the Boroughs minimum bulky waste charges in 2020 have been applied to the number of collections.

**Figure 3: Comparison of Borough bulky waste charges and kerbside WEEE collections 2019/20**



The fees used in this graph are based on 2020 prices and tends to show that there is greater demand for the kerbside service in the Boroughs where there are higher bulky waste collection charges.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the WEEE kerbside service has experienced significant disruption due to the temporary closure of the reuse and recycling centres (RRCs), capacity issues at the treatment facilities, short-term suspension of some of the Borough’s bulky waste collections and suspension of the WEEE kerbside service in August for two weeks.

## Issues and mitigations

The disruption to the kerbside service has resulted in increased waiting times for some boroughs of up to 24 weeks, so resources have been reallocated from areas of low demand to those with the longest waiting times to try and reduce the build-up. Bookings have been cut off at 31 March 2021 so that waiting times do not increase further and Clearabee are able to tackle the existing backlog.

In September 2020, it was agreed with London Borough of Enfield, that Clearabee could use Barrowell Green reuse and recycling centre to drop off items during collection to help the efficiency of the service. Although the use of Barrowell Green will help the service and potentially allow additional bookings where items have gone missing and collections not cancelled, it will not significantly affect the number of collections enough to resolve the current delays.

To reduce the collections where items are no longer available, texts are being sent to residents the day before collection to remind them of the pick-up and to cancel should the service no longer be required. A small number of additional bookings (on top of the 20 per day allocated) were also arranged to take account of the cancellation rate.

The disruption to the service has led to some complaints about upselling of the paid service that Clearabee also provides. If free collection slots are not available to suit the resident, then Clearabee have allegedly offered their own service which can be provided sooner at the residents' convenience. This has been raised formally with Clearabee who have been robust in their denial of this practice and the situation is being monitored on an ongoing basis.

## Complaints

In 2020 there were 7 complaints concerning the Clearabee service which are outlined in table 2 below. Of the 7 complaints, 6 were after Covid -19 restrictions were implemented in March 2020 and during periods of service disruption caused by the RRCs not accepting fridges and suspension (NLWA instruction) of the Clearabee service for a week.

**Table 2: Complaints about the Clearabee service 2020**

Date	Issue	Borough
23/01/2020	Long waiting times	Waltham Forest
31/08/2020	Postponed collection	Waltham Forest
07/09/2020	Missed collection	Hackney
02/10/2020	Upselling	Enfield
22/10/2020	Access to service	Islington
04/12/2020	Upselling	Haringey
05/12/2020	Upselling	Haringey