

Waste Electrical and Electronic (WEEE) Kerbside collection service update briefing note – MRWG 3 December 2020

1. Introduction

1.1 The current WEEE contract (Jan 2019 – December 2020) provided by European Recycling Platform (ERP) is due to expire at the end of December 2020. A recommendation to extend this contract is being taken to the 3 December 2020 Authority meeting.

1.2 As part of this contract, a free kerbside collection request service is provided for residents in the NLWA constituent Boroughs. The service is operated by Clearabee Ltd and is for the collection of large WEEE (items larger than a microwave). The arrangement allows for up to 20 collection appointments per day, five days a week across the NLWA area and is a cost to the Authority of £xx per year.

1.3 This report reviews the performance of the kerbside WEEE service provided by Clearabee during the contract period and outlines the cost of continuing this as an optional extra in the contract extension should members wish it to continue.

2. Performance

2.1 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 – October 2019 with the same period in 2020. See table 1 below for details.

Table 1: WEEE kerbside collections January to October 2019 and 2020

Month	2019		2020	
	No. of collections	Tonnes	No. of collections	Tonnes
January	191	5.06	167	4.1
February	208	10.72	196	5.8
March	207	2.82	226	3.1
April	257	7.38	248	4.04*
May	397	3.64	248	10.66*
June	357	2.32	434	11.36*
July	342	5.76	407	8.44*
August	313	9.62	146	7.2*
September	313	6.92	249	5.96*
October	323	13.1	205	14.42*
Total	2,908	67.34	2,526	75.08

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

2.2 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 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 to reallocate these slots quickly enough to take advantage of them.

2.3 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.

2.4 The monthly booking data for the kerbside WEEE collection service for January to October 2019 and the same period in 2020 is illustrated in figures 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1: WEEE kerbside collection bookings comparison January – October 2019 and 2020

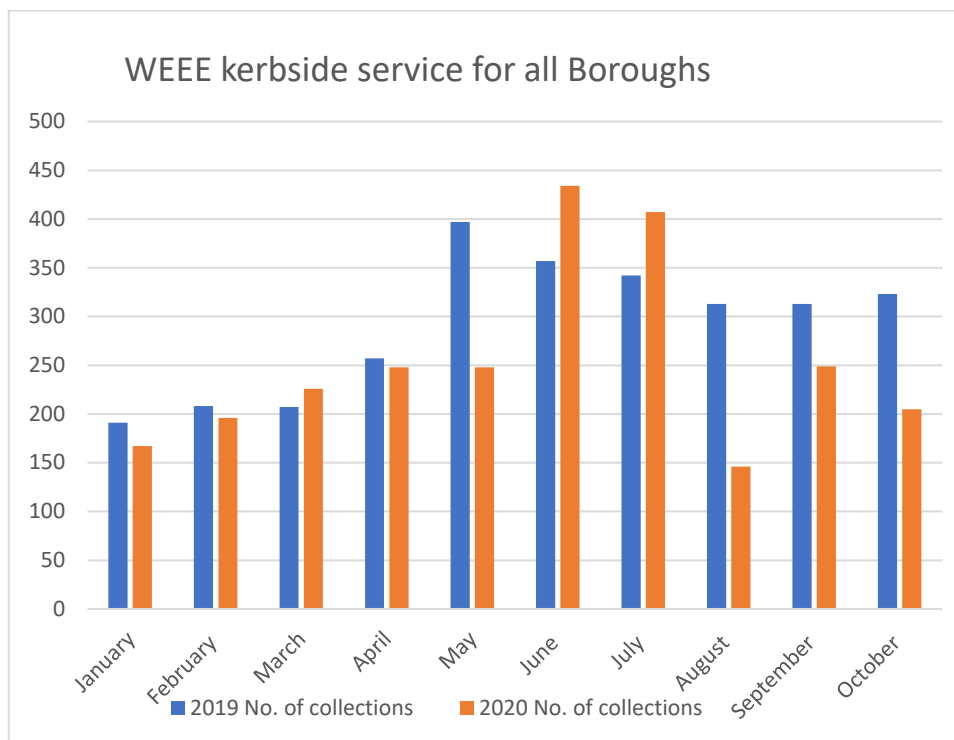
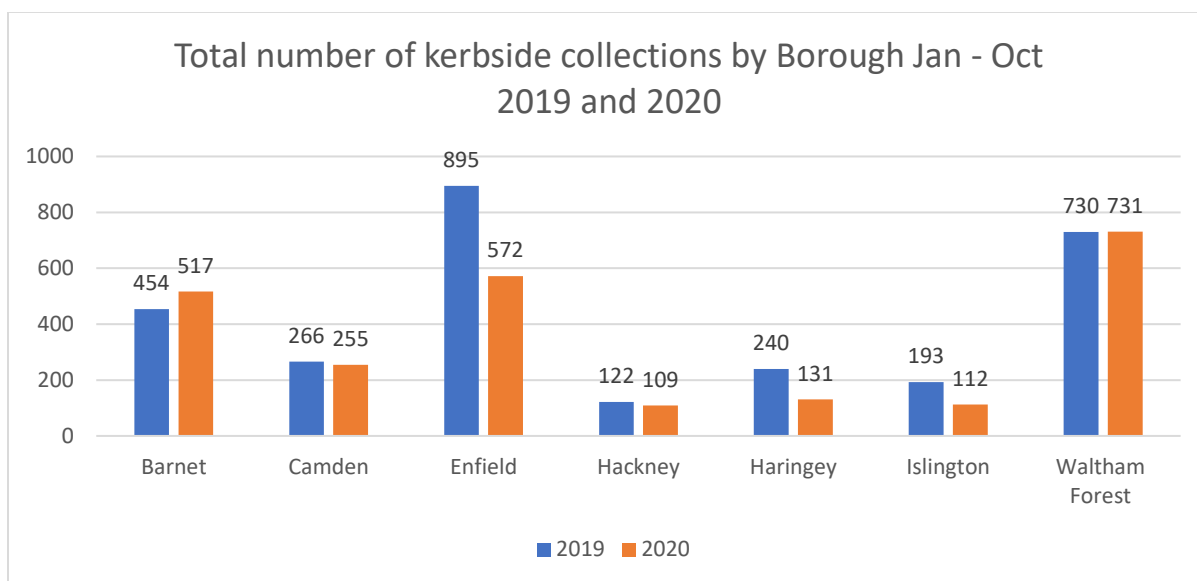


Figure 2: Total Kerbside collections by Borough (January – October) 2019 and 2020



2.5 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.

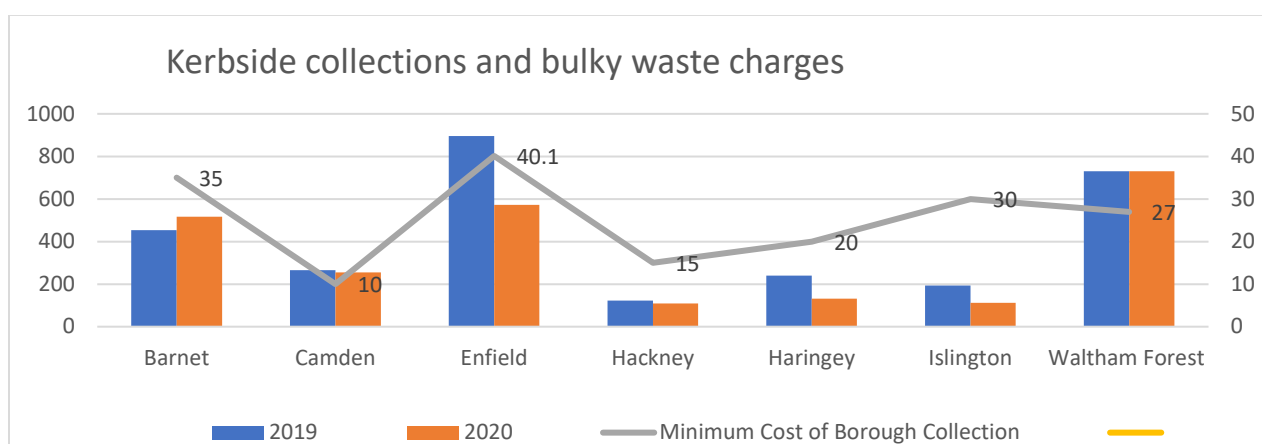
2.6 When comparing the service by Borough, demand has decreased across all Boroughs in 2020 with the exception of Barnet and Waltham Forest with Barnet, Enfield and Waltham Forest residents using the service the most.

3. Factors affecting performance of the WEEE kerbside service.

3.1 Boroughs bulky waste services

3.1.1 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 2019 have been applied to the number of collections.

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



3.1.2 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.

3.2 Covid – 19 impacts

3.2.1 During the Covid 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.

3.2.2 This 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.

3.2.3 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.

- 3.2.4 In an attempt 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 (than the 20 per day allocated) were also arranged to take account of the cancellation rate.
- 3.2.5 The disruption to the service has led to some complaints about upselling of the paid service that Clearabee also provides when free collection slots are not available 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.

4. WEEE contract extension

- 4.1 The extension of the WEEE contract provides an opportunity to review the performance of the WEEE kerbside service to Boroughs.
- 4.2 To reduce the backlog of booked collections, lengthy waiting times and provide for the high demand for the service, additional resources can be supplied by Clearabee. These are essentially a doubling of resources which would come to a total cost for the Boroughs of £xx per year or approximately £xx per Council plus fuel surcharges if costs increase substantially.
- 4.3 As this is a significant cost increase and based on the tonnages collected this equates to over £xx per tonne contributing 0.01% to the recycling rate.
- 4.4 We do not have analytical information about the type of residents who use the kerbside collection service, but there is a concern is that it may be used by residents who are limited in using the other options for free disposal of large WEEE items. If the Clearabee service was not available residents could dispose of large domestic appliances such washing machines and fridges by:
- 4.4.1. Taking the items to one of the re-use and recycling centres in the NLWA area.
 - 4.4.2 In the event that 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.
 - 4.4.3 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 borough. Boroughs also offer concessions for varying groups which can include elderly residents and/or those in receipt of certain benefits.
- 4.5 There is a risk that residents may also turn to flytipping or using unlicensed waste carriers to dispose of their items,
- 4.6 Given the facts outlined in this report, officers' advice is not to include the kerbside collection after the 31 March 2021 (bookings cut-off date), given the cost per tonne collected, and the existence of alternative arrangements. However, it would be likely to mean at least some residents losing a free disposal opportunity for large electrical items.

Report ends