| Council name | COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL |
|---|---|
| Name and date of Committee | OVERVIEW AND SCURTINY COMMITTEE 4 NOVEMBER 2024 |
| Subject | WASTE SERVICES UPDATE ROUND REZONING |
| Wards affected | All |
| Accountable member | Cllr Mike Evemy Deputy Leader - Cabinet Member for Finance<br>Email: mike.evemy@cotswold.gov.uk |
| Accountable officer | Bill Oddy, Assistant Director - Commercial Development<br>Email: bill.oddy@publicagroup.uk |
| Report author | Simon Anthony, Business Manager – Environmental Services.<br>Email: simon.anthony@publicagroup.uk |
| Summary/Purpose | To provide the Committee with feedback on the recent waste collection round rezoning project. |
| Annexes | None |
| Recommendation(s) | That Overview and Scrutiny Committee:<br>    1. Note the contents of the report. |
| Corporate priorities | • Delivering Good Services<br>• Responding to the Climate Emergency |
| Key Decision | NO |
| Exempt | NO |
| Consultees/ Consultation | Ubico colleagues were consulted in preparation for this report.<br>Rob Heath – Ubico Operations Director, and Marc Osment – Ubico Head of Operations will be present at Committee to answer questions. |

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides the Committee with feedback on the recent waste collection round rezoning project.

## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The waste service collects over 300,000 containers each fortnight and performs very well in terms of recycling rate as Cotswold District Council is in the top 20 performing local authorities in England in the recycling rate league table.

2.2 Cotswold District Council and its waste collection provider, Ubico, agreed to undertake a waste round rezoning project in summer 2024 to generate operational efficiencies which would yield financial and environmental benefits to the Council. Savings across a full year, as a result of the rezoning project are forecast to be £0.5M with in year savings in 24/25 of £0.375M. Environmental benefits, particularly including $CO_2e$ savings are expected as part of the rezoning project although the actual environmental savings are being investigated.

2.3 The rezoning project was principally a collaboration project between Ubico and Publica with several departments from each organisation working together, including Communications, Digital, IT, Waste Services, Customer Services, Data and Project Management teams. Delivery of the project post go live waste principally the responsibility of Ubico who supplemented core staff and vehicle levels with additional support crews, supervisors and vehicles to reduce disruption where possible.

## 3. PRE-GO LIVE

3.1 The new version of the rounds went live on June 24th. All communications were successfully delivered ahead of this date so residents knew their new collection day and when to present each waste stream.

3.2 To provide a good level of customer service, on the 22nd of June (Saturday) Ubico were required to collect addresses that fell into a window of having to wait longer than 13 days between their old collection date and their new.

3.3 These interim or pre-go live collections were well managed as impacted residents were well communicated with, this is demonstrated by the fact that only impacted residents presented waste for collection on this date. From an operational perspective this was a difficult exercise to arrange as a large number of Ubico Cotswold contract employees were either unavailable or did not want to work this additional day so crews from outside of Cotswold were drafted in. Despite this all interim collection rounds were fully staffed and the significant majority of pre-go live collections were successfully made, unfortunately, due to staffing challenges Ubico were unable to collect all scheduled collections for this Saturday and therefore started the Monday with additional properties/roads to collect as well as starting the new rounds.
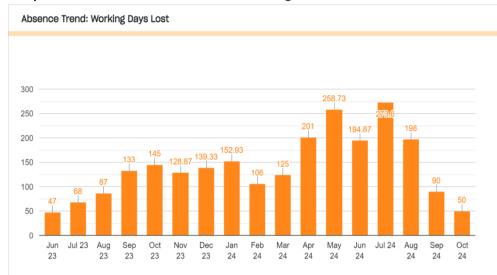
**3.4** Ubico created new round 'packs' detailing the new routes that crews would be covering were made available for crews/driver to look over in the week/s prior to starting the new rounds so that they could familiarise themselves with some elements of the new rounds

**3.5** During the first few weeks each crew was issued a pack each day containing a physical copy of the days route map and were required to report in to a 'war room' at the end of the day with any difficulties or issues they experience that day. Issues or difficulties normally equated to wrong roads on rounds, unable to find certain roads or properties or incab technology related issues.

**3.6** Every morning an email would be sent from the operational team updating Publica on any challenges effecting that day such as absence or vehicle breakdowns and what mitigating action would be taken to help reduce performance impact. An end of day update email was also sent detailing how the day had gone in terms of performance, updating on any service failures and reasons.

## 4. OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

**4.1** Prior to starting the roll out of the new rounds the then Operations Manager left the business, he had played a major role in the preparation. This meant for a period of a circa one month Ubico were operating with no Operations Manager and then started the project with a new Operations Manager. Any change in such a significant role will come with challenges.

**4.2** Absence levels significantly increased in the month prior to the roll out of the new rounds and then continued to rise/stay high during the first two months of the roll out. This caused significant disruption as the operational team lost knowledge of the geographical area and drivers/loaders to operate rounds.

**4.3** Looking at graph 1, below, the absence rate peaks during the first two months of the roll out and then starts to drop in September and return to a more stable figure in October. During the peak of absence the contract had circa 30% of the frontline workforce unavailable, this then requires Ubico to utilise agency employees which proved difficult to obtain/retain and involves between 4-7 hours of induction before Ubico can utilise them on rounds. Absence levels are now under control after extensive work with our HR and SHEQ teams to manage employees back to work.
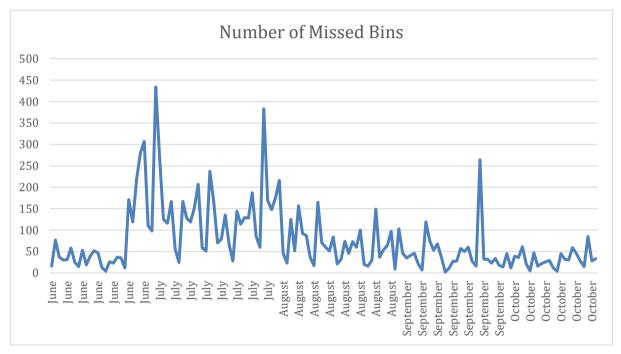
### 4.4 Graph 1 – Ubico Absence, Waste Rezoning

Absence Trend: Working Days Lost



## 5. PERFORMANCE

5.1 As it became clear that the waste service was struggling to achieve the level of performance that was required due to the above challenges Publica and Ubico scheduled daily stand-up meetings. The collective partners would meet each morning and at 4pm to talk through the day, review data and implement plans to address the issues such as repeat misses. Measures introduced following these meeting included having a dedicated priority list produced by Publica to highlight urgent collections.

5.2 Longer term measures that Ubico now have in place include;

- Ubico now have a stable workforce in terms of reducing reliance of agency employees.
- Ubico have made internal, non-day change amendments to rounds where it has been deemed required and
- Ubico have started a cross round training arrangement where Ubico will familiarise employees with other rounds as best Ubico can to reduce the reliance on just the team that operate a specific round.
- Ubico have introduced an Operational administration-based post (within existing budget) that is a constant presence in the Operational office to help coordinate crews and allow supervisors to be out on the ground more frequently to help address issues that crews may have. This role offers a constant contact for customer services and contracts team and as becomes more established and experienced will drive through improved performance, stability and over all communication.

5.3 Graph 2 below shows missed bin performance before, during and after round rezoning go live. The graph reflects the commentary provided above; after the first two collection cycles there has been a gradual week on week improvement with a peak in late September

due to specific staffing challenges.  Services are broadly achieving pre go live levels, however the commitment remains to achieve comparative or better levels of services with a smaller resource base.

GRAPH 2 Missed bin performance



Number of Missed Bins

## 6.   REPEAT MISSED BINS

**1.1.**   Repeat misses are where Ubico have missed a collection previously and then this has not been correctly addressed or addressed quick enough so that the same property/properties experience further misses. In this particular area it is fair to say that Ubico struggled and did not react, recover or manage the issue as quickly or as proficiently as they could/should have. The main challenges here were the high turnover of frontline employees and that Ubico regularly had supervisors out driving or loading so not in a position to help crews identify these areas as Ubico needed them to be. On numerous occasions crews assumed that they had corrected a miss collection but were visiting the wrong location to address. Some isolated or hard to find properties commonly featured in the high repeat misses and Ubico did not react quick enough with detailed instruction or guidance to address. This is an area where Ubico have captured significant lessons learned in building up shareable detail on certain areas/addresses within rounds to assist any new employee or when Ubico experience shortages. Ubico did not take this situation lightly but understand and agree that the service to some residents within the community fell short of what was expected and deserved. Changes were made to how Ubico managed the repeat misses and urgent issues in that Ubico tasked a specific member of the team to take responsibility for these, starting with a morning debrief to the crew then working closely with the crew/s that have them on

for the day's work throughout the day to ensure collection. Now that Ubico have stability with the teams in terms of the attendance and a full team of supervisors Ubico have them out on the ground more often to visit locations and work with the crew to resolve where they had ongoing collection issues. This has seen an immediate improvement and is still ongoing to continue on that improvement path, it is acknowledged that Ubico should have looked at a measure such as this sooner.

## 7.    CUSTOMER JOURNEY

**7.1**    Throughout the round rezoning project a number of challenges became apparent around how residents interact with the waste service, particularly in terms of when and how missed bins are reported.  Currently Cotswold Council allows residents 2 days to report a missed bin, Ubico have a further 3 days rectify the reported missed bin, this can mean waste remaining on the street for significant amount of time.  Where Ubico are unable to get to a scheduled collection Ubico can 'service fail' the collection, this can be for legitimate reasons for example the road is flooded, however where a collection is service failed residents will not be able to report a missed collection.  To confirm, a service failed collection is automatically scheduled to be collected the following working day.

**7.2**    The waste service, with service design colleagues in Publica have been commissioned to review the entire customer journey, this project includes:

- Messages and emails back to residents,

- Messages and information on webpages

- How and when residents can report missed collections in terms of service failures,

- Reporting and rectification SLA's

- Potential additional functionality in terms of an update version of back-office systems.

## 8.    CONCLUSIONS

**8.1**    The rezoning project was aimed at generating efficiencies leading to financial savings and environmental improvements, savings are already being realised and environmental savings are being investigated.

**8.2**    For over 99% of properties in Cotswold the rezoning project was delivered smoothly. Indeed there have been pockets of above average disruption that took longer than anticipated to resolve, these properties are typically rural and / or have unique characteristics that make collections more challenging the typical sub-urban cul-de-sac collections.

## 9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 These have been discussed in the report.

## 10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 These have been discussed in the report.

## 11. RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 Risks have been covered in the report.

## 12. EQUALITIES IMPACT

12.1 N/A

## 13. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

13.1 These have been considered as part of the report.

## 14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 None submitted.

(END)