

## RECYCLING REUSABLE SACKS (SACKS FOR LIFE) UPDATE

Committee – Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee – 16 July 2024

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer - Finance & Trading

**Status:** For Consideration

**Also considered by:** Cabinet 18 July 2024

**Key Decision:** No

**Executive Summary:** This report updates on the current domestic waste and recycling collection service for recycling and the agreed processes for the introduction of reusable recycling sacks for life across the District.

**This report supports the Key Aim of** Climate Change Strategy & Council Plan

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Irene Roy

**Contact Officer(s):** Trevor Kennett, Ext. 7407

Adrian Rowbotham, Ext. 7153

**Recommendation to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee:**

- (a) That the progress and update as detailed in this report be noted.

**Recommendation to Cabinet:**

- (b) That the progress and update as detailed in this report along with any views from the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee be considered by Cabinet, and noted.

**Reason for recommendation:** Our domestic recycling waste collection service is a main priority for the Council, so it is vital that it operates in an efficient and effective manner, while remaining sustainable and affordable.

## Introduction and Background

1. At the Council's budget setting meeting on the 20 February 2024, it was resolved to approve the Council's budget for 2024/25, which included agreed savings on clear sacks from year 2, replacing them in year 1 (24/25) with reusable recycling sacks for life. This resulted in a budget saving from year 2 of around £200,000.
2. Direct Services has engaged with the four main manufacturers of sacks for life and have reviewed numerous samples, demonstrated at a previous Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee meeting, along with loaning the samples to some ward councillors to show at local parish council meetings.
3. After a number of reviews, also involving the waste teams, the following specification was settled on as our reusable recycling sack:
  4. A 190 litre sacks (55x55x63cm) with Velcro lid, 150gsm with 30% recycled Sevenoaks Green WPP fabric 4, vertical seams, overlock stitching with 2 x 15cm lifting handles with a 1kg Plastic weight pad and white panel on side for house marking.

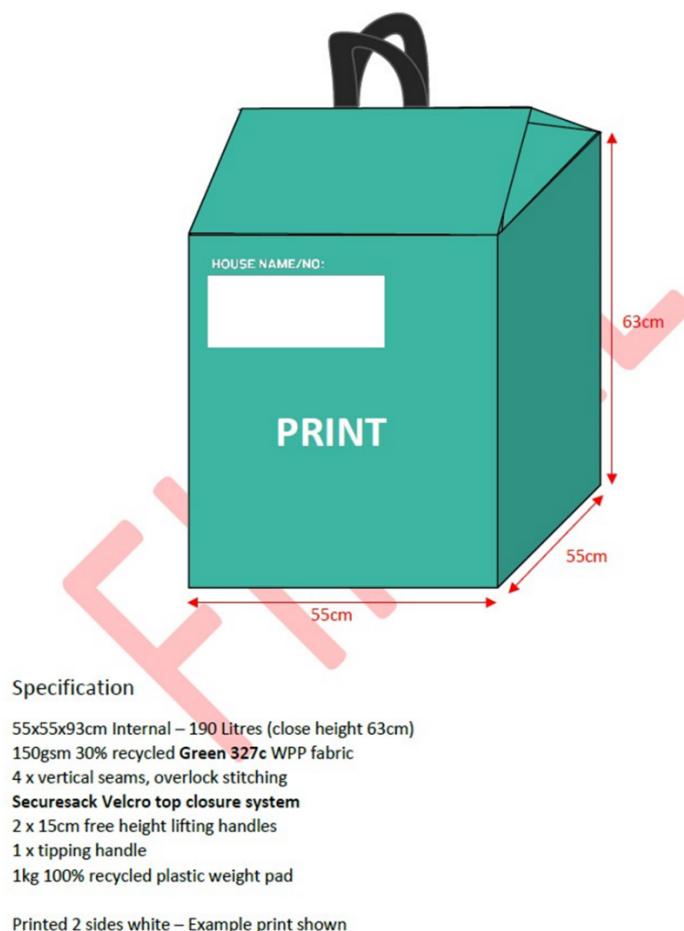


Figure 1: Sevenoaks Reuseable Recycling Sack Specification

5. Around 130 councils already use sacks for life for their recycling. The feedback we have received from other councils has been very positive. The sacks weighted so they do not blow away; they have a panel for residents to write their house number or name and are water resistant.

### **Reusable Recycling Sack Manufacture**

6. Sackmaker are currently manufacturing our chosen sack for life. Production and initial delivery estimated at around 16 weeks, with the first deliveries made to Dunbriek around September 2024.
7. Fifty Seven thousand sacks ordered, giving around 5,000 as stock after distribution to residents, so that replacements and extra sacks requested delivered free of charge. Further smaller batches ordered going forward.

### **Circulation & Roll out**

8. We will take a zonal approach to deliver the reusable recycling sacks using the existing collection round method and optimisation. For example, Wednesday is generally our rural rounds so that entire zone supplied before moving onto other areas. While residents are waiting for their sack for life, they will continue to use clear sacks for recycling. After delivery of the reusable recycling sacks, residents can use them straight away and clear sacks can still be placed out for collection.

### **Communications**

9. A cross-departmental officer project group is meeting to manage all aspects of the reusable recycling sacks roll out.
10. Our communications will be timely, shared in advance and during the delivery of the new recycling sacks for life. The communications will include practical information focusing on what materials should go in the sacks, how the new system will operate and how households can order replacement sacks or, for larger households, additional sacks. Our communications will seek to explain the benefits of introducing the sacks for life. This includes the financial savings that, in face of rising costs, are helping the Council to retain weekly waste collections and the many environmental benefits.
11. Other messages will seek to answer the most commonly asked questions about the sacks while reassuring residents who may have concerns about the first major change to the recycling collection service since its introduction in 2002. The communications will take into account the relatively small number of households (usually those in flats with communal recycling facilities) that will not receive a recycling sack for life and for these residents, nothing will change. The majority of the communications will be carried out within existing budgets.

## **Implementation – external communications**

12. In Shape magazine, distributed to all homes and businesses in the District. We are proposing to include a prominent double page feature in the autumn issue (distributed 16 to 20 September 2024), shortly before sack deliveries begins.
13. Social media – organic posts in the lead up to and during the sack deliveries. Consideration given to a paid-for Facebook boost subject to an available budget.
14. Press release – issued in advance of sacks deliveries. The press release will be shared with local media contacts, town and parish councils and others who have requested to receive them.
15. Council website – information on the timing of the sack deliveries and how to use the new sacks will be hosted on the Council’s website. A new website form will be developed to allow households to order replacement or additional sacks.
16. Questions with Answers – an updated version will be added to the Council’s website and shared with town and parish councils.
17. A concise leaflet explaining how to use the new recycling sack for life, and how to order replacement or additional sacks, will be included in each recycling sack for life. The leaflet will also promote recycling while reducing black waste.
18. Consideration will be given to producing a short video that could be shared on social media and hosted on the Council’s website, subject to an available budget.

## **Implementation – internal communications**

19. Our Direct Services and the Customer Services teams, with support from the Customer Insights Team, will develop processes and website forms for:
  - a. Reporting missed sack for life deliveries
  - b. Ordering replacement or additional sacks
  - c. Questions and Answers – an updated version will be made available to the Council’s Customer Solutions Team to provide residents with consistent responses to most queries be they over the phone, in writing or over social media.
  - d. Members provided with the Questions and Answers. Direct Services will communicate regularly with Members in advance and during the delivery of the sacks.

## **Non-sack for life properties**

20. The Waste team has identified a small number (around 5% of residents) that will continue to use clear sacks. These include areas like New Ash Green (most roads) and a small number of flats. However, the majority of flats will remain on communal bins as currently. All residents will be notified in writing during the roll out stage if they are staying on clear sacks and these will be provided.

## **Key Implications**

### Financial

All financial costs or savings detailed within this report.

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

Under section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Sevenoaks District Council is the Waste Collection Authority. This statutory duty requires the Council to arrange for the collection of household domestic waste in its area except waste, placed, in the opinion of the authority in isolated or inaccessible places that the cost of collecting would be unreasonably high. Risk is low to completing waste collections should there be a delay in delivery of the reusable recycling sacks as we would continue to issue and use clear sacks.

### Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

### Climate Change Implications

The decisions recommended in this paper directly impact our climate change ambition. This is because of the reduction in single use plastics, while increasing recycling that reduces residual waste. The impact has been reviewed and there will be a decrease in carbon emissions produced in the district as a result of this decision.

**Appendices**

None

**Background Papers**

Reusable Recycling Sack Manufacturer

<https://sackmarket.co.uk/pages/recycling-waste-management>

**Adrian Rowbotham**

**Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Finance & Trading**