



Subject:	Waste Collection Update – Expansion and optimisation of narrow access domestic collection routes
Date:	6 October 2026
Reporting Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Director (Operational) CNS
Contact Officer:	Darren Trowlen, Waste Collection Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

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1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To update Committee on the plan to increase restricted/narrow access rounds from three to five and to onboard new rounds and routes as described in the main report below to streets where reported access issues have been frequent and service delivery impacted as a result.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are requested to note the contents of the report.
3.0	Main Report
	<i>Narrow Access Vehicles</i>
3.1	The Council waste collection service currently operates three restricted/narrow access (RA1, RA 2 & RA3)) routes using the smaller 18 tonne Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs). This currently equates to 29 active routes across black, blue and brown collections . The rate setting process for 2026/27 approved growth that allowed for the procurement of two additional 18 tonne RCVs and recruitment of drivers and operatives for same, The Service intends to increase the number of restricted access rounds from the current 29 routes to 47 routes . As part of the addition of 18 extra restricted access routes, The Service will review the existing 29 mixed stream routes and optimise them alongside the introduction of the additional 18 routes.
3.2	As the current Restricted Access routes have evolved over time, the routes have become relatively inefficient , and routes are often spread across significant geographical ranges . Narrow access general waste collections are the most common service type. Households in Urban Belfast receive council black bin collections with recycling and food waste collections provided under contract by Bryson Recycling. Narrow access streets in this area only require narrow access black bin collections. Narrow access streets in suburban Belfast may also require blue and brown bin narrow access collections, which has been factored into the creation of the new restricted access routes.
3.3	The project team have reviewed all current collections and rationalised streets, including those from the “Park with us in mind” pilot that were to be included in the narrow access expansion . Crew reporting over the last 12 months provided the basis from which to include or exclude these additional streets as appropriate and ensure that streets on which access has been frequently reported as an issue are included in the current expansion.
3.4	In addition, the new InCab routing module, RouteSmart, operates on the basis of single stream crews, so the approach taken with the review of these routes aligns to the software The Service has procured to design routes in the future.
3.5	The additional resource provided an opportunity to review existing routes and merge all 5 rounds to create 2 narrow access black bin rounds 2 narrow access brown bin rounds and 1 new narrow access blue bin round . This will standardise the rounds and group them together by electoral ward to maximise the number of properties serviced – this is a similar approach to the kerbside glass expansion over the last 2 years, area-based routes by electoral ward.
3.6	The new rounds have been designed to allow capacity for future expansion , should additional streets/properties in those areas require a smaller 18 tonne RCV to service them.
3.7	The new routes and revised former routes equate to 48 routes across blue, black and brown collections servicing 27331 properties and 888 streets on a narrow access collection schedule. This represents an increase of 57% in terms of the number of properties being serviced by a smaller RCV . It is anticipated the change, overall, should reduce “no access” reporting issues and the service disruption for residents caused by it. Appendix 1 details proposed streams and streets with property counts for the newly designed routes.

- 3.8 **Communication to residents**
Historically, the council issued separate letters for blue, black, and brown bin collections, meaning a single household could receive up to three different letters. For this service revision and expansion, that traditional approach would require sending 27,000 letters.
- 3.9 By analysing and merging property data, **we have consolidated this information. We will now hand deliver one tailored letter per household to the 15,348 affected properties.** Each letter covers all relevant waste services, including both old and new collection dates (see examples in Appendices 2, 3, and 4). This consolidated approach is much more user-friendly for residents.
- 3.10 The Digital Services Printroom and Operations Teams will print and envelope the letters internally. **Resource Advisors will then distribute them over a two-week period from Thursday 15 October to Wednesday 28 October**, delivering approximately 1,500 letters per day (as summarized in Table 1).

New collections for RA1-5 will begin on Monday 2 November.

Table 1 : Letter Delivery Dates

Date	Letters delivered
Thursday 15 October	1535
Friday 16 October	3070
Monday 19 October	4605
Tuesday 20 October	6140
Wednesday 21 October	7675
Thursday 22 October	9210
Friday 23 October	10745
Monday 26 October	12280
Tuesday 27 October	13815
Wednesday 28 October	15350

- 3.11 **In order to transition from old RA1-3 (See Appendix 5) to New RA1-5 we will need to bridge collections** with a QRT collection at some blue and black bin properties moving from one collection calendar to the new schedule, where the gap between collections is more than 15 days. **This will allow a seamless transition and mitigate any gaps in collections for those households.**
- 3.12 A number of brown bin properties will also have a longer than usual gap between the old and new collection schedules, however, given the time of year, it is anticipated that a QRT is not required as brown bin use and set out generally declines markedly in October/November.

Table 2 : Anticipated QRT Bridge collections

QRT Collection Dates	Blue Bin HH	Black Bin HH
Sunday 25 October	1833	5936
Sunday 2 November		

- 3.13 These additional collections will be reflected the in communications issued to these households.
- 3.14 The **new routes will also need to be built into** the current operational software, **CREST and activated during the transition**, allowing residents to easily check and confirm their new collection day(s) at their address. This will also support crew reporting via the ReportItApp from the first day of the new collection schedules. These routes will be transferred to Whitespace in advance of Whitespace replacing CREST as the new operational software for the service.

4.0

4.1	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None. Any additional costs incurred will be covered from existing service budgets.
5.0	
5.1	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.
6.0	Appendices
6.1	Appendix 1 – New RA1-5 routes and streams Appendix 2 – Sample letter to residents – 3 streams Appendix 3 – Sample letter to residents – 1 stream Appendix 4 – Sample letter to residents – 2 streams Appendix 5 - Old RA1-3 Routes