

10.1 VERGE VALET SERVICE REVIEW

Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- 1. NOTES the feedback from the Verge Valet Vincent trial; and**
- 2. APPROVES the adoption of pre-booked bulk verge collections as a standard service offering.**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To provide results of the Verge Valet Vincent trial and consider the adoption of pre-booked bulk verge collections as a standard service offering to City residents.

DELEGATION:

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 14 March 2023, Council approved the extension of the Verge Valet trial and contract for 12 months (July and June 2024) and requested the Administration provide a further report (inclusive of community consultation feedback) to be presented to Council on the progress of the trial and associated bulk verge services in March 2024. The Administration was unable to present this report in March 2024 due to resourcing issues.

The Administration has delegated authority to award a services contract through a public tender exempt procurement process. The *Local Government (Functions and General) Regulations 1996 Part 4 Division 2 r.11(2)(e)* permits tender exempt procurement of goods or services that are supplied by a local government or a regional local government. The pre-booked bulk verge collection service (Verge Valet) is administered by Western Metropolitan Regional Council (WMRC) which is a regional local government.

BACKGROUND:

The City's Waste Strategy 2018 – 2023 has a Vision of "Zero waste to landfill by 2028". The Strategy recognises the previous collection methodology for bulk hard waste was outdated and encouraged the generation of waste.

During the bulk hard waste collection in February 2019, the City received numerous complaints from the community, with concerns including:

- thoughtless scavenging (often overnight), creating amenity and safety issues/concerns;
- adverse impact on visual amenity – including ransacked piles and litter;
- presentation time too long, leading to further illegal dumping on existing piles; and
- verge access/obstruction issues.

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 2 April 2019, Council requested Administration to provide alternative options, including financial modelling. Initial options and modelling were provided at the 25 June 2019 Ordinary Council Meeting. Council subsequently resolved (it):

- 1. NOTES options presented for future hard waste (junk) services, resulting from a service review undertaken as part of Waste Strategy Project 2; and*
- 2. DOES NOT support Option One – Cease to Provide the Service;*

3. *REQUESTS further investigation of options that may be more tailored to suit the City of Vincent community, including but not limited to:*
 - 3.1. *maintenance of an annual service with inclusion of meaningful ways to achieve higher diversion from landfill and reduce amenity and verge obstruction issues;*
 - 3.2. *more detailed free on-demand (on-request) service options, including consideration of neighbourhood or street based collection services; and*
 - 3.3. *opportunities for recyclables and reusable goods to be offered for free on verges and/or timed to coincide with events linked to recycling, such as the Garage Sale Trail weekend;*
4. *REQUESTS*
 - 4.1. *that further refined options are presented to the Community Engagement Panel for feedback prior to community consultation and to inform development of the Public Engagement and Community Strategy;*
 - 4.2. *that the proposed detailed Public Engagement and Community Strategy includes objectives and rationale for bulk hard collection prior to community consultation; and*
 - 4.3. *that procurement of a bulk hard waste service in February 2020 be undertaken, with a shorter bulk waste presentation period to minimise dumping, visual amenity and verge access issues.*

It is relevant to note that Bulk Hard Waste (Junk) Collection service was postponed to July 2020 due to COVID but incorporated the shorter presentation period in accordance with item 4.3 of the above resolution.

The City engaged the services of Talis Consultants, to assist with the provision of further refined options, including financial modelling. As part of this modelling, various scheduled and on-request collection scenarios were considered.

Six refined options were subsequently taken to the Community Engagement Panel on 7 March 2020 (as per request items 4.1 & 4.2 above).

Options considered:

- 1a - Scheduled – limit time material is presented 48 hours prior
- 1b - Scheduled – limit time material is presented and limit volume 2m³
- 2a – On-request skip bin – charged/service
- 2b – On-request skip bin – no charge
- 3a – On-request – uncontained 2m³, 48 hours prior, charged
- 3b – On-request – uncontained 2m³, 48 hours prior, no charge

The two Street/Neighbourhood based collection options, although considered and discussed, were not specifically included in the ranking, as they cannot operate as core “stand-alone” service options and as such were considered complementary measures to the on-request service options.

The Community Panel Workshop was held on Saturday 7 March 2020, with thirteen Community Panel residents participating. Feedback was sought through small group discussions and individual participant surveys.

Three breakout groups provided feedback and reached broad consensus that the City should adopt:

- an on-request, uncontained bulk waste collection service;
- limit volume to 2m³ per collection;
- costs for the service included within the City’s annual rates (rather than a user pays service). This outcome was also reflected as the preferred option in the individual survey responses.

Respondents also indicated that they would like the option of a second, on-request collection to be available at cost to the resident (i.e. a user pays additional service).

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 21 July 2020, Council received and noted the Community Engagement Panel Outcomes Report and approved the Public Engagement and Communications Strategy.

In delivering this Public Engagement and Communications Strategy, the City engaged the specialist services of CATALYSE Pty Ltd to undertake the community perception survey, which was undertaken between 7 August and 22 August 2020. The main objective of the consultation was to seek feedback and gauge community support on the various verge collection service options presented and provide opportunity for resident concerns to be heard and responded to; the results enabling the City to gain a clearer community wide view and help inform next steps.

The baseline data was demographically weighted to assist in tailoring marketing materials and strategies to reach the unengaged segments of the community.

CATALYSE Pty presented the findings of the community perception survey at 22 September 2020 Council Workshop.

The survey showed that there is a strong environmental sentiment as 91% of respondents believe reducing waste helps to reduce the impact of climate change and global warming, which is a 6% increase from the last survey carried out 2019.

The preference between scheduled and on-request services was marginal – with 42% preferring on-request and 8% undecided.

Based on the survey findings, Administration recommended an 18 month trial of an on-request collection service (uncontained with a limited volume) from January 2022; this was subsequently approved at the 23 March 2021 Council meeting.

This trial was considered to offer the best environment outcome, aligned to the City's Waste Strategy and waste targets, whilst addressing the on-going illegal dumping, public amenity and safety concerns and complaints regarding the traditional bulk verge system.

Administration considered best-practice examples of on-request services and awarded the contract to WMRC and their on-request collection system "Verge Valet".

Since implementation of the Verge Valet trial in the City of Vincent, the system has received very positive feedback from participating residents. Participants have cited their ability to choose their collection date, its flexibility, ease of use, and speed and quality of service amongst the key highlights.

Participant feedback is captured as part of the booking process and residents are able to rate: The Booking System Service (Figure 1), The Collection Service (Figure 2), the Overall Service (Figure 3), and their preference in regards to which service they verge system they prefer, i.e. the previous traditional bulk service vs. Verge Valet (Figures 4), as well as the opportunity to leave comments on any aspect of the service.

During the initial trial period, over 200 residents rated the service and its ease of use. Over 80% gave the service a 5 Star rating, with statements including:

"I like that we can use it when we actually need it and don't need to store broken or bulky items for long periods of time. Plus I seem to forget when the bulk verge collections are approaching and then have a mad rush to get everything sorted at the last minute / or miss something because I have had to store it somewhere out of the way and then forgot about it."

"I liked the text message confirming expected time of arrival. Much better than traditional bulk verge collection as the neighbourhood looks much cleaner and you can request as required"

"Nothing to suggest. The whole service went off without a hitch. I appreciated there were reminders sent out and also that you could track the time of arrival of the contractors. And that the actual time of collection was as promised."

Only 5% stated gave the service a 1 Star rating. In these instances, this rating was mainly due to resident error, such as waste being presented too late (which resulted in a futile booking), or too much waste presented.

64% of all booking participants preferred the service over the old scheduled bulk system. Only 17% preferred the old system, and this was mainly due to preferences around the unlimited amount of waste they could previously present (now restricted to 3m³). Comments included:

“Only reason I prefer bulk collection is you can dispose of more rubbish. If we had 2 valets a year I’d prefer that .“Would prefer if more than 3 cubic metres worth of waste could be collected. Say 5 cubic metres.”

Whilst 19% of the participants rated their preference to the previous system as “indifferent”, it is worth noting that 78% of these also rated the Verge Valet service with 5 stars.

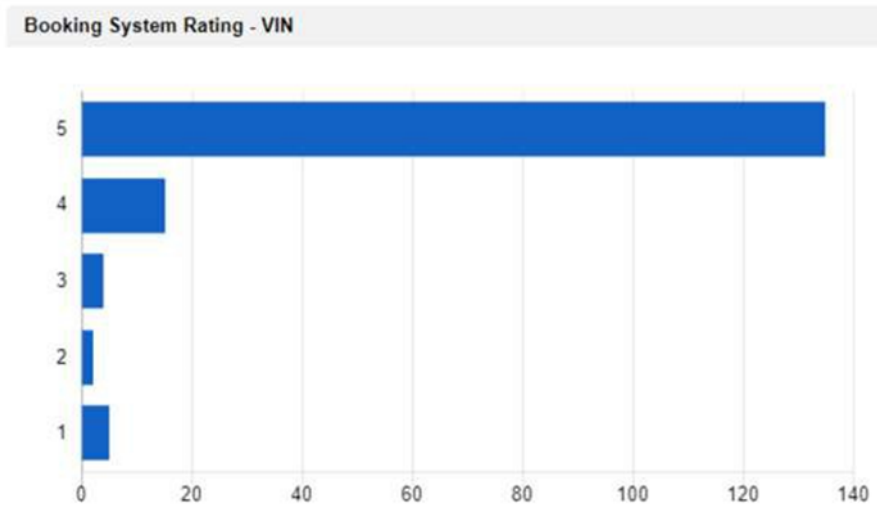


Figure 1 – Booking System Rating

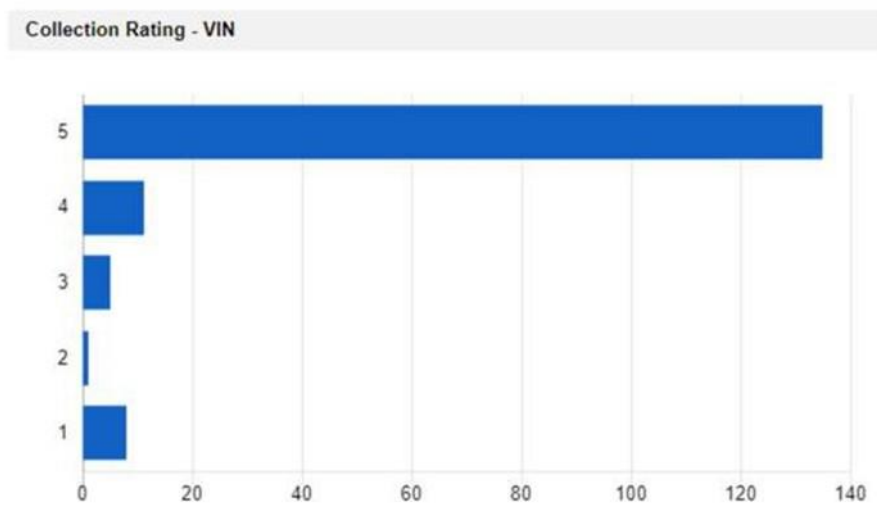


Figure 2 – Collection Rating

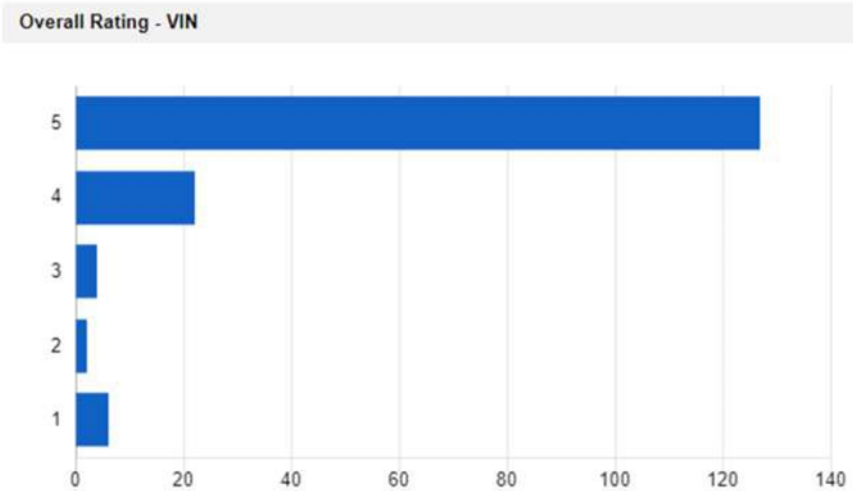


Figure 3 – Overall Rating

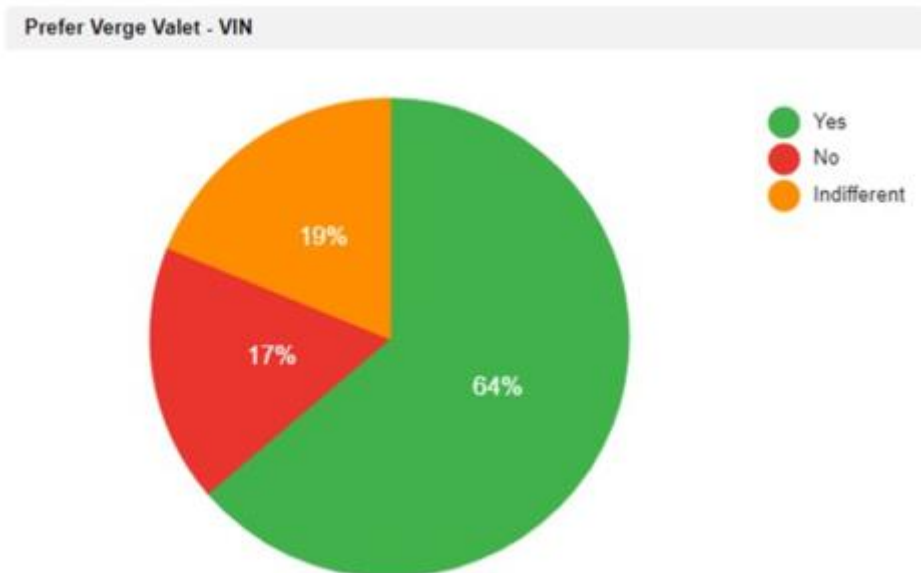


Figure 4 – Verge Valet Preference

The overall recovery rate for its bulk hard waste material at March 2023 was high, sitting at around 67%. Recovery averaged 38% via the previous system.

Verge Valet Trial Extension

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 14 March 2023, Council approved the extension of the Verge Valet trial and contract for a further 12 months until June 2024.

In May 2023 the City engaged CATALYSE Pty Ltd to conduct a MARKYT® Community Waste Scorecard. The Scorecard enables participating councils to evaluate, track and benchmark service levels.

The Scorecard included 531 local community members participating in a survey rating the performance of the waste related services provided by the City of Vincent Performance index scores (out of 100). For waste management, the City of Vincent was positioned in equal 6th place out of 50 councils with a score of 72 out of 100, 10 index points ahead of the industry average.

A summary of the data captured in the scorecard for bulk waste green waste and Verge Valet services are detailed in (Figure 5). It should be noted that only 38% of respondents had used the City’s green waste verge collection service over the past 12 months.

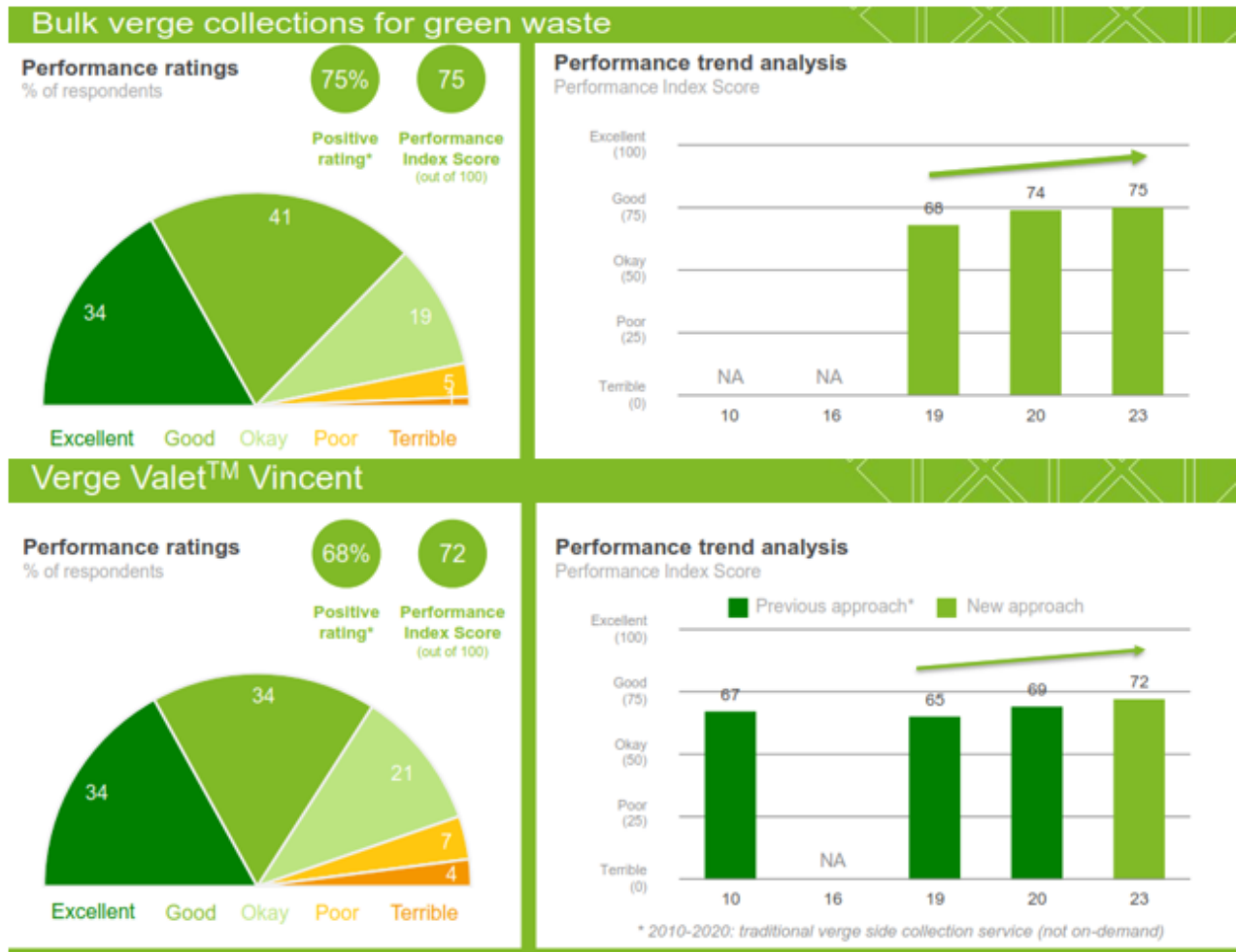


Figure 5 – Waste Management Services Performance

While only 30% of respondents had tried Verge Valet, 68% gave a positive response to the service and that there was an increase in satisfaction with verge valet service compared to previous system.

Among non-users, the main barriers were not needing this service (70%) and not being aware of this service (30%).

Imagine Vincent

From 12 April to 7 May 2024, the City’s Imagine Vincent team conducted a further survey, it attracted 363 respondents, 63% of which had used the Verge Valet service previously. 58% of respondents who used the service preferred the Verge Valet service for future bulk waste collections.

Among the non-users, the main reasons included not meeting needs (42%) with reasons such as not having enough waste to be collected or the size of the collection (3m³) was too small.

The participants (both users and non-users) were able to rate the booking system (Figure 6), waste collection (Figure 7) and overall experience (Figure 8).

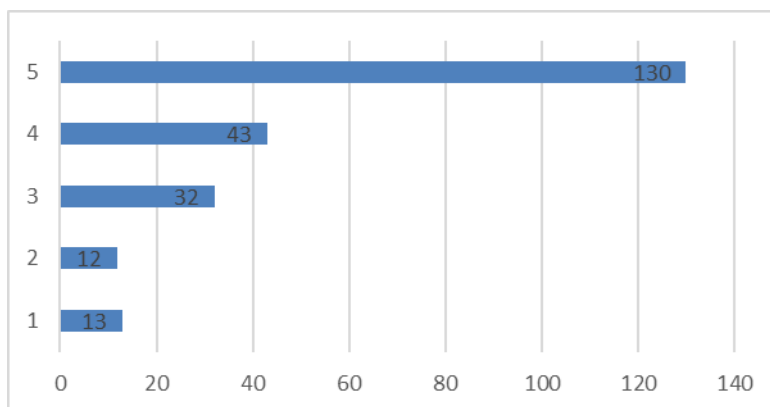


Figure 6 – the Booking System

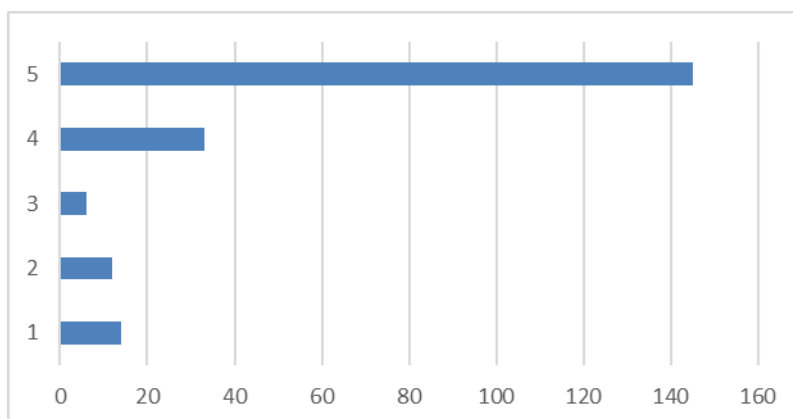


Figure 7 – Waste Collection

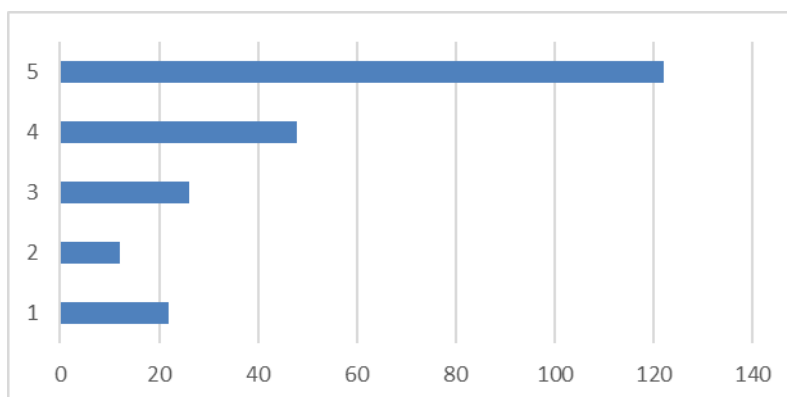


Figure 8 – Overall Experience

Of those who have used the service, the majority rated their overall experience 5 stars.

The online booking system incorporates waste education information regarding reuse options, reminding residents to explore alternative avenues (such as Charities or Buy Nothing Groups) prior to booking a collection. It also ensures consistent communication and provides further guidance around waste avoidance behaviours, whilst offering easy access to the service. Similar information can be found on the City’s website.

For the 2023/24 financial year (between January 2023 and May 2024), 2993 Verge Valet collection were carried out and 453 tonnes were collected and processed. This represents a participation rate of around 17.8% of households. 76.4% of materials collected were recovered avoiding landfill compared to the previous bulk verge service which recovered 38% on average.

As anticipated - and experienced with other Verge Valet participating local governments – there was a spike in booking requests at the end of the financial year, with residents booking to ensure they did not lose their annual allocation. To support this the City increased the number of available collections between 23rd May and 27th June and all 720 allocations were booked. There was approximately 5-7 days waiting time between making the booking and collection occurring.

Survey participants were asked to provide comments within their submission and from this feedback opportunities for improvement have been identified which may increase participation and satisfaction in the service. These include.

- collection day changing from Thursday to Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday which affords greater flexibility for items to be placed the weekend prior to collection.
- segregation and recovery of e-waste in accordance with the E-waste to landfill ban in WA which is in effect from 1 July 2024.
- doubling number of available collection days per week, reducing the wait times from booking to collection.
- doubling the allocations from one to two per year and exploring opportunities for one of these allocations available for the residence to nominate either hard waste (junk) or bulk green waste.

The current trial concluded on 30 June 2024 however the Administration sees value in the pre-booked bulk verge service continuing as it is considered to offer the best environmental outcomes, aligns with the City's Waste Strategy and waste targets. It also addresses on-going illegal dumping, public amenity and safety concerns and other complaints noted regarding the traditional bulk verge system.

The Administration is seeking to adopt pre-booked bulk verge collections as a standard service offering to City residents (refer also 'Comments' Section below).

CONSULTATION/ADVERTISING:

A benefit of a continuing the Verge Valet system is that it is already established with excellent supporting communications material, customer service personnel are well versed in answering FAQ's and any customer concerns.

Since the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 14 March 2023 where Council approved the trial extension the City has undertaken two surveys namely the Community Waste Scorecard 2023 (May 2023) and Imagine Vincent Survey (May 2024). There is also on going data that is collected from the Verge Valet booking service.

LEGAL/POLICY:

Aligns with the City's Waste Strategy 2018-2023 and the State Government Waste Strategy 2030. Both strategies are currently under review.

Legislation: The Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2007.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Low: It is low risk for Council to as

- Trial and extension completed and provided a positive response overall. The City will subsequently continue to promote the service changes and encourage correct waste behaviours within the boundaries of the new service; and
- Risk that WMRC may not have capacity to continue services should the City request increase in services.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS:

Project 2 of the City's Waste Strategy 2018-2023 will assist in the delivery of: the City's Waste Strategy, the State Government Waste Strategy 2030 and the City's SCP objectives.

This is in keeping with the City's *Strategic Community Plan 2022-2032*:

Enhanced Environment

We have minimised our impact on the environment.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

This is in keeping with the following key sustainability outcomes of the *City's Sustainable Environment Strategy 2019-2024*.

Waste Reduction

Will support the City's Waste Strategy vision of sending 'Zero Waste to Landfill'

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS:

This is in keeping with the following priority health outcomes of the City's *Public Health Plan 2020-2025*:
Reduced exposure to environmental health risks.

FINANCIAL/BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

The City budgeted \$437,400 in FY2023/24 for the verge valet trial extension. The year end-costs were in the order of \$364,000 (pending final June invoicing).

In FY2024/25 the bulk verge collection services budget is \$429,772 which includes CPI increase in cost and additional bulk verge collections through the offer of increased resident allocations.

This is still considered to be value for money given that it is inclusive of the established customer service, online booking system and communication materials and has been positively received by the community. It has also effectively addressed the amenity issues and concerns, which were the subject of many community complaints.

WMRC have advised that it currently has capacity to provide these services in alignment with the original contract should the City seek to contract these services over the longer term.

Regulation 11(2)(e) of the Local Government (Functions and General) Regulations states that tenders do not have to be publicly invited if the goods or services are to be supplied by or obtained through the government of the State or the Commonwealth or any of its agencies, or by a local government or a regional local government.

COMMENTS:

The results of the Waste Community Scorecard show that, for waste management, the City of Vincent was positioned in equal 6th place out of 50 councils with a score of 72 out of 100, 10 index points ahead of the industry average. Whilst it is acknowledged that the Imagine Vincent survey responses indicate that of those who have not used the service 58% would prefer not to use Verge Valet for future bulk waste services. 58% of those who have used Verge Valet would prefer to use it again and that the addition of a second collection would increase this number further.

The City does not have capacity to bring this service in house without significant financial investment and the current market for on-demand service providers is not well established.

The Administration is seeking to adopt pre-booked bulk verge collections as a standard service offered to City residents and should this be approved, seek to enter into contract with WMRC for the provision of these services on an initial 3 year term basis with optional extension of an additional 3 years as per the same terms as the trial and original contract.