

**South Oxfordshire  
Vale of White Horse**

# **Rethinking waste**

**Waste Resources  
and Street Cleansing Strategy**  
**2024**

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## Executive Summary

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse is proud of how it captures and manages household waste, and how it maximises the amount that is recycled for future use. This has led to the districts being two of the best recycling local authority areas in England. Residents also care about their local environment and want continued access to litter bins and to clean and tidy streets and towns.

With many changes in waste, recycling and how streets are cleaned, at a national and local level, and the need to widen the focus to include the sustainability and carbon impacts of what we all do, now is the time to raise our ambition and do more.

The council has a large part to play in the success of waste, recycling, and street cleansing. It is also a total community effort which needs residents, visitors, and businesses to play a part. Therefore, this strategy will help us all do more to protect our environment and keep it clean for ourselves and generations to come.

Through this strategy, the councils will identify ways by which residents can reduce the amount of waste they produce. The strategy encourages and enables people to reuse, repair, refill and rehome items, instead of throwing them away, keeping valuable resources in circulation for longer.

This approach, along with making waste and recycling vehicles more energy efficient and maintaining value from the recyclable material collected, will support efforts to tackle the climate emergency.

Public services must continue to work together, and to work with the public, to improve services and reduce waste. Through making it easier to report waste-related problems, using local knowledge to improve street cleaning in places most in need, and working together on a variety of schemes from litter picks to local repair cafes, this strategy will deliver the change needed.

The things we no longer want - what we call waste - does not have to end up as rubbish. This strategy will help to ensure that everyone in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse can make the most of what they already have.

This strategy, through an efficient kerbside collection service that will remain easy for residents to use, will continue to help capture recyclable items. Working with the public, the councils will continue to deliver clean public spaces for residents, businesses, and visitors to enjoy.

To reduce cost, pollute less and protect the planet, we need to rethink waste. That is what this strategy will help us do.

## Purpose of the strategy

This is the strategic plan for how South Oxfordshire District Council (South) and Vale of White Horse District Council (Vale) will approach the challenges of supporting waste reduction, household waste collection, reprocessing of recyclable materials and street cleansing services.

This is not only a council strategy, but one that applies to everyone who lives, works or visits both districts.

This strategy, sitting alongside the supporting documents, has three main purposes:

1. To outline the current set of services and their performance, as they approach a period of change
2. To clearly explain the need for a proactive approach to waste and street cleansing, and how and why these services need to change in the coming years
3. To set out the drivers and influences that have been used when determining the themes and work areas.

It's important this strategy is meaningful to a wide range of people, including:

- Residents and visitors to the districts who will see clear and simple messages about how the districts want to handle household waste and keep the streets clean and tidy
- Stakeholders, such as elected councillors, who will have clearly articulated their leadership role in delivering these services
- Council services and our contractors. This strategy will provide a clear route map to guide actions and projects to meet the desired outcomes.

This strategy does not aim to do the following:

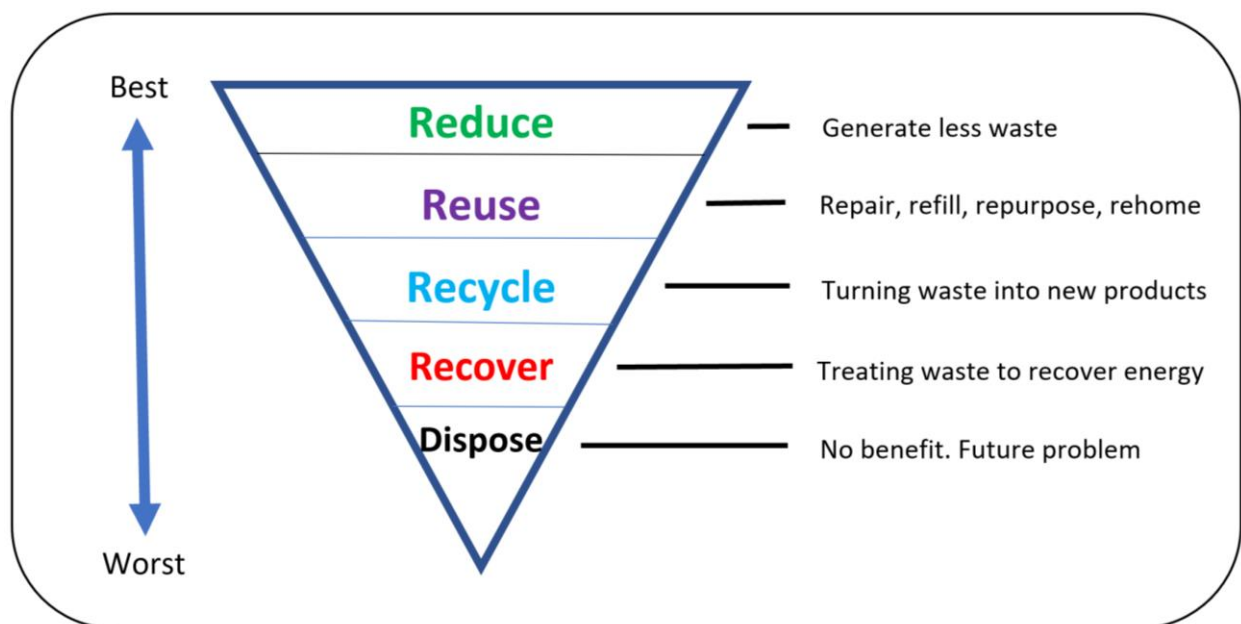
- Set unrealistic expectations for either residents or the councils
- Set out every detail of what will happen in years to come. This strategy lays out the overall direction of travel. Annual service action plans will reflect operational requirements more clearly.
- Determine the specific mechanism (such as via a contract) by which the services should be provided. This is an operational decision that will be taken separately.

# Introduction

Waste management and street cleansing are two of the highest profile services that we provide for residents. Why?

- They are received by everyone and everyone has experience of them
- The journey of waste and litter often starts inside the home
- Due to the size of the operation involved and the technical nature of some aspects, it is one of the most expensive services that we provide
- Bins and streets are something that most people directly experience every day
- The services have a significant impact upon the environmental performance of any local authority.

There is also a legal requirement, regarding waste, to act in accordance with the [Waste Hierarchy](#). The Waste Hierarchy is a nationally recognised model designed to show how different actions in relation to waste are ranked in terms of importance, with Reduce being the best solution and Dispose being the least favourable.



The Waste Hierarchy is the guiding principle within this strategy.

## Who takes responsibility?

Local authorities have been responsible for the collection of waste and recycling, and the cleanliness of streets and public areas, ever since they were formed.

The responsibility for its management is now covered by a range of national legislation. This legislation, dating back over 100 years, has been built upon in recent times so that local authorities have a wide range of responsibilities to fulfil. South and Vale will always undertake these services as required under the statutory obligations placed upon them by central government.

Understanding and adhering to the **legislative framework** is one of the four key drivers and influencers on this strategy.

However, legislation alone is not the only factor that local authorities have to consider when prioritising how they will provide a well-functioning service. There are three other key factors which, depending upon the specific situation, may be complementary or competing. These are:

- **Commercial factors**, including financial constraints placed on local authority finances
- **The needs and preferences of the residents and stakeholders**, including visitors or others who work within the districts
- Wider **corporate and environmental obligations**, including a response to the [climate emergency](#).

## **At a crossroads**

Undertaking the delivery of the services, as currently provided, is relatively straightforward. It involves collecting waste and litter and transporting it to a place for suitable treatment and/or disposal (recycling, energy production, landfill, etc.).

This becomes more complex when further involving the public as active players in helping with solutions, especially when taking action further up the waste hierarchy, with balancing the pressures of the four drivers above.

The councils are at a crossroads regarding the future of these services. This strategy aims to outline the current service, reflect on the four competing drivers and influences, and concludes with the areas of activity that can be best delivered in the coming years.

## **The current service**

Waste and street cleansing is a large and visible service, currently run by Biffa as part of a contract let by the councils, starting in 2009. The service covers the two districts from early morning until late afternoon, as well as on bank holidays and, particularly for street cleansing, on weekends.

## **The Household Waste Collection Service**

Around 70 waste collection vehicles, including those delivering bins and managing bulky waste, are supported by around 170 staff. Each year the service collects around ninety-five thousand tonnes of waste from around 130,000 properties.

The standard household waste and recycling collection service comprises the following:

- A weekly collection of food waste using a green 23-litre caddy
- A fortnightly mixed recycling collection using a green 240-litre wheeled bin. Clear plastic sacks are offered for properties where wheeled bins are unsuitable.
- A fortnightly collection of non-recyclable waste using a black 180-litre wheeled bin. Pink plastic sacks are offered for properties where wheeled bins are unsuitable.
- A fortnightly collection of textiles in tied carrier bags put out alongside the green recycling bin
- A fortnightly collection of small electrical items in tied carrier bags put out alongside the black refuse bin
- A fortnightly collection of batteries in clear plastic bags put on top of the lid of the green recycling bin
- Multiple-occupation properties, such as flats, often use communal wheeled bins up to 1100-litres in size
- An assisted waste collection system operates for those unable to move their bins to the kerbside and additional capacity can be provided for those with a medical condition and large families or those with young children in nappies
- Clinical waste collections for those that qualify.

All the above services are paid for through council tax alongside government grant funding. In addition, the following services are provided to those who wish to use them, for which a charge is made:

- Fortnightly collection of garden waste in a brown 240-litre wheeled bin
- On demand collection of bulky waste

The household waste collection arrangements were introduced as a part of a new contract in 2009, and have been operating, relatively unchanged, since 2010.

Larger bins for recycling and smaller bins for non-recyclable waste and their respective capacities (240-litres and 180-litres) reflected what was achievable for households. In 2010, food waste was only collected by a third of all local authorities in England, but was added as a service offered to all residents in both authorities.

Other waste services that are not provided by the councils, and therefore not directly considered in this strategy, are:

- Provision of Household Waste Recycling Centres

Both councils work as part of the Oxfordshire Waste and Resources Partnership (ORWP) which brings together Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and other districts in Oxfordshire to work on waste and street cleansing issues. Although these services are not directly provided by the councils, we can influence, and are influenced by this work and this strategy has been created in consultation with ORWP and OCC.

- Commercial Waste Collections

The councils do not operate a commercial waste collection service. The market is aggressive with a number of well-established large commercial waste collection providers operating in both districts, so it would be very difficult for any new provider to break into this sector. Additionally, the councils do not have experience in this area and so it's unlikely that there would be a suitably attractive business case which would enable the councils to successfully compete. This makes the focus of this strategy solely on domestic waste.

## **Reprocessing and disposal**

The councils are currently responsible for the collection, transfer and onward reprocessing for:

- Dry mixed recyclable materials. With Oxfordshire not having facilities to accept and sort the materials, the councils currently send them to a large Biffa-run Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in North London, after they are bulked up at a transfer station at the current Culham depot. Once at the MRF the mixed materials are separated for re-sale.
- Textiles collected at the kerbside (for more information about how textiles are handled, please click the link to the [Vale](#) or [South](#) website)
- Small electrical items and batteries collected at the kerbside (for more information about how small electricals and batteries are handled, please click the link to the [Vale](#) or [South](#) website)

This is currently undertaken through the main contract with Biffa, due to end in June 2026.



All other waste and recycling streams collected (including garden waste and food waste), are transferred to OCC to take responsibility for processing and disposal. Non-recyclable waste goes for energy recovery at an Energy Recovery Facility (ERF). Food waste is also used for energy recovery, through Anaerobic Digestion. Garden waste is converted into compost.

All of this is done within Oxfordshire by way of contracts OCC has in place with external companies. More information about how waste is processed and disposed of can be found [here](#).

## The Street Cleansing Service

Street cleansing is one of the most visible services that the councils provide. The service is operated by Biffa as part of our main contract that runs until June 2026.

Street cleansing is governed by extensive legislation. This includes dog fouling, litter and fly tipping. District councils are classed as Litter Authorities and have a duty to keep the highways for which they are responsible, as clear of litter and refuse as possible and to ensure they are kept clean. *“It is the duty of a statutory undertaker in respect of its relevant land to ensure that the land is, so far as is reasonably practicably, kept clear of litter and refuse.” (Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 89(1) and (2)).*

South and Vale also have a responsibility to work with OCC on disposal of waste from street cleansing activities, with all litter, detritus, fly-tips and dog waste being taken to an OCC contracted facility. We also need to ensure that the services provided positively contribute towards the Oxfordshire Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) and the county-wide Waste Prevention Strategy.

The service consists of around 20 dedicated street cleansing vehicles and 55 staff. Each year the service clears 2,800 tonnes of litter and detritus from 14,400 miles of streets.

The service retains a necessary degree of flexibility to respond to issues as they arise. During 2023, Biffa received 865 requests for work that were not part of routine cleansing schedules.

The following functions are undertaken by the councils, but not considered as part of this strategy:

- Grounds maintenance
- Parks and open spaces

The following street cleansing functions are not the responsibility of the councils:

- Highway drains including gullies, and other drainage issues on highways
- Controlling weed growth

- Overhanging trees
- Parish or Town council managed land
- Privately owned land
- Unadopted foot and cycle-paths

## The performance of the current service

The performance of these services is measured in several different ways:

- The overall behaviours of the service users. Mostly services are voluntary to use and participation is not legally enforceable. Therefore, the amount of waste produced, which bin waste and recycling is placed in and what people do with their litter is, to a large extent, dependent upon the behaviours of everybody in the community.
- The performance of the councils and their contractor, in providing services. How the councils react to the service demands placed upon them, and how efficiently and effectively services are provided is directly within the control of the councils. This includes satisfaction of the public with the services received.

Some of the key statistics relating to the services are shown in this diagram.



The Waste Collection Service is popular with residents, as measured by the annual customer satisfaction survey. We receive relatively low levels of complaints and good delivery has been achieved against key performance indicators. More information on the annual customer survey can be found [here](#).

Of note is the service's performance in the local authority recycling league tables. This is a national ranking, measuring the amount of recyclable material collected as a percentage of overall waste, by weight.

Both district councils have been ranked amongst the top 10 recycling authorities in England for many years and are currently ranked first (South) and third (Vale). National tables are available through this link - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-collected-waste-management-annual-results/local-authority-collected-waste-management-annual-results-202223>

More detail on the current service and its performance can be found [here](#).

## The case for change

This document has outlined the current services and their performance. An important part of any strategy is recognising the 'as is' position and it being fully understood.

However, the status quo as of summer 2024, cannot be maintained for reasons that will be outlined in this document, and explained more fully in the supporting information.

### **Legislative framework**

The Environment Act 2021 aims to improve air and water quality, protect wildlife, increase recycling, and reduce plastic waste. The Act is part of a new legal framework for environmental protection following the exit in 2019 from the European Union.

There are a number of relevant areas within this legislation that are intended to drive change. These include:

### **The polluter pays principle**

- The introduction of the 'polluter pays' principle through [Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\)](#). This is, in effect, a tax on packaging producers based upon the amount of packaging they produce. The money raised from this will be used to fund the cost of processing and/or disposing of packaging once it has been used.

In 2024/25 all local authorities in England will be obliged to offer additional information to the body overseeing EPR and packaging producers will be expected to commence payments. This would initially be to develop a fund used to support those councils needing new infrastructure, vehicles, or other such requirements, to comply with measures within the Environment Act.

From 2025/26 the councils will be paid for the full net disposal costs for providing an efficient and effective collection system for packaging.

### **A deposit return scheme (DRS)**

- This will enable members of the public to take some packaging, such as metal and plastic drink containers, back to the shops they were purchased from, in return for a percentage of the money they paid for the item at the point of purchase. As it is currently proposed, the DRS does not include glass.

Current data indicates that less than ten per cent of the overall weight of Dry Mixed Recycling (the green bin) will be lost from kerbside collections when the above scheme is introduced in 2027. However, due to the relatively low density of these materials, the impact upon volume in the bin, collection vehicles and at transfer points, is expected to be relatively large. The working assumption is that between 20-25 per cent of the space in the Dry Mixed Recycling (green bin) could be freed up by drink containers (except glass)

being returned directly to shops, rather than placed in kerbside collection bins if residents actively participate in the scheme.

The implications of this are that, without changes to the green bin system, the councils would be emptying bins that are increasingly unlikely to be full.

## Simpler Recycling

- This was announced by the government in October 2023 and is designed to harmonise household waste services provided across England.

Local authorities who have not yet introduced a weekly food waste collection service will have to do so by March 2026. They will also be required to collect a core set of recyclable materials. South and Vale currently collect everything on the proposed core list, apart from plastic bags and film. These are likely to be a collection requirement by March 2027.

There is a recommendation that collections (except for food, which must be collected weekly) should be collected no less frequently than every fortnight.

South and Vale already offer a very comprehensive service and there are therefore few direct impacts on the councils arising from these proposals. The main impact will be the need to collect plastic bags and film. The councils will need to determine how they are collected, and how they can be processed. As the materials that local authorities collect will be standardised, all Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) will be required to accept the full set of core materials by 2027.

It should be noted that, at the time of writing this strategy and, as a part of the announcements on Simpler Recycling, central government indicated that three weekly collections would not be supported. Whether or not this is for guidance purposes, or will be legislated against, remains unclear. It does seem to be at odds with the ambitions of the Extended Producer Responsibility processes which are to reward schemes that maximise the capture of recyclable packaging (and less frequent non-recyclable waste collection does this). Whilst this proposal remains important, it will need to be reviewed in light of further legal and financial clarifications before it can progress.

The Environment Act 2021 does not put forward specific commitments regarding street cleansing services that will impact on our district services.

Also part of national policy is the [‘Waste Prevention Programme for England: Maximising resource, minimising waste’](#). This was published in August 2023 and contains recycling targets for specific types of material:

Material type	2024 recycling target
Paper	83%
Glass	82%
Aluminium	69%

Steel	87%
Plastic	61%

The Oxfordshire Waste Prevention Strategy is likely to be of increasing importance, as the efficiency of local schemes is monitored through EPR.

The Waste Prevention Programme also signals activity focussed on reuse, repair and the sharing economy, highlighting challenging materials often outside the scope of kerbside collections such as textiles and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and furniture.

This illustrates the overall direction of travel towards a more [circular economy](#), from central government and Europe, indicating where performance improvements are expected going forward.

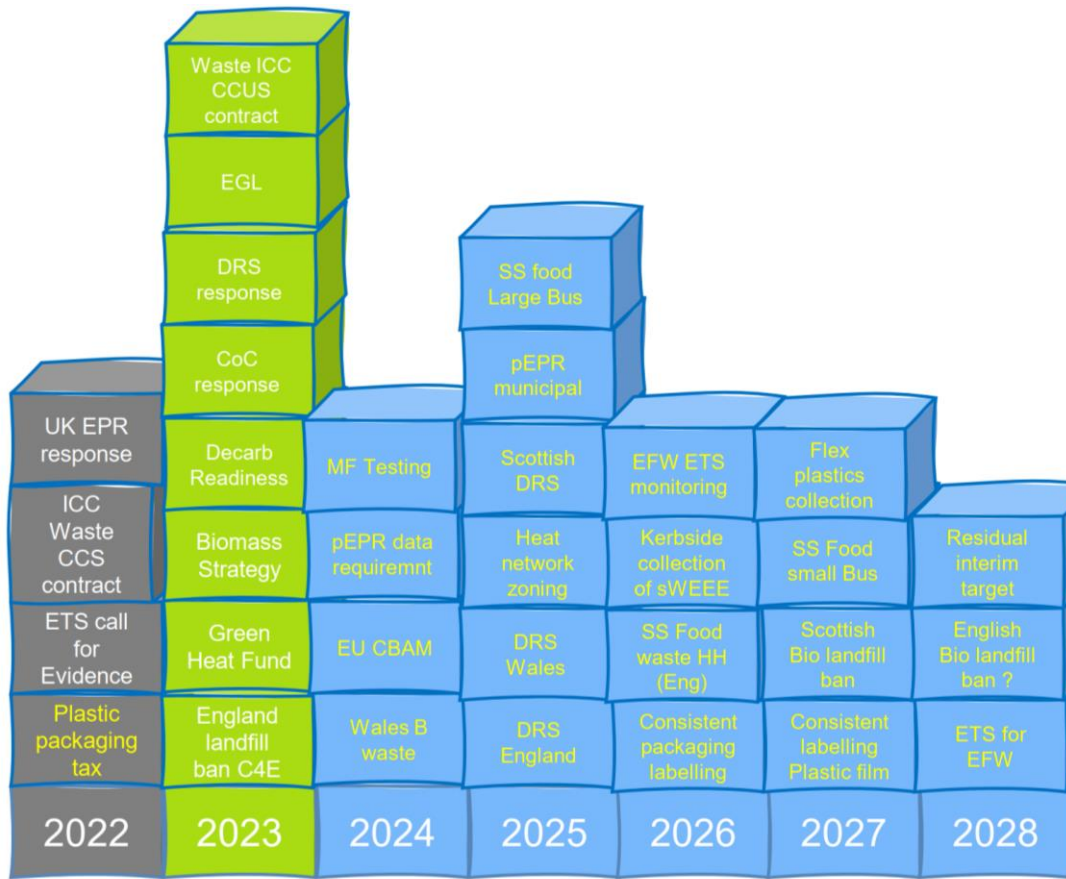
This shift in emphasis, with policies specifically aimed at moving materials further up the waste hierarchy, may result in further measures and targets at a national level.

The national recycling target set by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is 65 per cent of the waste collected by 2035 to be recycled. This is based on the current mechanism to measure recyclable and non-recyclable waste, which is by weight.

Compositional analysis in 2023 showed that if all recyclable items were correctly disposed of a recycling rate of 77.4% (South) and 75.1% (Vale) would be achievable.

However, driving down the remaining non-recyclable content can become increasingly challenging once the biggest recyclable materials have been removed.

The next graphic illustrates the many waste and waste-related changes underway and planned:



Summary of national government changes above

## **Community engagement**

It is important to capture a wide range of views on this strategy. These views can be matched with important independent data collected, and together show what is both desirable and achievable.

## **Councillor engagement**

Several sessions were held between September and December 2023 to gather Councillors' views on the future shape of the waste and street cleansing services.

The need to respond positively to the climate emergency was considered a key priority. Both councils have specific committees dedicated to provide advice to Cabinets on issues related to the climate emergency. As a part of the information gathering exercise, both committees were invited to put forward ideas and consider options for this strategy. The views gathered are reflected in this strategy.

Councillors were also supportive of waste systems that residents find easy to understand and to comply with.

There was general support for working more closely with the public over how litter, waste and the local environment was managed.

There was clear support for the council to have more direct control over the way that the street cleansing service, and household waste collection service is provided.

Full results are [here](#)



## Resident feedback

In the summer of 2023, the councils' sought the views of residents with a Waste Satisfaction Survey. The survey ran for four weeks over June and July 2023 and was aimed at residents living in South and Vale, who use the waste services. The survey included questions about the kerbside waste collection services, street cleansing and overall satisfaction. 2,069 responses were received. Some of the key results are:

- 83% respondents expressed satisfaction with the waste and recycling collection service
- 85% of respondents are satisfied with the reliability of the service i.e. collecting their bins on the correct date
- 66% of residents state that their bins have been returned damage-free. 54% say the collection team returned their bins to the correct location.
- 82% of respondents use the food waste service, 11% do not use the service and 7% sometimes use it

The street cleaning service received mixed feedback with 38% expressing satisfaction with street cleanliness and 37% expressing dissatisfaction. A total of 899 free text comments were received. The most frequently mentioned issues were with road sweepers (45%) and the lack of sweeping which respondents believe is resulting in overgrown vegetation in the streets and gullies causing blocked drains and leading to flooding in some areas (22%).

- **Frequency of cleansing** – comments included that crews were often not seen and that litter bins need more regular emptying
- **Litter** – residents requested more communication to deter littering, community engagement with litter picking groups was highlighted, as well as reporting mechanisms for those areas where litter was generally high
- **Standard of cleansing** – comments indicated that standards were low, with the standards lower further away from town centres. There were positive comments where some residents felt the standards currently maintained were acceptable.
- **Sweeper** – comments on sweepers often also referred again to the lack of frequency around sweeping and them not being seen in a resident's road
- **Fly-tipping** – comments focused on a rise in fly-tipping and highlighting areas that have repeat issues.

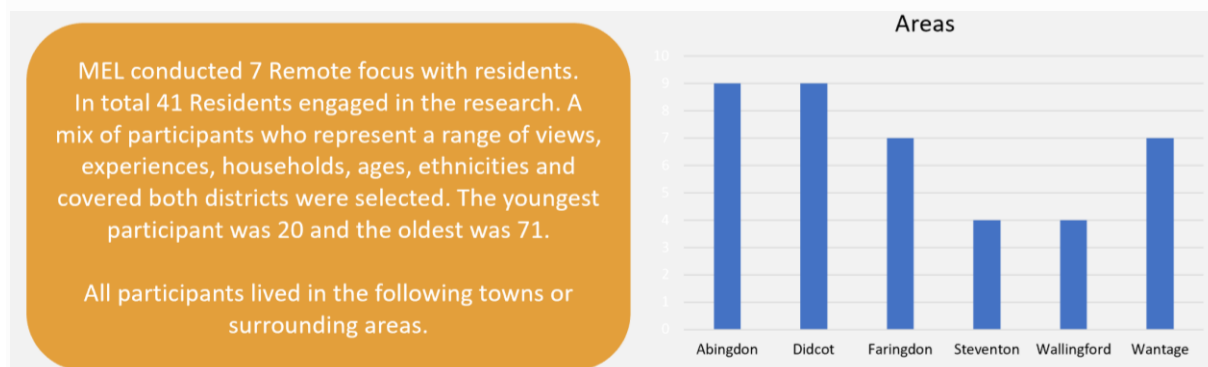
Information on what can be recycled and where it goes after it is collected is very important. The perceived 'messy' nature of food waste collections suggests that some communications work could be undertaken to increase the number of residents that actively engage in the food caddie system.

There is enthusiasm for text, email and other online communication methods, and there is some support for revisiting bin configurations.

Full report is [here](#)

## Further consultation

Between October and December 2023, a series of focus groups were held to test residents' views on the wider role of waste and what appetite there may be for doing things differently. This was undertaken by independent consultancy firm, MEL Research.



A series of questions were asked and open discussion between participants noted. With such a range of voices there were, as expected, differing perspectives. MEL attempted to highlight the main participant responses, and these were as follows –

## Top Line Findings: Residents



The current service does seem to be popular, reflecting the responses received to the annual resident survey. Convenience was reported as the top priority for residents and there was anxiety amongst those taking part about being asked to do more.

Improvements in communicating recycling messages (what, how and why), including a simplification of the language used and more opportunities for those seeking to do more, was popular. Interestingly there was a lot of concern, particularly from those with families, on having sufficient capacity in their bins. Some participants did not use the food waste collection service at all.

Full report is [here](#)

## Capacity audit

In late October 2023 and early January 2024 an audit of 2,000 green and black wheeled bins was undertaken from various locations across both districts. The aim was to establish how full bins were when presented for collection. This is a different measure than weight, with some materials, such as cardboard being light but taking up lots of room in residents' bins. As waste collection systems need to provide sufficient space in the bins offered to accommodate the waste generated, this information can help inform potential future changes.

In summary the key findings were:

- In both October and January, the dry recycling bins were fuller than the non-recyclable waste bins by 5-10 per cent on average
- The non-recyclable waste bins had very similar levels of available capacity in October and January
- The recycling bins had less available capacity in January than in October.

The results of the audit indicate that with no changes to materials collected or behaviours, nearly half of residents would struggle to cope with three-weekly non-recyclable waste collection (60L weekly capacity). However, compositional analysis from March 2023 suggested that 30 per cent by weight of the contents of non-recyclable waste bins could be removed and recycled at kerbside. If this 30 per cent was removed by residents, and we see a further 5 per cent drop in non-recyclable waste volumes due to the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility and the Deposit Return Scheme, then significantly more residents could cope with 60L per week capacity. This could mean it's viable to extend the time between non-recyclable waste collections.

Full findings are [here](#).

## **Commercial factors**

Following years of austerity, the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis, it is vital that any future service provision takes into account the commercial and financial situation faced by households and the councils.

## **Local government finances**

The Council's total budgeted cost for providing waste services is currently around £15m a year. That works out at just under two pounds per week, per household.

## **Model of service provision**

Since 2009 the service has been operated through a 15 year contract with the waste company Biffa. In 2023 an additional two-year extension was agreed, which begins in 2024 and will conclude in June 2026.

The contract has been considered good value to the councils. It has delivered high recycling rates and relatively high customer satisfaction. However, it must end in June 2026 for legal reasons related to competition and therefore, as a minimum, the councils will need to replace this contract. The councils are taking the opportunity to review all options available to provide this service post 2026. The councils can also decide the most appropriate mechanism by which the services will be provided after that time.

This decision is an operational one that is not part of this strategy. However, the emphasis on the type of provision to be developed in line with this strategy, will influence the decision taken and how the services will be provided beyond June 2026.

## **The commercial provision of waste and street cleansing services**

The waste and street cleansing service has enjoyed a long period of relative service consistency, having been operated by Biffa since 2009. However, 2024 does not place local authorities, nor the waste industry, within the same operating environment as 2009.

A decade ago, the councils were several years into what was still a relatively new contract, and a far more settled waste environment.

What is collected, how, by whom, using what system and to what standard, are all now more prescriptive and shifting. In addition to an overall increase in complexity for waste and street cleansing, the value to the private sector of waste collection contracts has also changed.

## **The state of play of the waste industry**

At the turn of the century, around the time that Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) were, both nationally and with some local authorities, a favoured option for large

infrastructure projects, there was significant opportunity, and investment, within the waste industry.

Energy capture from incineration was replacing landfill as the preferred disposal solution, driven by escalating landfill tax charges.

Recycling markets were buoyant, helped by demand for the UK's recyclable material, largely from emerging manufacturing countries, in particular China.

By the time the Environment Bill was first proposed, in 2018, recycling rates had stagnated. Many destinations around the world were no longer accepting UK recycling, putting pressure on the market for recycled material, which still remains volatile. Pressure was also growing to move towards a more [circular economy](#) and to address the climate emergency.

From the perspective of the waste industry, energy recovery remained a growth area, but with high fuel costs and pressure on wages, particularly from drivers, profit margins on collection contracts reduced. Some of the smaller operatives were taken over, leaving a smaller number of 'big players'.

There remains industry interest in local authority waste collection contracts but some of the enthusiasm has dwindled with drops in achievable profit margins.

Operating costs for re-processing have also become a factor. The sorting facilities are increasingly sophisticated in handling co-mingled recyclate but are not able to capture everything. The Reject Stream contains items incorrectly placed in recycling bins, or not identified by the machinery or hand pickers. This can make up to ten percent of the waste handled at Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs). Through a combination of 'WishCycling' which is where people hope that a wider range of items are captured than is actually possible, and through increases in the cost of machinery, power and labour, the capture and separation, from co-mingled recycling bins, remains practically and financially challenging.

Looking forward to 2028, the Emissions Trading Scheme, based on carbon, will be extended to include energy from waste plants (incineration). This is likely to have a similar effect as the Landfill tax has had. That is to further incentivise waste minimisation, by making the cost of disposal financially challenging for local authorities and businesses.

[More detail can be found here](#)

## **Wider corporate and environmental aspirations**

### **Local strategic commitments**

There are number of existing local drivers relevant to waste and important to consider within the strategic context.

The councils' Corporate Objectives, at the time this strategy was written, include:

#### **South Oxfordshire:**

- Protect and restore our natural world
- Action on climate emergency
- Improved economic and community well-being

#### **Vale of White Horse:**

- Tackling the climate emergency
- Building healthy communities
- Working in partnership

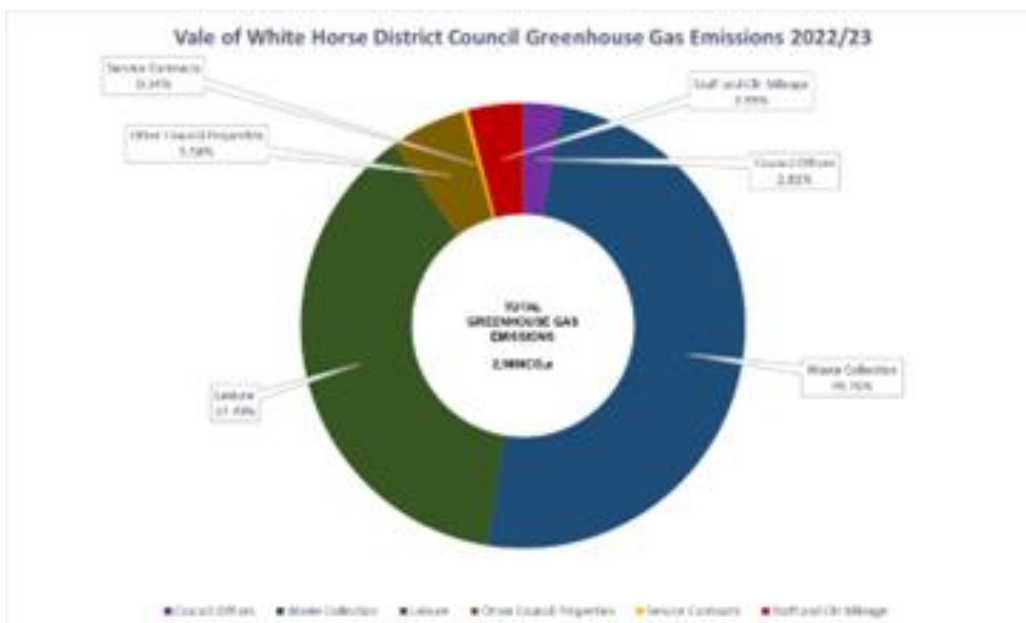
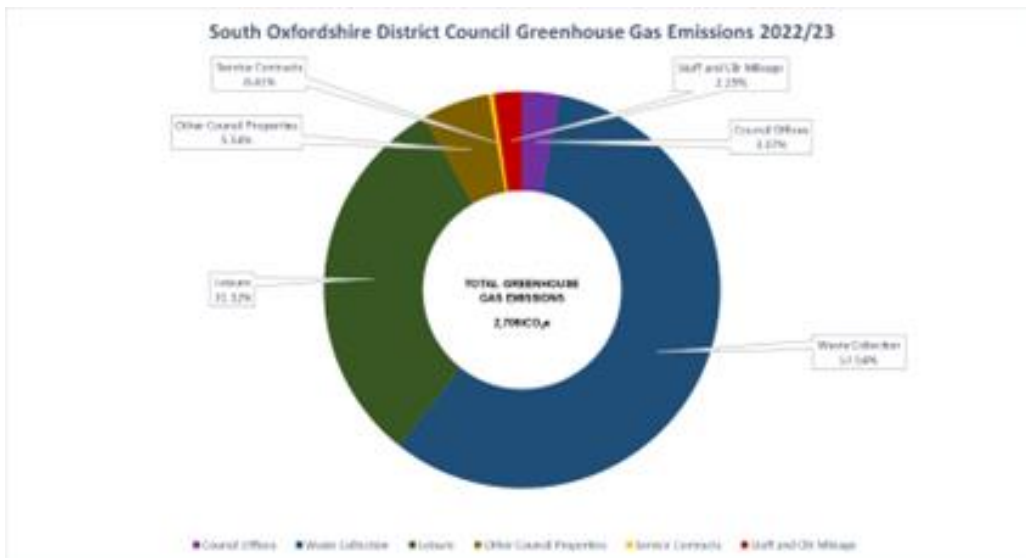
In addition to the strategic aims of both councils, there are strategic obligations within the [Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Oxfordshire](#). Through which the districts, as waste collection authorities, agree how best to work with the County, which acts as the waste disposal authority.

Oxfordshire's Resources and Waste strategy has been developed on behalf of all Oxfordshire's local authorities, working through the Oxfordshire Resource and Waste Partnership (ORWP). The strategy ran from 2018-2023 and has not yet been replaced with a new strategy. There is a Waste Prevention Strategy being developed through the ORWP. It is currently in draft form but looks likely to fit well with some of the work themes within this strategy.

### **Carbon reduction targets**

Both councils declared Climate Emergencies in 2019. The councils have set stretching targets to reduce carbon emissions in their own operations and across the districts and have prepared detailed Climate Action Plans. Further information can be found on the [Vale](#) and [South](#) websites. Our aims are to be carbon neutral councils and to play a leading role in working with residents and businesses to become carbon neutral districts too.

Waste collection is the biggest contributor to the councils' own carbon emissions as shown in the charts below. This is largely due to the fuels consumed by the waste collection vehicles.



Essential to this strategy are the opportunities to reduce carbon emissions across the districts. To help tackle these challenges, the councils have worked with other partner councils in Oxfordshire to prepare an Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan.

One of the priority areas for joint action countywide is to address ‘embodied’ carbon emissions. These are the emissions created during the manufacture and distribution of the goods and services bought, often arising in other countries. Total embodied emissions from all the goods consumed are estimated to be greater than the direct carbon emissions created locally from our homes, businesses, and travel.

As a society, we can do more to reduce embodied carbon emissions by buying less, using goods for longer, repairing and recycling which will all contribute to reducing consumption and reducing waste. These actions together create a ‘circular economy’ and set the context for this Waste Strategy document.

More on this [Here](#)

## Consolidated learning

This strategy has identified the key factors that will impact on local waste services going forward. These are:

- The need to keep a tight control of the significant costs required to deliver the best possible waste collection services. This includes managing within the available budgets for the district councils, as well as recognising the difficult financial position faced by many residents.
- Because of new legislation in the Environment Act, the composition of the waste collected will change. The way the collection service is funded will also change. This will provide opportunities to collect waste differently.
- The need to revisit operating arrangements and to seek out new waste contracts and infrastructure is urgently required. It will provide the chance to consider what specifications the waste service should operate to going forwards.
- Because of the Climate Emergency, moving waste up the waste hierarchy and de-carbonising the waste vehicles will play a crucial role in helping both districts in achieving their net-zero goals.

### Implications

Having consulted with councillors, residents and other stakeholders over what are desirable as well as achievable actions going forward, several things are clear:

- Change is both inevitable and essential to deliver an efficient, low carbon service, that adapts to changes in waste materials and waste volumes.
- The waste service, in particular kerbside collection services, are valued and should continue to be delivered in a way that remains easy and effective.
- To push waste up the waste hierarchy, the councils will need to go beyond directly delivered services and better work with residents and communities on waste and street cleansing initiatives.

### Conclusion

This direction of travel is clear.

The councils will move towards a waste service that is de-carbonising, provides value for money and better works with residents to push items further up the Waste Hierarchy.



This is reflected in the themes and work areas outlined within the next section of this strategy.

## Themes and work areas

Based upon the consolidated learning, a number of key themes have been identified.

These, along with the Waste Hierarchy, are listed below and are used to reference the work areas the councils will consider, in taking waste and street cleansing services forward.

### Themes

#### **Household waste collection**

1. Support residents to reduce waste and move the waste they do produce up the waste hierarchy.
2. Maximise the visibility and clarity of education messages on sustainability.
3. Support residents to maximise the value and lifespan they get from their goods.
4. Where items must be disposed of, have the most appropriate collection system, getting as many of the items that can be recycled into the recycling stream.
5. Recycle and process materials in the most cost effective and sustainable way.

#### **Street cleansing**

6. Reduce litter through a localised, community-driven approach.
7. Reduce fly tipping.
8. Clean streets in partnership with and sensitive to, local needs.

#### **From the Waste Hierarchy -**

**Reduce waste (change buying and disposal habits)**

**Reuse (repair, refill, repurpose, re-home)**

**Recycle (capture the value in the resource)**

**Recover (retain and use for energy recovery)**

The themes and the way they relate to the waste hierarchy, for waste collection and then street cleansing are supplemented with work areas in the following tables.

**Note:** For disposal, which is at the bottom of the waste hierarchy, no actions have been included. This is because this strategy seeks to minimise disposal, proposing positive actions to move waste up the waste hierarchy.

## Household waste collection

<b>Theme: Support residents to reduce waste</b>
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce</b>
Work Area: Support residents to make the most of non-recyclable waste bin capacity
Why? Not everyone is aware of the many options other than using their non-recyclable waste bin for general waste disposal. Residents may not be clear on what items could or should be placed within them. Some residents may not be trying to properly separate out recycling from non-recycling. By re-doubling efforts to offer bin audits with residents, by better targeting messaging on the materials most often incorrectly or unnecessarily put into non-recyclable waste bins, and by better targeting those not joining with their neighbours in complying with the kerbside collection system, we can encourage further waste reduction.
Work Area: Implement a 'bin half full' campaign to reduce unnecessary collections
Why? By encouraging residents not to present bins that do not need emptying it reduces the number of black bins being collected, giving carbon and cost savings.
Work Area: Further model a move towards a three/two/one kerbside collection system. Weekly food waste, fortnightly recycling and three weekly non-recyclable waste collection.
Why? Non-recyclable waste makes up only around 20% of all waste in the black bin. With changes such as the packaging reforms on the way, the amount of non-recyclable waste, per household, will reduce further. A move to this collection system is a proven way to 'nudge residents' towards reducing their waste. With fewer journeys for our waste vehicles it saves on carbon and costs.
<b>Theme: Support residents to maximise the value and lifespan that they get from their goods.</b>
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce</b>
Work Area: Bulky waste collections could be sorted, with reusable items passed on for reuse. This service (successfully trialled in 2014-15) will be revisited.
Why? Everything that is currently collected at the kerbside, as a part of the bulky waste service, is sent to landfill. However, there are items that are collected that still have a value. Sorting out what can be salvaged and keeping it in circulation would be an environmental win.

Work Area: Improve and promote online resources to provide far more than waste collection arrangements.

Why? Increasingly the public search online for solutions for items they no longer want, or to reduce the amount they buy new to begin with. To reduce waste overall and to keep items in circulation for longer, the digital platforms the council uses and promotes need to improve.

**Theme: Maximise the visibility and clarity of messages on sustainability**

**Waste Hierarchy: Reduce**

Work Area: Highlight zero-waste champions.

Why? Marketing research suggests that the public respond best to people within their communities able to deliver waste reduction. Supporting and highlighting the work of zero-waste champions therefore spreads best practice and real-world examples of what can be achieved in driving down waste.

Work Area: Revisit side-waste, overflowing and second bin policies and expectations.

Why? Whilst most residents are conscientious about correct use of their bins, some are abusing the system by having additional black bins or presenting bins that are overflowing. Systems to avoid this will be tightened.

Success will look like:

- Reduction in overall waste arisings, as annual tonnage per household
- Increase in the number of residents accessing online information and support
- Undertaking more doorstep communication, particularly about bin contents, with residents.

**Theme: Support residents to reduce waste**

**Waste Hierarchy: Reuse**

Work Area: Work with communities on share and borrow-based solutions for items used infrequently.

Why? There are several things, such as extra crockery for a party or a particular tool for gardening, that may only be used once a year. Rather than every household having to purchase, store and maintain such items, setting up a local loan store, a 'library of things' saves residents money and reduces the overall amount of unnecessary items in circulation.

Work Area: Supporting existing refill stations or help develop new ones.

Why? Most of the time when purchasing anything from soft drinks to washing up liquid the packaging comes with the product. With many bottles, particularly plastic ones, being able to be used hundreds of times, it makes more environmental sense to refill the same container multiple times.

**Theme: Support residents to maximise the value and lifespan that they get from their goods.**

## Waste Hierarchy: Reuse

Work Area: Instil donating/re-selling as the go-to option for residents

Why? The purchase, use, dispose cycle of unsustainable consumption needs to change. This means encouraging residents to buy/sell pre-loved items and to re-home items they no longer want. This will save residents money and reduce the strain on the environment.

Work Area: Support bring-and-take events.

Why? Whilst many people put items in front of their dwellings with a sign offering it 'for free', promotion of this by the council is problematic within the waste regulations and for safety reasons. However, organised events where items can be bought to a local venue and then collected, provide great opportunities to both get rid of unwanted stuff and to pick up useful items for free.

Work Area: Supporting existing community repair solutions, often called repair cafes, or help develop new ones.

Why? Encouraging residents to repair damaged or broken items so that they can be used for longer rather than throwing away.

Success will look like:

- An overall increase in number of community events supported
- Improved online presence, with more information available on moving waste up the waste hierarchy, and increased access to information by residents
- An increase in proportion of residents reporting reuse as their go-to option in the annual waste survey.

**Theme: Where items must be disposed of, have the most appropriate collection system, getting as many of the items that can be recycled into the recycling stream.**

## Waste Hierarchy: Recycle

Work Area: Consider the removal of glass from the Dry Mixed Recycling. Should separate glass collection prove to deliver environmental and financial benefits, it could be implemented.

Why? After the dry mixed recycling (green bin) has been collected it goes to a sorting facility. This separates out the different materials ready to recycle them back into metal, plastic and paper products.

Glass is the most challenging material to manage at the sorting facilities. It breaks into shards that shred conveyor belts. Because it is mixed with so many other materials, the quality of the glass extracted means it is of low value. As the broken glass gets into other material streams, it also lowers the recyclability and value of the materials it is mixed with. Contrast this with the high carbon cost required to melt glass and there is a case to be further explored, as a part of an effective recycling service, for the councils to consider a separate kerbside glass collection service.

Work Area: Better capture textiles, household batteries and WEEE items at the kerbside
Why? Compositional analysis shows that up to 31% of the contents of the non-recyclable waste bin currently contains items that should have been presented separately for collection as recycling. Removing these items will reduce the overall amount of waste sent for incineration. In addition, WEEE can be hazardous, containing minerals damaging to the environment and if still containing batteries, a fire hazard.
Work Area: Revisit the advice for planning on necessary provision within new build properties and for the conversion of existing properties.
Why? As we move from simply presenting waste towards better sorting and salvaging it, the space requirements for the right bins and, in communal properties, adequate shared facilities, is integral to maximising recycling.
<b>Theme: Support residents to reduce waste</b>
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Recycle</b>
Work Area: Provide more information on what can and cannot be recycled.
Why? What is recyclable, either at the kerbside or any other location is not straightforward. It can depend on its exact composition and if there is a market for the material. Providing detailed and up-to-date advice, with new materials and packaging configurations entering the market, the councils will continue to act as an authority on what can be recycled at the kerbside, at OCC's 'tips' (Household Waste Recycling Centres) and elsewhere.
<b>Theme: Maximise the visibility and clarity of messages on sustainability</b>
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Recycle</b>
Work Area: Support home and community composting
Why? For residents with gardens, there are a range of ways to recycle food and garden waste through composting at home. This reduces the emissions from collection vehicles and can enhance soil biodiversity. The councils will therefore support those revisiting how they garden. For those without home composting options, the councils will work with local town and parish councils and community groups to find ways of supporting community composting.
Work Area: Better promote understanding of what happens to recycling once collected.
Why. Evidence from the waste survey shows residents are unsure of the huge and complex work that is undertaken to make certain that maximum value is captured from the recycling they present. This is important in showing the scale of the recycling industry and the importance of presenting clean and correct recycling to aid the process of material separation and value.
Work Area: Engage with schools on spreading best practice in recycling as well as using the waste hierarchy.
Why? Schools are a good forum through which to spread best practice. Schools will be required to collect the same recyclable streams as residents are from 2025.

Work Area: Work with waste service crews to better engage with residents on waste collection services
Why? As frontline staff the bin crews are the public face for the waste collection service. Where possible, with training, incentives for crews and other support, they can be encouraged to play a more active role in supporting correct material separation from the waste and recycling residents present.
Work Area: Better engagement with developers and new home owners
Why? Bulk delivery of bins, leaflets and improved information for new home owners to enable residents to use the collection service correctly.

Success will look like:

- Recycling rate of 70% by 2030
- Reduction in contamination of dry mixed recycling through reducing the amount of recycling rejected at the MRF from 8% to 5%
- The public better understands onward journey of collected recycling.

<b>Theme: Support residents to reduce waste</b>
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Recover</b>
Work Area: A food waste focus. To reduce, but also to maximise capture rates.
Why? Food is one of the largest components within the black bin. Whilst it can be messy and challenging to separate out food waste and ensure as much as possible is not wasted or is placed into the food waste bin, more can be done. We want to waste as little as possible, while capturing for energy and compost as much as possible.
<b>Theme: Recycle and process materials in the most cost effective and sustainable way.</b>
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Recover</b>
Work Area: Work with OCC, as the disposal authority, on compositional analysis of disposal streams.
Why? Oxfordshire County Council, as the disposal authority, takes the non-recyclable, garden and food waste from the council for processing. Food and non-recyclable waste are used to generate electricity. To do this requires the right material mix. Whilst energy recovery does not sufficiently offset the environmental impacts, the councils will work with OCC to understand and support efficient waste recovery, as well as finding ways to reduce the overall amount presented for processing this way.
Work Area: Enhance access to recovered compostable material in the form of the annual compost give-away.
Why? This is a popular example of recovering some of the value from material sent for processing and a good way to engage with residents in the 'recover' theme.

Work Area: Procure the best services, where possible the closest to collection, for re-processing of all waste streams
Why? It is not just the kerbside collection itself that affects costs and environmental impacts. Having efficient, good value and locally based destinations matters and requires a strong focus on understanding the markets, the options available and securing the right contracts.
Work Area: Investigate identifying bins to best use technology in waste collections and material capture.
Why? This will enable more cost-effective administration of waste, specifically garden waste, by streamlining collection service operations

Success will look like:

- Reduction in the weight of non-recyclable waste per household per year.

## The Street Cleansing Service

<b>Theme: Reduce litter through a localised, community-driven approach</b>
Work Area: Following the audit of current litter bin provision the councils will develop a strategic approach to placement, replacement, and refurbishment.
Why? Bins should be best placed for use by the public, to capture litter and maximise service efficiency. Clearer knowledge of where bins are located and new mechanisms to report on overfilled or damaged bins will provide environmental and cost benefits.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Recover</b>
Work Area: Review existing 'on the go' recycling bins in town centres.
Why? To reduce non-recyclable waste, reduce littering of recyclable items and encourages more recycling.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Recycle</b>
Work Area: Encourage separated collection of recyclable and non-recyclable street litter, in addition to what is collected in street litter bins.
Why? A lot of what is dropped as litter is recyclable. Plastic and aluminium drink containers may become less frequently seen as a result of the introduction of the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS). However, the DRS will not cover glass bottles, nor paper and card. The councils will therefore look to better extract recyclable items from litter, to retain these as resources.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Recycle</b>
Work Area: Work with residents, community groups, businesses, and schools to help them improve the look and feel of the districts.
Why? Spread the message to respect and care for a clean, litter-free environment for everyone to enjoy.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Reuse Recycle</b>
Work Area: Look to increase support for volunteer litter picking.
Why? Working with partners such as parish councils and community groups to support and celebrate local ownership of street cleansing
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Recover</b>

Work Area: Develop a strategic approach to placement, replacement, and refurbishment of signage to discourage littering and to direct the public to where bins are located.
Why? To deter people from dropping litter, and to ensure they know where to correctly place litter, including dog waste
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Recover</b>
Work Area: Better understanding street litter composition, particularly from single use electrical devices containing batteries, such as vapes, to amend provision accordingly.
Why? Most litter collected currently goes as non-recycling. It is likely to contain a range of recyclable material, as well as dangerous and environmentally harmful items from small electrical devices. Understanding what is disposed of 'on the go' and adjusting provision, and/or messaging about safe provision, will be important in capturing resources and reducing environmental damage
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Recycle Recover</b>
Work Area: Easier bin identification for the public, for reporting purposes
Why? Helping residents contact the councils with specific locations of damaged or overflowing bins will lead to less 'wind-blown' litter, reducing clean-up costs and damage to the environment.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce</b>
Work Area: The councils provide waste service support to high profile events. These events need to prepare more effectively 'up-stream' so that prior to the event, the councils and event organisers are able to better plan the waste management systems to be used.
Why? With waste less about removing rubbish and more about capturing resources, waste management plans prior to events will ensure that events deliver minimal waste and carbon usage, and maximise recycling and reuse in the future.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Reuse Recycle Recover</b>

Success will look like:

- Increased capture of recyclable material from litter
- Increased number of community litter picks and community champions.

<b>Theme: Tackle fly tipping more effectively</b>
Work Area: Use the councils enforcement resources where they are needed
Why? Targeting priority areas is the most efficient use of resources
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Recover</b>
Work Area: Use of surveillance technology to discourage littering and fly tipping and to catch offenders
Why? To capture evidence of waste crime and maximise the chance of conviction.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce</b>
Work Area: Improve issue reporting processes via the councils' websites or through use of apps and social media channels
Why? To make reporting problems easier for residents.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Recover</b>



Work Area: Better explain to residents the need to check waste carrier licences, or to gain other assurances from those offering waste removal services
Why? Reputable waste carriers should be legitimate licenced operatives. Checking that the waste residents pay to have independently removed is not then going to be fly tipped, helps stop fly tipping at source. It also means that reputable waste carriers are more likely to capture any value in the items they dispose of, helping the reuse and recycling agenda.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Reuse Recycle</b>
Work Area: Review, and update if necessary, signage at fly tipping hotspots
Why? Clear signage, including information on potential fines is a deterrent to would-be fly tippers
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce</b>
Work Area: Education and communication to deter perpetrators and to encourage collaborative work with residents
Why? This matters for several reasons. Highlighting the alternative options available, such as the bulky waste service, reduces environmental damage and may see items that can be reused kept in circulation for longer. Good information can work as a deterrent, through explaining the risks from prosecution. Local information can be key in identifying perpetrators. There is also an opportunity to demonstrate other disposal routes that may result in reuse and recycling.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Reuse Recycle</b>

Success will look like:

- Increased proportion of cases brought to trial
- Public perception of fly tipping as an issue reduced.

<b>Theme: Clean streets in partnership with local communities, and sensitive to, local needs.</b>
Work Area: Develop a targeted and managed approach to street cleansing using a new system
Why? To provide a simple and effective performance measuring system, increase operational effectiveness and benchmark performance against other local authorities.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Reuse Recycle Recover</b>
Work Area: Revise current fast road cleansing requirements and arrangements
Why? Modern safety standards, coupled with increased traffic has made regular cleansing on roads with fast moving traffic, a specialist and expensive undertaking. To continue to deliver to the high standards expected may require service suspension at lower priority locations and/or the occasional agreement to buy-in services that specialise in road closures, delivering the additional safety requirements necessary to keep key arterial routes cleansed. There is also a key role with partners at the county level that will be strengthened.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Recover</b>
Work Area: Improve response to seasonal issues – leaf fall, flooding etc
Why? Service management that is sensitive to seasonal events can capture key blockages and maintain good overall year-round cleansing standards
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Recover</b>

Work Area: Greater partnership engagement. Work to develop a localised approach to street cleansing with parish councils and/or with community organisations to maintain key locations. To consider signing to encourage the sometimes more sustainable approach of asking the public to take litter home with them.
Why? The more local an organisation is, the greater the likelihood it understands and can support cleansing needs specific to the area it represents.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Recycle Recover</b>
Work Area: Better reporting of problem areas through multiple channels with feedback supplied
Why? Many elements of the street cleansing service are intelligence-led. By looking again at the ways in which information is received and responded to, will improve both services and public relations
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Recover</b>
Work Area: Where feasible, adopt new cleansing technologies to enhance performance
Why? New innovations in the equipment available for street cleansing regularly come onto the market. To be pro-active in looking at these and to run price, efficiency, and carbon impact assessments against each, to deliver cleaner streets and the districts wider corporate objectives
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Recover</b>
Work Area: Developing a partnership approach to tackle fly-posting
Why? A countywide approach will provide clearer public information on the dos and don'ts of fly-posting. This will allow for more efficient education and enforcement to tackle the problem locally.
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce</b>
Work Area: Evaluating a district wide approach to tackle dog fouling
Why? Nationally the introduction of Public Space Protections Orders and other measures has been an effective way to deter dog fouling. Exploring the feasibility of these orders within our own districts will determine their effectiveness to reduce dog fouling
<b>Waste Hierarchy: Reduce Recover</b>

Success will look like:

- More streets securing the highest standards of cleanliness, as described in the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse: Grade A - no detritus, and grade B - predominately free of detritus, except for some light scattering.

## Next steps

It's important to note that the work areas identified in this strategy are proposals for future action.

Some of these will be dependent on a legal view being established, funding secured, successful partnerships established and climate impact assessments completed.

Some of the proposals will need detailed financial and logistical modelling to be undertaken, to ensure viability.

Some will also be subject to further clarity from central government which may affect our ability to implement some of the actions proposed.

We will produce further detail in an annual waste service delivery plan.