



Committee	Cabinet
Date	05/03/2024
Subject	Simpler Recycling – Food Collections
Cabinet Member	Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment
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Key Decision?	Yes
Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN

Purpose/Summary

Government has legislated for Councils to align their waste and recycling services with new nationwide Simpler Recycling requirements by 31 March 2026. Suffolk councils already meet many of the requirements, but we will need to either provide new services or alter existing services to collect:

- Glass bottles and jars
- Cartons
- Food waste on a weekly basis
- Plastic film (by April 2027)

The capacity of the supply chain to meet unprecedented nationwide demand for specialist vehicles and bins is a major risk to meeting these requirements. Much of the Suffolk requirement for vehicles and bins will relate to introducing a new collection service for food waste, so Suffolk councils are being asked to take food service decisions by March 2024. Further final decisions on recycling and refuse service changes will need to be taken by early Summer 2024. However, guidance from Members in early 2024 will help Officers finalise the details and recommendations.

This report therefore outlines work to date and the proposed recommendations for food waste. It also seeks Members guidance on recycling and refuse service-related issues for decisions that will need to be made consistently and collectively across the Suffolk Waste Partnership (SWP).

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the introduction of a weekly separate food waste collection by 31 March 2026 to meet new statutory requirements.
2. Give delegated Authority to the Head of Operations, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for The Environment to agree and authorise a suitable procurement strategy, individually and/or collectively with partner councils, to deliver the necessary infrastructure in terms of vehicles, bins and material processing through New Burdens funding.
3. Agree to exploring cross-border service provision for food waste collections and implement if it is practicable and would deliver savings.

Strategic plan

How does this proposal support Our Direction 2028?

Environmental Impact	<p>Whilst introducing a new food waste collection service will boost recycling rates by removing around 10% - 15% of waste from the residual waste stream which currently goes to the EfW, we will also run a food waste reduction campaign to highlight the need to reduce food that is wasted – this will involve communication campaigns, liaison with community groups, education and so on.</p> <p>The new containers that will be required for the food waste collection service – kitchen caddies and external bins, will be procured with sustainability in mind, seeking products that best utilise recycled materials and will provide longevity in service.</p> <p>The new vehicles required will all have Euro VI engines, enabling them to use HVO fuel which reduces emissions and has made a significant contribution to reducing ESC's carbon footprint when introduced in the rest of the heavy fleet.</p> <p>Home Composting will also be promoted, highlighting the SWP media campaign that we are involved with and the various options available to residents.</p>
Sustainable Housing	N/A
Tackling Inequalities	N/A
Thriving Economy	<p>Around 40 new jobs will be created when introducing the new food waste collection service, both drivers and loaders. There will be an opportunity for ESSL to develop existing staff, e.g. training for LGV II licence.</p>
Our Foundations / governance of the organisation	N/A

Justification for recommendations

1. Background

- 1.1. In December 2018 Government published its Resources and Waste Strategy (RAWS). This was the first national review of waste policy for over 10 years, and aims to reduce waste, improve recycling and support the development of a circular economy. A key element of the Strategy is collection and packaging reform: providing nationwide consistency in recycling collections and driving reduction and improved recyclability of packaging through extended producer responsibility. The Suffolk Waste Partnership (SWP), which is a partnership of Suffolk's County, District and Borough councils, welcomed this publication and is unequivocal in its support of its overarching aims.
- 1.2. Government subsequently consulted on various RAWS policies in 2019 and 2021, and in November 2021, the Environment Act 2021 was passed, providing the legislative basis through which the strategic waste reforms will be enacted.
- 1.3. Until recently, the Government's policy position indicated that the mixing (or comingling) of all recyclable materials in one recycling bin, especially the comingling of glass and paper, would not be permitted in order to preserve the quality and value of collected materials for recycling into new products. However, the recently published Simpler Recycling response does not prevent the mixing/comingling of materials for recycling.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. The recently published Simpler Recycling policy has nationwide requirements to improve recycling required by the Environment Act 2021. To comply with these requirements, the Council must:
 - 2.1.1. Food Waste – introduce a weekly separate collection of food waste from domestic households by 31 March 2026.
 - 2.1.2. Dry Recycling – increase the range of recyclable materials collected separately at the kerbside, adding glass bottles and jars, and cartons by 31 March 2026; and flexible plastics (e.g. bread bags, plastic films etc) by 31 March 2027. This will require changes to the existing kerbside recycling collections services.
- 2.2. The most pressing issue is that of food waste. To achieve the Government requirements on time, it is vital that Suffolk councils take decisions by March 2024 relating to the introduction of a food collection service. This will allow the procurement of required service assets (vehicles, bins etc) to commence. A prompt decision is required as lead times for manufacture of food collection vehicles are currently estimated at 12 - 18 months and will likely increase as further councils nationwide place orders to introduce new services. Options are very limited, and officers are recommending a separate food collection service.
- 2.3. Further final decisions on recycling and refuse service changes will need to be taken by early Summer 2024. A further report will be presented to Cabinet with the details and recommendations.

3. Proposal

- 3.1. The Government has set a clear legal requirement for Councils to introduce a separate weekly collection of food waste from all households by 31 March 2026.
- 3.2. This means householders will be asked to separate their food waste into a council-provided food bin (of approx. 23 litres in size) and leave it at the kerbside or curtilage of their property for collection. A further caddy (approx. 5 litres) will also be provided to householders for use in the kitchen. This provides the householder with somewhere to store food waste in the short term and helps improve collection yields.
- 3.3. All of the collection service options are based upon council waste collection teams then emptying the material from these bins into a specific food waste collection vehicle, with the exception of kerbside sort options. Kerbside sort options are the most expensive and risky, as they rely heavily on higher secondary material income to offset costs. They also require the most bins per property, vehicles and staff. It is therefore proposed that these options are rejected.
- 3.4. Across the whole of Suffolk we expect to need 40-50 new food waste collection vehicles. With current lead times on separate food collection vehicles estimated at 12 - 18 months, and further pressure on the supply chain anticipated, all Suffolk councils intend to take food service decisions by March 2024. This will allow up to two years for the procurement, production and delivery of food waste vehicles and bins.

Food Waste Disposal / Treatment

- 3.5. The SWP undertook food waste market research in 2022 and established that strong market interest exists for the processing of Suffolk collected food waste and the mostly likely technical solution would be through Anaerobic Digestion. This work, supported by Defra's 'Waste Infrastructure Delivery Programme' (WIDP), also concluded that the best value solution for the processing of collected food would be through a market driven procurement.
- 3.6. Disposal routes that produce compost are difficult and expensive due to the presence of cooked food within the food waste stream – composting plants generally rely on green waste but can sometimes include food peelings etc. i.e. raw plant matter. Cooked food introduces bacteria and pathogens to the mix that need to be dealt with using specialist techniques which make the process economically unviable.
- 3.7. Compost produced this way is generally only graded as soil improver, which is used on farms etc. It is not the same products as offered for sale in garden centres.
- 3.8. As the Waste Disposal Authority, Suffolk County Council would undertake the food processing procurement with support from all SWP Councils.
- 3.9. The procurement process would probably split the service down by geographic collection areas or District/Borough specific lots. This would allow potential bidders to offer a whole county solution or bid for the materials from a particular area/District/Borough. A similar approach to procurement has previously been adopted for garden waste composting facilities.
- 3.10. In addition to the need for new food waste treatment, SWP councils will need localised delivery points for the collected food waste. Suffolk County Council has begun work to assess the changes that will be required at transfer stations. The planning and

construction timescales for these infrastructure changes are another reason that food service decisions need to be taken promptly.

- 3.11. Local solutions for disposal will always be investigated, looking at the benefits of reducing carbon emissions via the proximity principle.

Outstanding Food Services Issues

- 3.12. Vehicle types – The SWP has created an officer working group to finalise the size and number of food waste collection vehicles which will be required. There are two main types under consideration, a 7.5 tonne and an 11-tonne vehicle. Different sizes may be better suited to an urban or rural environment. The expectation is that this work will be completed by March 2024 to align with the suggested procurement timetable.
- 3.13. Vehicle routes - The same group is also looking at potential routing solutions for any new food collection service. The work is again expected to be completed by March 2024 and is looking at two main scenarios:
- 3.13.1. Existing border solutions – how many vehicles and of what size will be required for each Council to collect food waste from all properties in its area.
 - 3.13.2. Cross border solution – how many vehicles and of what size will be required across Suffolk to collect food waste from all properties using vehicles from the nearest depot. For example, could savings be generated by serving some Babergh or East Suffolk properties from the Ipswich depot?
- 3.14. Bin Colours – the Simpler Recycling requirements offer an opportunity to align bin colours across Suffolk. As such, work is underway to identify what bin/caddy colour would be best for any new food waste service. By identifying a single countywide colour preference, that doesn't cause confusion with other waste and recycling service provision, we can simplify and improve public communications both during the service roll out and in future years. This work will also need to be completed by March 2024.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. Simpler Recycling aims to significantly improve recycling services as well as introduce nationwide consistency. Government has committed that the additional requirements will be funded in two ways: all costs relating to packaging waste and recycling costs will be met through packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) payments from packaging producers; and all other new requirements on councils will be funded by Government under the New Burdens doctrine. East Suffolk Council has been allocated a total of £2,367,763 under New Burdens Funding – this is to cover the capital costs of purchasing vehicles and containers.
- 4.2. £295m of New Burdens capital funding has been announced to support the purchase of new assets in England and Wales (e.g. food vehicles and bins) where food waste collections need to be introduced. This is likely to be allocated based on modelled costs and councils expect to receive this funding in the first quarter of 2024.
- 4.3. One-off transitional New Burdens revenue funding is also promised to support the introduction of food waste services, but at present no further detail is available. However, it should be noted that New Burdens is not expected to fund any required changes to existing waste infrastructure. This includes depots, transfer stations or the MRF.

- 4.4. Ongoing New Burdens revenue funding is also promised to support all councils' ongoing costs of operating food waste services. This is expected to be applied to the Revenue Support Grant from April 2026, but at present no further detail is available.
- 4.5. Under the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regime for packaging, Government is making producers responsible for the full net costs of the packaging waste materials they place on the market, shifting the cost of collection and recycling/disposal away from the public purse. Producers will be required to pay into a centrally administered fund. This fund will then pay councils to cover the full net cost of packaging collection and recycling/disposal.
- 4.6. Councils have been told that Government will provide authority-specific EPR payment forecasts by Autumn 2024 to assist with local budget setting. However, actual payments won't commence until late 2025 at the earliest, albeit backdated to cover the period from April 2025.
- 4.7. Officers have repeatedly pushed Government, both as part of consultation responses and during regular engagement, that the provision of funding information is critical. As such, decisions on service change will need to be taken without full clarity on funding.
- 4.8. In 2022 the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders group allocated £375,000 of joint funding to support the countywide coordination and collaborative delivery of this major service change. This is expected to fund programme management procurement oversight; expert advice such as collection round analysis; and some joint communications activity.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1. The introduction of a food waste collection service is a Statutory requirement, so failure to do so will be a breach of our Statutory duties.

6. Risk Implications

- 6.1. There is a risk that if we don't progress the project in good time then we may not be able to meet our Statutory duties within the specified timeframe.

7. Options

- 7.1. As the Simpler Recycling proposal is legislated by Government, there are no alternative options to implementation.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. That Cabinet Approve the introduction of a weekly separate food waste collection by 31 March 2026 to meet new statutory requirements.
- 8.2. That Cabinet gives delegated Authority to the Head of Operations, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for The Environment to agree and authorise a suitable procurement strategy, individually and/or collectively with partner councils, to deliver the necessary infrastructure in terms of vehicles, bins and material processing through New Burdens funding.
- 8.3. That Cabinet agree to exploring cross-border service provision for food waste collections and implement if it is practicable would deliver savings.

9. Reasons for Recommendations

- 9.1. This is a statutory requirement.
- 9.2. There is a specified timeframe that needs to be adhered to.
- 9.3. Allows officers to move the project forward and make decisions as required.
- 9.4. Allows officers to engage with external bodies, agencies, companies etc. to explore operational and procurement options.

10. Conclusions/Next Steps

- 10.1. As stated, several times, the introduction of a food waste collection service is a statutory requirement, so this project needs to be implemented and progressed. By starting as early as possible we give ourselves the best chance of implementing the service in the best possible state for residents.
- 10.2. To start modelling the new service which will inform the number of vehicles and staff that will be required for the new service.
- 10.3. To commence the procurement of new vehicles and containers once modelling has been concluded.
- 10.4. To begin putting together a communications campaign to inform residents and stakeholders.
- 10.5. To work with ESSL on the operational implementation and introduction of the new service.

Areas of consideration comments

Section 151 Officer comments:

The budget and funding requirements for capital costs will be determined once the procurement strategy is agreed and a separate Committee report will be required to allocate and approve the necessary capital budget.

Monitoring Officer comments:

No comments.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion/EQIA:

N/A

Safeguarding:

N/A

Crime and Disorder:

N/A

Corporate Services implications:

The introduction of the new service will impact and require the involvement of:

Finance – New Burdens Funding, ongoing budget implications.

Digital – Data for modelling.

Customer services – Communications campaign and resident engagement.

Procurement – New vehicles and containers.

Residents and Businesses consultation/consideration:

A full communications campaign will be run to inform residents and businesses of the new service and the implications of the service.

Appendices:

None.

Background reference papers:

None.