

## A review of all aspects of waste management in the district (Part 2)

*Councillor Louise Gooch*

**Q1:** How does ESC expenditure on waste management compare with our neighbouring counties of Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, and Essex?

**A1:** The authorities listed above are not collection authorities. County councils have responsibility for *disposal* of material – not collection. Collection is a district responsibility. In terms of finding comparable figures for collection costs – these are not publicly available, because they often relate to contractual arrangements between district councils and their operators.

In addition, the overall costs of collection are a function of the number of households in an area, and the proportion of urban versus rural rounds. Therefore – even if available – the overall figure would not be a useful one in terms of understanding the cost of collection per household.

**Q2:** To what does the team attribute the marked difference in recycling contamination and ‘gate’ rejections in the north and south of the district? Does the identification of two ‘rounds’ in Lowestoft largely cover this?

**A2:** The quality of materials collected initially for recycling, as identified by the rejection statistics is far better in the South, albeit in the North, more so Lowestoft, due to possibly being a more densely populated area, with higher levels of homes in multiple occupation

We have identified certain rounds in Lowestoft, due to the pre-sorting exercise, that collect excessive contaminated materials and will be addressing that through further engagement and education.

An ESC Recycling Campaign and Questionnaire is planned to be issued very soon, which may help us further to understand the locational variances with an financial incentive to take part.

**Q3:** Please could we have a map of the glass recycling points? Given the discrepancy in the numbers of banks in the north and south of the district, would it not make sense to even up this provision?

**A3:** Locations of sites available on our website [Recycling » East Suffolk Council](#) and SWP [Recycling bring banks - Suffolk Recycling](#). It should be noted that this tool is location based, i.e. it will show recycling points in the vicinity of the location entered, and that the

accuracy of these locations is under review. We currently do not have a map of the district showing those recycling points for which ESC is responsible, though we could investigate adding these as an additional overlay on our GGP/GIS mapping system available on our website.

**Q4:** What educational programmes are in place in our schools (particularly in areas of high deprivation and hidden needs) to help students and parents understand the financial costs of littering and fly-tipping?

**A4:** There are programmes that the Suffolk Waste Partnership run – which include organising visits to the MRF – including outreach in schools. These programmes focus on the environmental and social impacts of recycling and littering – rather than the financial impacts, which may not speak to the target audience. The council no longer have resources to run education programmes directly.

**Q5:** Should we not, as a district, consider promoting communication that quantifies the waste of money on waste to residents? This might make people think twice. (For example, what percentage of the council tax is spent on this clear-up?)

**A5:** It is considered that environmental messaging - focusing on the social and environmental impacts of littering - are more likely to change resident behaviour, than messages about cost to the council. Littering is not considered to be a result of people not understanding the financial impact – but not caring about the environmental cost of their action.

**Q6:** What follow through mechanism is there to ensure that waste materials shipped overseas for recycling are not simply dumped as contaminants as has been seen recently on broadcast reports on Turkey?

**A6:** It is Suffolk County Council's responsibility to ensure that their contractor – Viridor – have the necessary controls around the end destination of waste material once it leaves the MRF.

Suffolk's Local Authorities send the mixed recyclables they collect from households to a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) at Great Blakenham. The MRF is operated by Viridor, one of the UK's largest waste management companies.

Once at the MRF, these mixed recyclables are sorted into their individual material types (e.g. paper, plastics, steel cans etc) before being sent to reprocessors both in the UK and overseas.

Viridor only works with appropriately licensed facilities which satisfy its strict environmental procedures. Material is sold with the understanding that it is to become an "end of waste product". In addition, Viridor carries out compliance checks in all destinations to

ensure materials are being sent to an approved supplier.

**Q7:** Could we consider posting road signs on the gateway roads to the district, and the main towns, to remind drivers of the possibility of fixed penalty notices?

**A7:**

Around 2013/14 Highways permitted the SWP to display anti-litter messages on the Variable Messaging Signs situated along the A14 however in subsequent years Highways tightened their policy to only permit messages directly related to road traffic safety. This has been explored and any main roadside signage would have to be approved by Highways England, and in cases Suffolk Highways. Permitted signage is for safety and motoring directions / information. We have though succeeded in agreeing with Highways England to employ the use of the A road Variable Messaging signs to remind drivers not to litter.

**Q8:** Might we be able to add further guidance in planning consent in relation to the management of waste on private retail and commercial park developments?

**A8:** Provision for the storage of solid waste in new or converted buildings is already covered in broad terms by part H of the Building Regulations. Beyond ensuring the physical space is allocated for bin stores etc, planning controls (presumably by attaching conditions to planning consents pertaining to the frequency of bin-emptying and street sweeping/litter picking) would be an inappropriate and unnecessarily cumbersome way of seeking to control litter and waste management on private retail and commercial park developments when there are other, more specific legal provisions applicable to the problem.

**Q9:** Do we have regular litter-picker routes for Norse? If so, what is the location and frequency, and how is this managed?

**A9:** Schedule at the bottom of this document.

**Q10:** Would we consider paying beach wardens to monitor our beaches in the summer and issue on-the-spot fines to those who fail to observe our litter-free rules? (I am aware of a new advertising campaign on this, thanks to Cllr James Mallinder).

**A10:** Enforcing littering legislation on all land, including beaches, is part of the role of the 3 waste management enforcement officers who do schedule periodic visits to beaches during the summer season for this and other enforcement purposes.

*Cllr David Beavan*

**Q11:** What is the reason that glass is not allowed in recycling bins?

**A11:** Blue bin contents are sorted using a variety of equipment which separate out paper, plastics and metals. The automated handling to which the waste is subjected during these sorting processes would be liable to cause any glass in the waste to break, presenting a serious hazard to operatives and contaminating the end product, hence glass for recycling has to be processed entirely separately from the blue-bin stream. Glass collections are dealt with by a closed recycling mechanism and therefore it is important that this a separate collection.

**Q12:** How can we ensure that the capacity of glass recycling points correlates with the variable demand in our tourist hotspots, by number and regularity of emptying?

**A12:** Glass bottle banks can be requested by Town and Parish councils if there is a capacity or location specific requirement. The potential quantity of glass to be collected would also need to be assessed for economic viability. Added to this our collection partners – Norse and Indigo – can also suggest additional capacity, or additional collections that may be required. ESC work with town and parish councils to identify the frequency of collection, including in summer months.

**Q13:** Beach wardens - do we need environmental wardens for dog fouling as well as littering? Are we confident the beach wardens are fully effective?

**A13:** Enforcing the controls on dogs, including cleaning up, dog ban areas and dogs on leads areas, is part of the role of the 3 waste management enforcement officers who do schedule periodic visits to beaches during the summer season for this and other enforcement purposes.

**Q14:** With reference to paragraph 2.1 "The prime reason for gate rejects loads to be initially rejected is excessive moisture, typically due to rain or fluids, such as drinks / food etc." Would it help to have a drain hole in the bottom of recycling bins to discourage/reduce moisture content?

**A14:** Larger capacity wheeled skips are sometimes equipped with drain holes. However, these create convenient access and attractive harbourage for rats. We have asked for these to be bunged in the past, to help deal with rat infestations. Excluding water by proper management and keeping the lid closed is far more effective and desirable.

**Q15:** Paragraph 2.3 – (a) Is foil allowed or not? (b) Are there Tetrapak local collection points? (c) Are there Local Composting sites or anaerobic digesters for food waste? (d) How clean does recycled material need to be?

**A15:** (a) The specific items permitted in the recycling bin are provided on our website (see link) [guide\\_to\\_recycling\\_2020\\_\(with\\_translation\\_box\).pdf \(suffolkrecycling.org.uk\)](https://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk/guide_to_recycling_2020_(with_translation_box).pdf)

This includes foil, but not foil lined items, for example Pringles packaging which can't be processed.

(b) There are no local Tetrapak collection points, although the Household Waste Recycling Centres will accept them. The prime reason for not having local collection points is the processing cost and associated environmental considerations. The only recommended processing plant is in Halifax, and tetrapaks by their nature are light but take up a disproportionate amount of space meaning the tonnages transported to Halifax, in relation to the vehicle are low. The solution to these hard to recycle materials is to compel the producers of packaging – and food companies – to take responsibility for the costs of their recycling. This is a major feature of the new Resource and Waste Strategy – and is expected to see both funding for the recycling costs of tetrapaks being passed to local authorities, as well as an incentive for food producers to use materials that are more easy to recycle.

(c) We don't provide local composting / AD for food although we have promoted campaigns, through the SWP designed around reducing food waste, called Food Savvy (see link)

[Food waste - Suffolk Recycling](#)

Coupled with this there have been RCV banners highlighting reducing food waste

(d) The key messaging for Recycling materials are to be Clean, Loose and Dry, as provided for on our website and promoted accordingly.

*Cllr Caroline Topping*

**Q16:** Strategic Plan Priorities table: P03 Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk. Should we not be ticking the Secondary Priority box? A place which has civic pride should be encouraged as a unique selling point in ES?

**A16:** Yes – we can add tick this box on the report.

**Q17: P08 Maximising health, well-being, and safety in our District.** In my opinion, this should have been a Primary priority? Health and well-being whilst we enjoy our open spaces, our towns, our cemeteries, etc free from litter which allows the wildflowers to grow and be seen without being choked and obscured. Safety as in my experience the most picked up single item has changed from dog poo bags and takeaway packaging, to face masks. Surely a health hazard?

**A17:** The report writing guidelines stipulate that only one 'Primary priority' should be ticked. The breadth of the subject matter covered by the initial request for this scrutiny report means it is not possible to reflect all the corporate priorities it encompasses by reference to just one.

**Q18: T03 Maintaining Financial Sustainability.**

With this currently unknown cost for the new waste plan, we have to start being 'smarter'. If we can have grass cutting and litter picking schedules from Norse this would help with

- (a) The unfortunate side effect of our cutting teams not being able to litter pick an area before the cutters going in, hence the cutters then cut the litter that is in place up into smaller pieces causing more of a problem. I know the cutters do not want to leave the place in more of a littered mess than when they arrived, but what other choice do they have – can we schedule the litter pick before the cut?
- (b) Litter picking schedules would help as there is no sense in community litter picking groups going out and targeting the same areas as the Norse pickers. If we know where the Norse pickers are and on what days, we can do other areas and increase coverage?

**A18: Kerry/ Daniel**

- a) East Suffolk Council is aware that in the past, issues have been created by lack of coordination between litter and cutting teams – who are sometimes working for different councils. However since 2019, efforts have been made to improve communication between the ESC teams who are picking litter on verges and central reservations, and the teams working for Suffolk Highways who are cutting verges. This seems to have improved the coordination and reduced the number of incidents of 'strimming' litter on the roadside.
- b) The work of community groups and individual volunteers complements rather than replaces the work of the Norse teams – we do not see one at excluding the other. In many places, community volunteers are picking the same areas as Norse do, just more often. Litter removal is an ongoing battle – as soon as some is removed, more is added. Many community volunteers completely get this and some would prefer to pick something up now rather than wait even if they know Norse will be picking it next week. In addition, some volunteers particularly those who regularly pick the streets in their own neighbourhood may have the time and inclination to carry out more thorough litter picking removing very small items such as cigarette ends and fragments of plastic whereas the Norse crews may in some areas be under more pressure to remove the larger more visible items to cover more ground more quickly.

**Q19: Hangers on bins.** Is there another way? A temporary sticky label perhaps? As many hangers get blown off the bins before the homeowner sees them.

**A19:** We have used hangers to publicise collection timetables and recycling guidance for at least the past 15 years, and generally there are few issues with these. We have discussed phasing out hangers, and just running digital comms – however it is considered that the bin hanger, or a letter through the door (which is more time consuming) are the only way to reach all households. Depending on the timing of the release, we could also include the information in the new East Suffolk magazine.

We have also explored recyclable bin tags (as against Hangers) to inform the resident of a contaminated bin, although all materials reviewed have been confirmed as 'objectionable' for recycling by Viridor.

**Q20: Gate Rejects.** North 918 tons £50,308 compared to South 30 tons £1,639 – do we have plans for work in this regard?

**A20:** The key reason for the variance in these cases is to do with the difference in demographics in each area. Areas such as the North of the district, with higher numbers of homes in multiple occupation (HMOs) typically have higher levels of contamination in the recycling stream. This is due, perhaps, to lack of awareness among newer residents of the recycling rules in the district. There is also a link between high levels of deprivation and associated social issues, and lower levels of compliance in recycling.

The focus is on engagement and education and by having the data from the Transfer Station which strongly indicates the affected rounds we can more specifically target those areas requiring our support.

**Q21: MRF gate fee**

I think SCC are in a contract with the incinerator so that we have an obligation to commit a certain amount of waste for incineration? The MRF 'gate fee'\* is then on top of the contract the Waste Partnership are in? So, are we obligated to supply a certain amount of waste? Does Great Blakenham then charge a further whole rejected load cost? If we are so obligated, what happens if we underprovide the amount of waste?

*\*The MRF 'gate fee' includes the additional cost of depositing rejects at the Energy from Waste Facility in Great Blakenham (EFW) for incineration. Whole rejected loads cost £102 / ton. This is the fee that ESC is charged at the gate of the EFW facility. SCC currently fund this – therefore the cost is to the 'whole system' rather than ESC specifically. However, this is currently being reviewed.*

**A21:** The focus is to recycle, hence the reason we receive recycling performance credits. The prime reason for the incinerator is to burn household waste for energy, not to add to that from contaminated recycling loads, which could have had potential economic and social value if recycled. The CC currently fund the incineration of the rejected recycling loads. There is a minimum calorific requirement for the

incinerator to operate efficiently, which is dependent on the quality of the waste being burnt to generate steam, although the CC's focus is to promote recycling. Importantly the incinerator generates enough electricity to power 34,500 homes, and based on tonnages this equates to 6,450 homes in ES.

**Q22:** How successful was the campaign in Lowestoft which started in January 2021?

- Firstly, an updated recycling leaflet – ‘Together we can get our recycling right’ was posted to all householders in January 2021 (produced by the Suffolk Waste Partnership). This was complemented by various social media campaigns (via ESC, SCC / SWP).
- Secondly, A5 and A3 recycling stickers (the same design as the above) have been produced for crews to place on bins, where required. For example, the A3 sticker can be placed onto communal waste bins.

Would a door to door, or a few people standing in the street just engaging with the public in general in a public place be more effective? How were the leaflets posted - by Royal Mail, private delivery agency, within the Advertiser?

**A22:**

The campaign referred to was an SWP campaign carried out county wide and coordinated by SCC. We would need time to make enquiries of SCC as to the impact of the campaign.

“Roadshow” events where people engage in the streets and other public places can be visually prominent and an opportunity for PR but realistically the only people who engage will be those who have a reason to e.g. those who want to find out more and those who want to have a moan and these represent useful opportunities for open engagement, however those who don't care will cross the street.

Door knocking can bring additional opportunities for benefits, as where it has been possible to identify streets where an issue exists the effort can be targeted there, and it also enables literature to be posted through letterboxes where no one answers the door. It also enables return visits to the same households to measure impacts.

However both of these approaches would have resource implications in terms of officer time particularly door knocking exercises, and we are not currently resourced to be able to deliver either approach.

**Q23:** Paragraph 2.11 -

- South of the District – 193 Bottle Banks, 75 Bring Banks for textiles, clothing, shoes and books.
- North of the District – 81 Bottle Banks, 8 Bring Banks for textiles

Why are there so many more collection banks in the South compared to the North of the District?

**A23:** This issue goes back to the funding available to previous councils. Circa 2002/03 SCDC was awarded a large grant from Defra for recycling services and part of this was used to introduce the more flexible 1100l wheelie bins including at sites that couldn't accommodate the bell-style banks and resulted in a step change in the number of sites at which banks for glass, cans and paper were



provided. When we stopped collecting cans and paper at bring sites, all the existing containers were repurposed as glass banks.

**Q24:** I am aware that some Councils state that if bins (in HMOs) are contaminated they might be removed by the council and the people living in the accommodation will have to take the waste to the waste centre – do we have something similar or have we considered it?

**A24:** HMOs can be a contributor – in some cases – to higher levels of contamination entering the recycling bins. Reasons for this include the fact that people living in HMOs may have come from other areas where recycling arrangements were different to those in operation in East Suffolk.

For that reason, we do liaise with the private sector housing team to engage with larger landlords in areas such as Lowestoft to ensure that the messages about recycling are understood by residents.

Where there are ongoing issues with contamination, we do offer the ability for individual residents in HMOs to place recyclable items in a separate bagged collection, and these will be collected by crews.

The report accompanying this meeting also sets out proposals to pause recycling collections – in extreme circumstances – for properties where contamination is a significant and enduring issue.

**Q25:** Where is the trial for the sensor trigger bins taking place?

**A25:** There are 18 bin sensors installed across the District, in bins that are less used / or have irregular emptying patterns. The output from the data will determine how the existing collection frequency compares with the recommended frequency

**Q26:** Litter bins. Do I understand correctly that we are removing the open top bins, which I agree with as gulls and foxes, etc pull the litter out of the bins and cause a mess. Are we replacing them with wheelie bins the same as household wheelie bins? Do we consider wheelie bins to be the right style of bin to stand in our historic town centres and within our Conservation Areas? Why can we not replace the open top bins with attractive closed top bins?

**A26:** We're seeking a consistent litter strategy approach, more so that the litter bins reflect the litter materials that are deposited – Black for litter and Blue for recycling. In some locations various bin types and colours were being used such as Green and Blue for litter, causing confusion. The cost of bins is also a consideration. The ones as described are c.£300 plus, the wheelies are £30. Town Councils can review if they wish to purchase themselves.

**Q27:** Only .7% of our card stays in this country. Do we know what the travel carbon footprint is of the card being sent abroad?

**A27:** East Suffolk Council is not the contract holder for the MRF – and therefore does not hold this data. The end destination of recycled card and the associated carbon output is the responsibility of Suffolk County Council, who hold the contract with Viridor.

**Q28:** The 80 litter complaints during the first 4 months of 2021 are, I suggest, a drop in the ocean of the actual issue. Should we be encouraging people to contact ESC to complain about litter to get a true record of the littering problem?

**A28:** Yes. Public feedback can only help. Complaint data which truly reflects the distribution of the problem can help target resources effectively. Incomplete complaint data can misdirect resources to the “squeakiest wheel”, whilst worse problems are ignored elsewhere.

Thank you for the recognition in the report of the Beccles Bombles. We have now been picking about 10 years and would like to thank Norse for their continued support and prompt collection (usually within 24 hours) of us reporting the collection site.

## Norse litter picking schedule

North		South	
Lowestoft Town Centre	morning clean and permanent present 11-5 Mon – Sat	Felixstowe Town centre, seafronts	Daily, with permanent presents with 3 guys. 1 in town, two on seafront - Monday to Sunday
Lowestoft Daily	Daily	Woodbridge Town centre and river wall	Daily with permanent presence Monday to Sunday
Beccles Daily	Daily	Aldeburgh town centre and seafront	Daily and permanent presence Monday to Sunday
Bungay Daily	Daily		
Southwold	Daily and twice Daily June – Oct	Saxmundham town	6 days a week , few hours a day
Halesworth	Daily	Framlingham town	6 days a week few hours a day
Carlton Colville	Twice Weekly		
Blundeston / Lound / Somerleyton / Wrentham	Weekly		
Kessingland	Twice Weekly		