

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Cabinet

## Agenda Item 103

**Subject:** More Recycling, Less Waste - A New Collection Model

**Date of meeting:** Thursday, 22 January 2026

**Report of:** Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environmental Services

**Lead Officer:** Name: Corporate Director- City Operations

**Contact Officer:** Name: Rachael Joy- Interim Director of Environmental Services

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**Ward(s) affected:** (All Wards);

**Key Decision:** Yes

**Reason(s) Key:** Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

**For general release**

### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 Increasing our rates of recycling and reducing waste is a key part of our goal to deliver a clean and sustainable city to be proud of, a central ambition to our Council Plan 'A Better Brighton & Hove for All'. By promoting the responsible use of resources, minimising waste and providing a reliable refuse and recycling service we will continue to develop pride in our place and our commitment to a circular economy.
- 1.2 Since May 2023, there has been ongoing increased investment in waste and recycling services to ensure significant improvement in this essential service. This report outlines an ambitious programme to continue our service improvement and to work toward doubling our recycling rates over the next decade.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees the actions set out in the report to explore and develop a proposal for a future model of delivery for waste collection services, in particular through modelling and independently assessing round structures.
- 2.2 Cabinet approves the use of a waste composition survey to assess how the current service is being used.

- 2.3 Cabinet approves the engagement with residents and staff as set out in the report to ensure a collaborative and evidence led approach to the redesign of the waste collection services.
- 2.4 Cabinet notes that a further report will be brought to Cabinet to assess the outcome of the waste composition survey, round analysis and engagement with residents and staff, and for a further decision to be made on the future model of the service based on this data.

### **3. Context and background information**

- 3.1 Over the last 18 months significant progress has been made to improve the performance of the waste and recycling service and, in May 2025, alongside ongoing significant work to improve the workplace culture in the service, Cabinet approved a programme of investment to accelerate the pace of change, resolving historic issues of under-investment in fleet, introducing digital technology to improve historically unreliable systems, and continuing the work to embed culture change. Since then, the range of materials that can be recycled in our kerbside and communal collections has been expanded, and a separate food waste collection service has been successfully rolled out across most of the city.
- 3.2 The expansion of materials accepted in mixed recycling and the introduction of weekly food waste collections means that we are now seeing the volume of residual waste (refuse) fall. This reduction is expected to continue.
- 3.3 Alongside these new services, the performance of the collection service has improved so that in most weeks around 99% of the circa 194,000 (sometimes much higher) collections we make are achieved during the week. We continue the drive toward zero missed collections.
- 3.4 Digital transformation in the service has seen the introduction of in-cab technology, allowing far more efficient planning and management of rounds, greater transparency, and detailed real-time information available for customers on the website.
- 3.5 Alongside our local changes, Government has set a target for all authorities to ensure that 65% of waste is recycled by 2035 and also set clear rules around service delivery including weekly food waste collections, and making companies pay for the packaging they produce. In addition, the government are planning a Deposit Return Scheme which will give people money back when they return bottles and cans, and the introduction of stricter rules on landfill carbon emissions trading that will make throwing things away or sending waste to energy recovery facilities more expensive.
- 3.6 The council has progressed changes to recycling and introduction of food waste collections ahead of the statutory timeline and will continue to strive for improvements over and above those required statutorily.
- 3.7 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) may result in boundary changes for Brighton & Hove. If this is the case, the work described in this report will

provide the basis for taking forward changes to the waste service over a revised geography.

- 3.8 Recycling rates in the city hover around 26%. This still leaves around 73% of the city's waste being sent for energy recovery, with less than 1% of material not suited to recycling or energy recovery going to landfill. The changes outlined in this report are aimed at significantly shifting the rate of recycling, whilst continuing with a very low rate of waste ever going to landfill.
- 3.9 Research from INC PEN (The Industry Council for Packaging and Environment) shows that residents recycle more when they
  - are confident that recycled materials actually go for recycling
  - see neighbours like themselves recycling
  - receive regular information on recycling performance direct from their Council.
  - Opportunities to recycle are easy with most decisions about what to recycle being made in the kitchen rather than at the kerbside.
- 3.10 This report addresses all four of these factors working with residents, businesses and government to make possible a doubling of recycling rates over the next decade.
- 3.11 Brighton and Hove is an outlier in continuing weekly refuse collections. Currently, only 62 out of 317 English councils collect residual waste every week<sup>1</sup>. More than 80% of councils collect fortnightly or every 3 or 4 weeks.

## **Waste Composition Survey**

- 3.12 Our future waste collection model will be developed based on the improved data we now have available following our digital transformation, with expert analysis and engagement with residents and staff to establish the round structure that will work best for the city. We will apply the principles of our learning organisation as we learn from the past and apply those lessons to the future. The first step in this process will be an assessment of the current situation.
- 3.13 A waste composition survey is planned to provide accurate local data to tell us how residents are using the current services. For example, how much more could be diverted into food or recycling streams rather than going to energy recovery and, crucially, the extent of contamination leading to the rejection of recycling materials. The results of this survey will form the foundation for our planning and our communications plan with residents.

## **What we know about recycling levels already**

- 3.14 Additional recycling materials have been introduced to the kerbside dry recycling stream since 1 June 2025. We now collect plastic pots, tubs and trays (PTT) in addition to the existing recycling mix of paper, card, metal tins,

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<sup>1</sup> WRAP local authority portal

aerosols and can and separate glass. There is a drive to increase compliance with PTT recycling through an awareness campaign which has so far seen leaflets notifying residents of the inclusion of this material to over 70,000 households and to the whole city by the end of February.

- 3.15 In 2024/25 households residual waste was 580kg/hh. The last waste composition analysis carried out in 2022 showed 38% of residual waste was food waste. With food waste collections now in place, the waste movements will mean the residual waste has further reduced.
- 3.16 Our initial data from the current food waste collection in place for 72,000 households shows that over 600 tons has been collected so far. As household refuse is still collected weekly, some residents continue to dispose of recyclable items in the residual stream. The benchmarking data with CIPFA Nearest Neighbour local authorities with similar demographics, property types, and collection schemes, the projected annual food waste yield for Brighton & Hove was estimated at 5057 tons, or 0.74 kg per household per week on a weekly refuse collection. If refuse was on a fortnightly collection, it is projected there is potential to increase this by 50%.

### **Engagement with Residents**

- 3.17 As part of the consideration of the new collection model, focus groups with residents will take place to ensure that feedback informs our future service design, and our future collection model makes it as clear and easy to recycle as possible.

### **Reliable and Efficient Round Design**

- 3.18 Brighton's and Hove's waste collection routes were designed over a decade ago and no longer reflect current traffic patterns, housing growth, or service changes. By building on the insights from our new digital round management platform, Bartec's Collective, we can use advanced modelling to create smarter, more efficient routes. Once the modelling is complete, an independent expert will validate the new rounds, ensuring they meet best practice standards and deliver real-world improvements. Crucially, this process will draw on the local knowledge of our crews, who understand access challenges, seasonal variations, and community needs. As a learning organisation, we see this as an opportunity to combine technology, external expertise, resident experience and staff insight to improve reliability and efficiency. The result will be routes that reduce wasted mileage, cut fuel costs, and give residents greater confidence that collections will happen on time, every time. The outcome will also provide an assessment of the logical frequency of collections, and the viability of alternate weekly collections for residual waste, dependant on the assessment of increased recycling and the removal of food waste from our residual waste.

### **Alternative Weekly Collection**

- 3.19 All of the analysis of data, described above, is likely to lead to evidence of reductions in residual waste, and therefore supporting the potential

introduction of alternative weekly collection for residual waste. A study by the University of Southampton found that switching to alternate weekly collections increased recycling rates by up to 9% and reduced residual waste volumes by 13%<sup>2</sup>. This evidence has resulted in around 80% of councils already operating with fortnightly collection of refuse, with particular success in areas where there is also a food waste collection.

- 3.20 The global UK based charity organisation, Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) carried out national analysis which shows that councils with alternate weekly collections achieve recycling rates 5–10 percentage points higher than those with weekly refuse collections<sup>3</sup>.
- 3.21 A Defra-funded Health Impact Assessment found no significant health risks associated with reduced collection frequencies, provided common-sense measures are taken<sup>4</sup>
- 3.22 Alternate weekly collection with other simpler recycling measures should see recycling levels increase to around 40%. Nationally, the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme will contribute around 20%-25% to increased recycling and the deposit return scheme, when implemented a further 5-8%, opening the way for the city to achieve 65% recycling levels over the next decade.

### **Environmental Services Culture Change – further developments**

- 3.23 :The Council underwent a Local Government Association sponsored peer review of all of its service between 1st and 4th April 2025. The review noted the positive direction in Environmental Services. The report stated that "significant work is underway within environmental services, early results show that transformation efforts are beginning to yield improvements in both the culture at the depot and in service delivery" The report noted the need for continued momentum, recognising the progress, the peer reviewers emphasised the importance of maintaining "ongoing focus on strengthening industrial relations, improving workforce engagement, and embedding new ways of working"
- 3.24 In May 2025, Cabinet was updated on progress about the Culture Change programme which was built on the principles of our learning organisation.



- 3.25 **Being Connected** – In recent months the service has become better connected replacing its rudimentary paper-based systems with the latest digital platform shared by crews, back office staff and the customer contact

<sup>2</sup> [Fortnightly collections | Engineering | University of Southampton](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Technical report templates](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Microsoft Word - HIA of AWC Q and A v5 final.doc](#)

team. This has enabled a more effective deployment of resources and provides a clear picture of day-to-day performance.

- 3.26 **Being Confident-** the service has become increasingly confident in delivering multiple change projects at once. On going learning from each phase of a project is built into weekly project board meetings ensuring that feedback is built into successive stages of the project. This has been most noticeable on the roll out of Food Waste Collections with each phase being significantly more complex and larger than earlier phases.
- 3.27 **Being Innovative and Creative-** the service used the opportunities presented by digitalization to introduce, as far as we know, the UKs first real time information service for residents. Prior to the digitalization there was no way of knowing how well the service was performing. Since the summer, collection performance has steadily improved and now regularly achieves 99% collection levels each week.
- 3.28 **Being Diverse and Inclusive-** equality and diversity issues are picked up in the weekly staff newsletter and a programme of training has commenced for all staff. Digital inclusion has been progressed through the provision of increased communal IT equipment at the Hollingdean site enabling staff to keep up to date and learning to take place, and a programme to provide access to digital council systems on personal phones is underway. In addition, managers have been trained in agile ways of working.
- 3.29 **Being Healthy and Psychologically Safe-** an anonymous reporting tool has been introduced to enable people to report concerns independently of the service. When staff have concerns about their role, there is an increasing emphasis and expectation that informal processes such as mediation will be used to bring people only using formal processes as a last resort where the nature of the concern justifies this.
- 3.30 As the culture change continues, further improvements are planned to ensure the service is resident focused using data and digital systems effectively and listening to and working with residents to co-create solutions where issues exist.

### **Weekly Service Performance Reporting**

- 3.31 the service is in the final stages of developing a weekly public performance dashboard demonstrating a commitment to full transparency about how the service is doing. This will provide information for each waste stream.

### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 This report recommends exploration of options to secure an efficient and effective model of waste collection based on a target operating model that increases recycling and reduces residual waste while maximising efficiency in the service.

- 4.2 The alternative option is ‘do nothing’, which would see the continuation of significantly reduced residual waste stream, collected on the same operational model at higher cost with lower recycling levels and cannot be recommended.
- 4.3 The further cabinet report, in the early summer 2026, will outline in detail all the options based on the evidence collected in the waste review process outlined in this report.

## **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 Effective community engagement is central to achieving high participation, supporting behaviour change, and ensuring the success of these service changes.
- 5.2 Early independent engagement will take place through focus groups to gather opinions from residents in kerbside refuse collection areas regarding their views on recycling can be improved through a new collection model.

The results and analysis will be reported to cabinet alongside the service options modelling.

## **6. Financial implications**

- 6.1 If approved the report recommendations will result in some minor spend commitments for the Council. Estimated revenue costs are associated with the exploration of the new collection model and the commissioning of the waste composition survey. As part of the introduction of Food Waste across the city £0.512m has been identified as one off project funding to support these costs and is included in the 2025/26 budget position. The current year forecast includes a commitment to fully spend this budget, as such consideration at year end will be given to the carry forward of the unspent project budget into 2026/27 to ensure that the results of the review and survey can be implemented.
- 6.2 It is expected that a long-term revenue saving can be made in relation to a round redesign and review of the delivery model. High level estimates based on a refresh of round design to increase efficiency will be included as part of the 2026/27 budget report to Cabinet and Full Council in February. Assumptions have been made related to the very historic round design currently in place, and will be further assessed as a result of the detailed analysis that is described in 3.12 to 3.22 above.
- 6.3 Capital investment relates to the costs incurred regarding glass collection. The estimated investment totals £0.076m and can be met from existing capital resources.
- 6.4 The report is not seeking any new budget either revenue or capital, however it is possible further investment will be required. This will need to be approved by cabinet as a full business case outlining the one-off investment

and on-going revenue implications. The financial implications are likely to exceed £1m as a result of the work undertaken.

Name of finance officer consulted: Craig Garaghan Date consulted: 09/01/26

## **7. Legal implications**

7.1 Procurement of consultancy services will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Contract Standing Orders. No decisions are sought in this report regarding a proposed revised model of service and therefore there are no further legal implications to address at this stage.

Name of lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date consulted 07.01.26

## **8. Risk implications**

8.1 Risk will be managed through the project governance process with an officer Project Board meeting weekly and reviewing risk and issues as a part of a structured project process. Significant risk is highlighted to the lead Cabinet Member through a regular progress reporting process. This report is seeking permission to review the current model of collection, and undertake work to consider the optimum model of collection in the future to reduce waste, increase recycling and improve efficiency and reliability. Risks related to the future model recommended will be covered in the cabinet report when the outcome of this work is presented.

## **9. Equalities implications**

9.1 The final proposals will be accompanied by a full impact assessment, reported to Cabinet alongside a future report.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

10.1 The proposal supports net zero objectives through a sustained increase in recycling and reduction in collection vehicle journeys.

## **11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:**

11.1 The cost and consequences of not addressing climate change fall unequally on marginalized and vulnerable groups.

## **Other Implications**

## **12. Procurement implications**

12.1 An appropriate procurement process will take place for suitable round design consultancy and a waste composition survey.

## **13. Crime & disorder implications:**

None

#### **14. Conclusion**

- 14.1 Accepting the recommendations in this report will lead to a programme of work to develop a possible new collection model capable of increasing recycling, reducing waste delivered by a more efficient, effective and reliable service.. A formal decision on whether or not to proceed with a new collection model will be considered at a future Cabinet meeting.

