

Brighton & Hove City Council

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 57

Subject: **More recycling, less waste - a new collection model?**

Date of meeting: **21st January 2026**

Report of: **Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Contact Officer: **Name: Natalie Sacks-Hammond**

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

Key Decision: **No**

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report considers a new collection model following the introduction of food waste collections and the expansion of recycling to include plastic pots, tubs, and trays in June 2025. The city currently generates 557 kg of waste per household per year, and the service aims to increase recycling rates to reduce overall waste.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 provides an update on Waste Services including the recent roll out of food waste collections, the introduction of new digital tools, an update on the culture change programme and the proposed new collection model.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider and comment on the More Recycling and Less Waste report due to be considered by Cabinet on the 22 January 2026.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 The Council is expanding the range of recyclable materials collected in the city, now including plastic pots, tubs, and trays, and has introduced weekly food waste collections. Evidence from other local authorities shows that broader recycling can reduce waste by approximately 80 kg per household per year. The service is considering reducing some refuse collections to a fortnightly schedule, noting that only 62 of 317 councils still offer weekly collections.
- 3.2 Waste Services supports the Council Plan's objective of an accessible, clean, and sustainable city. The new More Recycling Less Waste Report will be presented to Cabinet on 22 January 2026. The report proposes modelling

how alternative weekly collection will support efforts to increase the city's recycling performance from the current level to 65% over the next decade.

3.3 The proposed approach is to undertake a waste composition analysis survey, engagement with a representative and random sample of residents through focus groups, round redesign and behaviour change support.

Research from INCPEN (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.

3.4 The team have identified opportunities to improve and be more efficient; using digital technology, regular monitoring of data, and clearer service performance standards. Residents can access real time information on the status of their bin collections and the performance of the service via the Council's website. The performance reports show the percentages of households whose bins were collected and those that were missed.

3.5 The report provides an update on further progress and broadening out of the culture change programme last updated to Cabinet in May 2025. The action plan remains ongoing, with the service focusing on becoming more people-focused, business-focused, and resident-focused.

Wave 1- Dealing with a toxic culture and restrictive working practises that prevented change and modernisation

Wave 2- The Council facing up to the past the KC report and recommendations and council apology

Wave 3 – Becoming more people focussed- the Culture Change Action Plan - ongoing

Wave 4- Becoming more business focussed- the May 2025 Cabinet report- investment to make the team effective - ongoing

Wave 5- Becoming more resident focussed – the January 2025 Cabinet report- rti and service standards

The service is proposing increasing resident confidence in the service through weekly performance reporting and through the introduction of a balanced scorecard to monitor overall service performance.

A Balanced Score Card- As the Culture Change Programme has developed measuring its performance requires a balanced scorecard approach in May 2026 the service proposes to bring forward targets against the following indicators for cabinet to consider embedding culture change in the core of the new collection model.

Performance

-  % of collections completed vs. planned
-  Upheld service complaints decrease
-  Recycling levels increase

Finance

-  Unit cost per bin collected decreases

Resource availability

-  Days lost to sickness absence falls
-  Vehicle unavailability hours decrease
-  Days with insufficient crew decrease

Staff Dimension

-  % recommending as employer rises via a quarterly WhatsApp survey
-  % of team rating supervision or daily debrief as good increases
-  Confidential hotline reports of concerns about the service
-  Substantiated whistleblowing allegations

Finally, the service is proposing Clearer Service Standards for Residents are developed – Residents do not currently have clear service standards concerning the provision of their waste collection service. This can lead to a mismatch in expectations. Waste collection service standards can provide a clear framework to ensure consistency, reliability, and legal compliance—vital factors that underpin public trust. Well-defined standards will help Brighton and Hove Council meet statutory duties to make arrangement to collect waste, protect public health by preventing waste buildup, and minimise environmental risks such as fly-tipping or contamination. They also support councils in delivering best-value service design by balancing collection frequency, container sizing, and additional support where needed. Beyond operational efficiency, evidence shows that robust standards drive public confidence and satisfaction. The lack of a framework of service standards is most visible when residents want to complain about the service because there is no core standard by which to measure a complaint by. Typically, service standards cover several core components:

- **Collection frequency and scope** – defining how often residual, dry recycling, food, and garden wastes are collected, with guidance suggesting weekly food waste collections from March 2026.
- **Container provision** – specifying bin types and capacities for different household types and waste streams.
- **Assisted services** – detailing support for residents who can't handle bins unassisted, including those with disabilities or at flats.
- **Bulky and specialist collections** – services for large items, hygiene products, textiles, fats, oils, and non-household waste.
- **Contamination controls and reporting** – measures to reduce improper sorting and processes for monitoring collection performance.
- **Communication and contingency planning** – informing residents of changes in collection schedules and having plans to prioritise services under pressure.
- **Complaint Handling** – how the service responds to complaints.

- **What happens when the service misses a collection** – for example due to illegally parked cars.

As a part of the resident engagement process ahead of May Cabinet.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 Not specifically for this scrutiny report

5. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 Not specifically for this scrutiny report but see Appendix 1 for planned engagement with staff and the public on the Alternate Weekly Collection Model.

6. Financial implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this Overview & Scrutiny Report.

6.2 Appendix 1 seeks recommendations for minor revenue commitments to support the development of a new waste collection model and a composition survey, funded within the current budget. Capital investment for digitizing communal bins and trialing alternative glass collection methods will be met from existing resources. No additional funding is requested at this stage; however, further investment is anticipated following trials and survey outcomes, subject to Cabinet approval. Long-term savings are expected through a redesigned delivery model, with details to be considered in the forthcoming budget report.

6.3 Further details can be found in appendix 1.

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

7. Legal implications

7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report which is seeking comment from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The legal implications relating to the report proposals are set out at Appendix One.

Name of lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date consulted 12012026

8. Equalities implications

8.1 Any proposed changes to waste collection services would need to consider the potential impacts on individuals with protected characteristics, to ensure they are not disproportionately negatively affected. Particular consideration should be given to residents with mobility issues who may have difficulty

moving bins, those whose first language is not English and who may face barriers in understanding service changes, and larger families with babies who generate more waste and may be affected by any reduction in service.

9. Sustainability implications

9.1 It is important to consider sustainability when making changes to waste collection. Measures such as reducing collection frequency can optimise collection routes and decrease the number of vehicles required, which lowers fuel consumption and emissions. Encouraging waste reduction and increased recycling would also reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill, helping to cut greenhouse gas emissions such as methane.

10. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

10.1 Changes to collection frequency would need to take into account the potential health and wellbeing impacts on residents, including issues related to hygiene, pests, and odours.

11. Conclusion

11.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee to note the report.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Review of Waste Collection Services – Cabinet report

