

Brighton & Hove City Council

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 22

Subject: Recycling and Behaviour Change

Date of meeting: 8th September 2026

Report of: Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: No

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 This report provides an update on recycling in the city and outlines a series of measures that will ensure the council delivers on the commitment to provide a reliable refuse and recycling service.

1.2 The council has expanded recycling services, rolled out citywide food waste collections, improved recycling communications and signage, and carried out extensive resident engagement. These initiatives have increased awareness and participation in recycling, contributing to higher recycling rates and reduced residual waste, with current efforts focused on further increasing recycling and reducing contamination.

1.3 More details can be accessed in the presentation which can be found at Appendix 1 and the July Cabinet report at Appendix 2.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the report and provide any comments on the proposed work and how recycling might be further improved.

3. Context and background information

3.1 Recycling rates in the city have been historically low and have been falling for several years. The council has delivered a comprehensive programme of service improvements, communications and resident engagement aimed at increasing recycling rates and reducing the amount of recyclable material placed in rubbish bins.

3.2 Key actions have included:

- Launching the “Recycle Right” communications campaign
- Expanding recycling opportunities through the introduction of carton recycling, waste electrical and electronic equipment recycling bins, and the addition of plastic pots, tubs and trays to the recycling service
- Delivering extensive resident communications through council publications, social media, bus stop advertising, housing newsletters and community engagement activities
- Rolling out weekly food waste collections citywide, supported by a dedicated communications programme and household information campaign
- Improving recycling infrastructure through updated bin signage, colour-coded bin lids and a review of signage at recycling points.
- Undertaking face-to-face engagement with residents, including community events, surveys and resident feedback sessions to understand concerns and improve services

3.3 The improvements so far have resulted in a significant reduction in residual waste. With food waste being collected weekly, residual bins are less full, drier, less odorous and present less risk of vermin. The focus is now shifting towards maintaining these improvements, increasing food waste participation, expanding recycling capacity where needed and tackling the ongoing challenge of contamination within recycling collections

3.4 Regular communications regarding the “Recycling Right” campaign are ongoing, aiming to guide and support residents in developing good recycling habits. There will be a review of signage at Recycling Points, face-to-face engagement events will take place in early 2027 and citywide communications will continue to encourage the uptake of food waste collections.

3.5 Addressing contamination remains a key priority, with household rubbish and bagged waste accounting for 49.98% of contamination and glass a further 11.85%. To reduce these levels, a robust contamination policy and supporting operational processes is being developed and will be implemented by Autumn 2026. In-cab technology data will be used to notify residents, via the council website and direct emails, when recycling is contaminated. Communications about new recyclable materials will also reinforce the importance of keeping recycling clean, dry and loose (not bagged), and keeping glass separate.

3.6 Reliable collections are essential if we want residents to recycle to the maximum extent. There are a range of measures being taken to make further improvements to the reliability of the collections service, as described in previous Cabinet reports. These details can be found in the July 2026 Cabinet report at Appendix 2. In addition, a clear set of service standards will be published, that will include:

- Alignment of collection days where possible
- Published service standards to deal with missed collections
- Proactive communication to residents about any service disruption
- Regular publication of performance data

3.7 Additional improvements for the wider service were approved at Cabinet on 16th July and will be implemented, including:

- Additional capacity in Communal on-street service for recycling
- Partnering with other organisations to provide cost neutral collections of additional materials to divert from household rubbish
- New vehicles, including the 'twin-pack' vehicles used for kerbside recycling
- A review of bin capacity across the city
- Investment in Hollingdean depot
- Additional waste expertise to address some of the immediate operational issues
- Additional crews
- Additional performance monitoring to provide immediate assurance about the quality of service

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 The Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee is invited to note the report and provide any comments on the proposed work and how recycling might be further improved.

5. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 Behaviour Change Network surveyed residents from April – May 2026. There were 1,674 respondents, of which 91.8% were aware that plastic pots, tubs and trays can now be recycled and 72.2% were already using the food waste collection service.

5.2 Further resident sessions will take place across the city to address concerns and support rubbish and recycling. Residents will be consulted on the redesigning of rounds and there will be continued engagement with frontline staff.

5.3 Engagement will continue and focus on the delivery model, including container capacity, assisted collections, households with medical or additional waste needs, communal and complex properties, side waste, contamination, service guarantees and accessible communications. Resident feedback will be used alongside operational modelling, waste composition evidence, equalities assessment and staff insight to shape the service going forward.

6. Financial implications

6.1 At this stage, no specific offsetting savings have been identified to fully mitigate the pressures generated as a result of this work. The £1.3m investment agreed as part of the July Cabinet is additional over and above

the current forecast position and so adversely impacts the financial position of the council.

- 6.2 The financial risk associated with these proposals has been reflected within the corporate financial risk position reported through TBM, but not part of the forecast.
- 6.3 Whilst the proposals increase in-year financial pressure, they are expected to contribute to improved operational performance and enable the transition to a more sustainable and efficient service model over the medium term, including planned changes to collection arrangements. This will enable the service to deliver the alternate weekly collection model, which is estimated to deliver approximately £0.5m in savings with £0.375m expected in 2027/28, the remaining the year after. The payback for this investment based on the full £0.5m savings expected is within 3 years.
- 6.4 Due to the absence of any other funding options, any new proposals in addition to those agreed at July Cabinet will increase in-year financial pressure, and will be reported through the councils TBM process.

Name of finance officer consulted: David Wilder Date consulted (27/08/2026):

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Siobhan Fry Date consulted (24/08/26):

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 None for this scrutiny report

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 None for this scrutiny report

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 The improvement programme supports the council's sustainability and Net Zero objectives by increasing recycling, reducing waste, improving resource efficiency, and diverting more food waste and recyclable materials from disposal. Measures to reduce contamination and improve resident participation will help maximise the environmental benefits of recycling, reduce carbon emissions associated with waste management, and support the transition to a more circular and sustainable local economy.

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

11.1 None for this scrutiny report

12. Conclusion

12.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee is being asked to note the report and provide any comments on the proposed work and how recycling might be further improved.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Presentation slides
2. Cabinet report 16th July 2026

