Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet — Agenda Item 27

Subject: **More recycling less waste**

Date of meeting: **Thursday, 16 July 2026**

Report of: **Cabinet Member for Net Zero & Environment**

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

Contact Officer: **Name: Satti Sidhu**

Email: Satti.Sidhu@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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 The Council Plan 2023 to 2027 and its 2025 refresh set out the priorities to create a city to be proud of, an accessible, clean and sustainable city, and a responsive and learning council with well-run services. This report supports those priorities by seeking to reduce avoidable residual waste, increase recycling and food waste capture, make better use of existing resources and improve the reliability and efficiency of waste collection services.

1.2 In January, Cabinet agreed that officers should model options for a future model of delivery for waste collections services that is designed for a reduction in residual waste, and an increase in recycling. The approach approved by cabinet is evidence led and collaborative, with engagement of both residents and staff. This report provides an update on this work and makes recommendations based on the evidence collected and the engagement work undertaken. In addition, this report outlines a series of measures that will ensure the council delivers on the commitment to provide a reliable refuse and recycling service.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet agrees to continue work to model and prepare for the introduction of a fortnightly residential kerbside residual waste collection model, with a view to implementation by July 2027, subject to operational readiness and a final decision being taken by Cabinet.

2.2 Cabinet agrees to the investment of £1.3M being made as set out in 3.16 below in order to improve the service in readiness for a change to fortnightly collections and to achieve the associated savings and efficiencies as detailed in this report.

3. Context and background information

3.1 The service has experienced significant historic issues which have resulted in it operating sub-optimally over a sustained period. Over the last two years, considerable progress has already been made to improve performance, including ongoing culture change, the introduction of digital technology, increased recycling opportunities, and the delivery of a new separate food waste collection service, but there continues to be challenges in delivering the quality of service to which we aspire.

3.2 The improvements so far have increased the options for recycling, including the acceptance of a wider range of materials. This should result in a significant reduction in residual waste, thereby creating a strong foundation to take forward further change, although the lag on the waste data means we have not yet been able to see the extent to which this has happened. The reliability of collections needs further improvement to ensure the change to fortnightly residual waste collections can be introduced successfully in 2027.

3.3 The case for change to a fortnightly residual waste collection service is based on clear local and national evidence. A study by University of Southampton found that switching to alternate weekly collections increased recycling rates by up to 9% and reduced residual waste volumes significantly. Around 80% of councils already operate fortnightly collections for residual waste. The UK based charity, 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.

3.4 Since the January Cabinet decision, significant local evidence-gathering and modelling has been undertaken that support the move to alternate weekly residual waste collections, with data from the service showing that many households no longer use the residual waste service weekly, with around 30% already putting out a residual waste bin fortnightly or less frequently.

3.5 The analysis from the waste composition survey also shows that 45.1% of kerbside residual waste, equivalent to 2.36 kg per household per week, may be divertible through existing services. Estimates show that food waste is the largest opportunity at 29.4%, with dry recyclables and garden waste accounting for a further 15.7%.

3.6 Resident engagement shows that support for a fortnightly residual model depends on reliability, clarity, fairness and confidence in food waste and recycling services. Residents want to recycle more, but need simple guidance, sufficient container capacity, accessible support and assurance that the Council will respond consistently and quickly to missed collections, side waste, contamination, odour, pests, storage constraints and disruption.

3.7 A fair and inclusive service provision will be central to implementation proposals and will continue to be discussed through resident engagement. Flats above shops, shared houses, larger households, older and disabled residents, households with medical waste, and areas with limited storage or access may need tailored arrangements. These will be addressed through implementation planning, the Equalities Impact Assessment, service standards and continued engagement.

3.8 Staff and trade union engagement will be central to round design, risk management, communications, training and go-live planning. Crews, supervisors, managers and support teams hold essential knowledge on access, traffic, tipping delays, contamination, containers and what works on street. Engagement to date has been constructive and will continue throughout the change process, to ensure the valuable insights and input from staff across the services help shape the final round design.

3.9 Ahead of implementation, 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

3.10 Alongside work to review the residual waste collections, modelling of other parts of the collection service will take place to ensure that the service has clear standards across all waste streams.

3.11 The Council operates around 1,250 on-street communal bins. The communal refuse service has experienced significant service failures because of the reliability of the side loader vehicles. These vehicles are currently being upgraded to improve the resilience of the communal refuse service, along with a review of the bin capacity across the city. Over the course of the next 3 years, after which the purchase of replacement vehicles will be required, an assessment of the optimal model for communal collections will take place. In the meantime, and as set out below, immediate measures are being put in place to improve the reliability of the service.

3.12 A review will also be undertaken on how commercial waste services, including trade waste, garden waste subscriptions and bulky waste collections, are managed alongside residential waste collections. Currently, the commercial service draws from the same pool of resources, including management, vehicles and cover staff, as residential operations. The proposed separation is intended to reduce pressure on residential operations, improve the allocation of crews and vehicles, and strengthen customer service by creating clearer accountability, more responsive service planning and dedicated operational focus for both paying commercial customers and residents receiving statutory household collections.

3.13 Investment in Hollingdean Depot is also being planned to ensure the depot is a safe and efficient working environment for staff, and to support the provision of a high-quality waste service.

3.14 The move to alternate weekly collections, the wider review of all waste streams, the focus on the commercial service and investment in our depot, will bring financial benefits as set out in the financial implications of the report. The collection rounds have not been reviewed for over 20 years, and therefore a review of rounds will ensure much greater efficiency and balanced rounds to ensure most efficient use of resources across the service.

3.15 To ensure the service is resilient and able to sustain excellent performance alongside the implementation of significant changes, further short-term investment is needed. This investment will ensure that the savings associated with a change in the model of service can be realised, and will include:

- Additional waste expertise to address some of the immediate operational issues
- Daily city-wide audits and targeted inspection regimes to ensure service standards are being met
- Additional crews to ensure reliability of collections and speedy resolution of missed bins
- Additional resource to support with cleanliness in communal bin areas and to provide support for any service failures
- A refreshed fleet strategy, that will build on the investment agreed in May 2025, and that will see a programme to replace over time our ageing fleet replaced and to address the historic underinvestment in vehicles
- Additional performance monitoring to provide immediate assurance about the quality of service

3.16 The above will be delivered with the following additional investment

Investment	No of posts	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	Total £'000	Notes
Management and resources	6	252	92	**344**	Consultancy, 1 Lead Operations Manager, 4 Operation managers posts and 1 HR Manager. All 6 month resources aside from HR manager which is a permanent resource ask.
Additional Operating staffing capacity	17	415	290	**705**	Additional operational staffing capacity includes 2 Controllers for 6 months, 3 Workshop Mechanics for evening/weekend cover for 12 months, 2 Caged Van Drivers for 6 months, and additional Operatives/Driver Operatives to support side waste removal, communal recycling point clearance, and communal 4x4 pool collections.

Additional vehicles and contractor capacity	0	233	18	**251**	Additional vehicle (through hiring agreements) and contractor capacity includes ad hoc contractor support to clear side waste, caged van hire, hire of 2 RCVs and 2 twin packs, and purchase of 40 x 1100L bins to support operational service delivery.
Total	**23**	**900**	**400**	**1,300**	

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 Ongoing work will continue to consider the implementation of a fortnightly kerbside residual residential collection model. This is intended to align residual collection capacity with the reduced waste stream, strengthens use of weekly food waste and recycling services, and creates opportunities to improve route efficiency, resource deployment and resilience. A phased or tailored approach may be used where equalities, storage, access or operational constraints require different arrangements, and as necessary the detail of this will be covered in the subsequent cabinet report.

4.2 BHCC's current Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and collection approach reflect the design of the existing contract and infrastructure. Separate glass collections align with national policy direction under Simpler Recycling and support the production of higher quality recycling outputs. While fully co-mingled collections can offer operational efficiencies, the current system provides a compliant approach that prioritises material quality and environmental outcomes within the constraints of the existing facility.

4.3 A full range of options for the next contract will be explored as part of the scoping exercise to inform the development of the contract specification and subsequent tender process. This stage will provide the Council with the opportunity to review all potential delivery models and future requirements, including consideration of any associated infrastructure needs.

4.4 Dependent upon the option ultimately pursued, there is scope to make effective use of existing assets to support future service delivery. This would enable the Council to retain operational efficiency while adapting to evolving requirements, ensuring that current infrastructure continues to provide value within any future arrangement.

5. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 Consultation and engagement have identified the practical conditions for any change to collection frequency: reliability, clear information, sufficient container capacity, weekly food waste, fair treatment of different household circumstances and consistent handling of missed or disrupted collections.

5.2 Engagement will continue before implementation 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 final implementation plan.

5.3 Staff consultation and engagement will continue throughout the change process to ensure that our staff are fully involved and support the shaping of the future service with their valuable knowledge and expertise of waste collections.

6. Financial implications

6.1 Part of the budget proposals for 2026/27 included a saving of £0.375m from implementing service efficiencies, improving productivity through a review of the waste collection model and design of collection rounds. The delivery of this saving is contingent on the implementation of plans outlined in the report. As part of the month 2 finance report this has been allocated as a grey saving, i.e. a saving without a defined plan therefore at risk of not being delivered. Any decision to not implement or delay will directly impact on the saving being made in 26/27 and is therefore accounted for as a pressure within the month 2 Environmental Services forecast outturn.

6.2 The report sets out the route to potentially implementing Alternate Weekly Collections, the anticipated costs of delivering this was £0.5m at the start of the financial year, subsequently revised to £0.4m at month 2. The funding of these costs was to be met from a carry forward of budget from 2025/26. However, this was not approved due to ensuring the council's financial position was managed down as far as possible, by utilising all available resources. The result means those project delivery costs are required to be met from within the 2026/27 Environmental Services budgets making the financial position for the council worse in 2026/27.

6.3 The proposals set out in this report require an estimated gross investment of approximately £1.3m, split £0.9m and £0.4m in 26/27 and 27/28 respectively to stabilise and improve the waste collection service. This reflects temporary operational measures, including additional staffing, fleet capacity through the hire of additional vehicles, and support services resources.

6.4 A key component of this investment relates to fleet provision. The current service already utilises a number of hired vehicles which are assumed within the existing revenue budget and forecast. The proposal therefore relates only to the incremental cost of two additional vehicles, with an estimated annual revenue impact of approximately £0.170m. The existing seven vehicles are already reflected within the current budget forecast at month 2.

6.5 At the latest Targeted Budget Management (TBM) position, City Operations is forecasting a net underspend of £0.241m. However, this position remains subject to a high level of volatility, particularly in relation to income assumptions. The additional investment proposed needs to be managed outside of that underspend so as not to adversely impact on the councils forecast position at month 2.

6.6 At this stage, no specific offsetting savings have been identified to fully mitigate this pressure. The investment proposed is additional over and above the current forecast position and so adversely impacts the financial position of the council. If approved and mitigations or additional income are found to offset this pressure, it will directly divert resources that would have otherwise supported the council's financial position as reported at month 2.

6.8 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.

6.9 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 3years.

Name of finance officer consulted: Craig Garoghan Date consulted: 29/06/2026

7. Legal implications

7.1 Under section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 the Council as a waste collection authority is required to collect household waste. Guidance issued by DEFRA confirms that waste collection authorites are required to decide on the collection frequency and methodology for collecting the residual (non-recyclable waste) and dry recyclable waste and to do so in a way that meets local needs and provides value for money for the taxpayer. In planning and delivering waste collection services from households, the Council is required to ensure that:

- all households have reasonable residual and recyclable waste collections
- they consider providing additional services for specific needs, such as households with medical needs
- there is no build-up of odorous waste at the kerbside
- changes to collections do not lead to an increase in fly-tipping of residual waste

The proposals set out in this report are in keeping with the Council's duties as a waste collection authority.

Name of lawyer consulted: Siobhan Fry Date consulted (03/07/26)

8. Risk implications

8.1 Risk will be managed through the programme governance process, and led by the Director, Environment & Leisure. The key implementation risks are: public confidence, equalities impacts, operational readiness, workforce engagement, container capacity, communications accuracy, service disruption, and the potential for side waste or fly-tipping if the model is not supported by clear standards and enforcement arrangements.

9. Equalities implications

9.1 The final decision will be accompanied by a full impact assessment.

10. Sustainability implications

10.1 The proposal supports net zero objectives through a sustained increase in recycling.

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

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

12. Conclusion

12.1 The ongoing work outlined in this report is supported by a strong and local evidence base. The 2026 Waste Composition Analysis shows that kerbside residual waste has reduced substantially and that 45.1% of what remains could already be diverted through existing services. Food waste remains the largest single component of the residual bin despite the availability of weekly food waste collections, and packaging remains a significant part of the residual stream. Operational modelling shows that the current weekly residual model is increasingly misaligned with changing waste flows and can be redesigned to improve productivity, resilience and performance. Consultation and engagement show that residents need clarity, capacity, reliability and guarantees, while staff engagement will be essential to designing a model that works in practice. On that basis, the recommended next step is continue the work to remodel the service, working towards a more reliable service, and on the basis of future cabinet decision, a fortnightly residual waste collection service.