

DOMESTIC WASTE & RECYCLING STRATEGY

September 2024

A Sustainable Future

Introduction

It is a significant challenge for any local authority to manage waste in a more sustainable way. Reducing the environmental impact of waste in the Sevenoaks District will only be possible if we all work together. This means residents, businesses, and the council 'doing more' to tackle the challenge of climate change. To reduce carbon, we will give top priority to the prevention of waste, helping our residents reduce and reuse more materials. We need to make more sustainable choices for our waste and recycling service and ensure we can all recycle as much as possible, reducing our general waste to an absolute minimum. The most effective way to do this is to change, improve and expand our collection services.

In December 2018, the UK government released the 'Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England' (known as the Resources and Waste Strategy). The strategy sets out key objectives for dealing with waste at a national level and suggests actions to achieve these statutory objectives, many of which are set out in the Environment Act 2021.

The Resources & Waste Strategy for England makes it clear that the UK Government is determined to transform the way waste is collected, recycled and reused so that all avoidable waste is eliminated by 2050.

The UK Government supports comprehensive and frequent rubbish and recycling collections. Household recycling rates in England increased significantly from 11% in 2001 to 45.2% in 2017. However, in recent years, progress has been slower and rates have remained at around 44%. While many local authorities continue to make improvements and introduce new services, some have seen a drop in recycling rates and do not collect the full range of materials that can be recycled, or do not collect food waste separately. According to the Strategy for England, householders who want to recycle more are increasingly confused about what can and cannot be recycled.

Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) recycling rates are currently significantly below the national average, at 37.7% in 2022-23. Current national targets (for the UK as a whole), are set at 55% by 2025, rising to 65% by 2035. New legislation and waste regulations have made it clear that providing an effective and efficient waste and recycling service will be key to maximising funding for council services.

The current collection system will not meet national recycling targets, nor will it comply with forthcoming legislation. Change is therefore essential and presents an opportunity to increase and expand the waste collection service currently delivered by the council..

A key priority within the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2024 is resources, consumption and waste, which aims to improve our rates of recycling and reduce the amount of non-recyclable (black sack) waste that we collect.

Strategy Aims & Objectives

This strategy sets out four key objectives on how we propose to minimise waste, promote resource efficiency and move towards a circular economy.

Our aim

We aim to provide the Sevenoaks District with a cost and carbon efficient recycling and waste service that maximises the recovery and recycling of valuable natural resources and meets the needs and expectations of our residents.

We will ensure that this service is compliant with national legislation, adheres to health and safety obligations and is compatible with any new working arrangements with our Kent County Council (KCC) waste disposal partners.

Objectives

Objective one

Minimise carbon impact of waste/recycling service

We are committed to taking all possible measures to help tackle the challenge of climate change. We can do this by considering the carbon impact of each element of our waste collection service.

Objective two

Increase quality and quantity of recycling

Our recycling rate is currently very low when compared to other authorities, ranking us 246th out of 343 waste collection authorities in England.

Future recycling rate targets set by the government will not be met without a change in Strategy.

Contamination (non-recyclable items) within the recycling is also increasing, and we need to be able to provide feedback directly to residents to educate and help bring about behavioural change.

Objective three

Reduce levels of overall household waste

Waste reduction remains top of the waste hierarchy; therefore, we must implement all possible actions proven to reduce levels of waste.

We must also address residual (black sack) manual handling safety concerns.

Objective four

Legislative and regulatory compliance

As a waste collection authority, we are required to comply with any legislation that central government pass in relation to waste collection services. Failing to meet requirements on current and any new legislation or meet health and safety standards for staff may result in severe penalties for the Council.

Waste Strategy Scope

This strategy sets out our approach to managing waste and recycling collections in a more sustainable way, with the aim of reducing the environmental impact of waste in the Sevenoaks District.

The actions presented in this document will form our service priorities over the next five years, before review in 2028. In its creation, the following has been considered:

- How we need to change our frontline services to better manage waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy, preventing waste, reusing materials and increasing recycling.
- How new services can be delivered in the most sustainable way possible.
- How we work with residents and other stakeholders to make the future service even more successful.
- How we work closely with our partners to develop implementation plans for the collection and processing of new waste and recycling services.
- How we ensure all elements of our waste and recycling service comply with government legislation and meet regulatory standards.
- The strategy does not review arrangements for the treatment and disposal of non-recyclable waste, as we will continue to use the infrastructure provided by Kent County Council (KCC). In addition, this strategy does not review collection of business waste; a review of this service will be carried out separately.

Why sustainable waste management is important.

This strategy recognises the impact that waste management can have on the environment. Dealing with waste uses energy to collect and transport it, using fossil fuels which when burned release greenhouse gases (including methane and carbon dioxide), contributing to climate change.

The strategy also considers the wider environmental impact of items that we use in our daily lives and recognises that the impact on the environment does not begin when things are thrown away. The extraction of raw materials from the earth, material processing, manufacturing and transport are all stages in the process that use energy and emit greenhouse gases.

Recycling uses fewer natural resources from the earth and less energy to produce the same new product. Recycling and composting reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with landfill and incineration.

This strategy is underpinned by the principles of the waste hierarchy that prioritise not producing waste in the first place, then reusing it followed by recycling and composting.

Waste Hierarchy

This strategy is based on the principles of the National waste hierarchy.

The waste hierarchy set out in Article 4 of the Waste Framework (Directive 2008/98/EC) (1) ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment.

It stresses the importance of preventing waste created in the first instance as the main priority, and disposal as the lowest priority. As an organisation producing or collecting waste, we have a legal obligation to manage waste as high up the hierarchy as possible. This strategy aims to raise awareness of waste management within the community to drive waste material up the waste hierarchy.

The waste hierarchy:

- **Reduce** - Minimise the generation of waste products.
- **Reuse** - Redistribute for continued use, minimal processing.
- **Recycle** - Collection of used items, turning them back into raw material.
- **Energy recovery** - Includes anaerobic digestion and incineration with energy recovery.
- **Landfill** - Last resort, no recovery of raw materials or energy.

A case for change

The policy, drivers and research carried out in preparation for this strategy has demonstrated the need for change in frontline service delivery.

Summarised below:

- We have pledged to increase recycling rates, reduce residual black waste and reduce carbon footprint as detailed in the adopted Climate Change Strategy 2024.
- We have a legal obligation to apply the waste hierarchy by reducing, reusing and recycling as much of the waste we collect as possible.
- We need a service that will comply with central government's future direction regarding consistency of collections.
- The current service does not encourage waste minimisation because it offers unlimited collections of general waste.
- We need to offer a wider range of recycling services to meet resident needs and expectations.
- We have committed to work with our Kent partners to ensure that the future collection service is compatible with future waste and recycling transfer and processing arrangements.
- We need to improve the cleanliness of the District's streets, by minimising waste from split bags and the associated detritus.
- We need to ensure that our staff are protected from the risks associated with handling waste and recycling collections and meet regulatory standards.
- We need a collection system that allows us to help residents recycle more when services are used incorrectly, for example, where the wrong items are placed into recycling containers. This will enable us to help bring about behavioural change and will improve performance, by reducing waste and improving recycling.
- Satisfies residual waste (black sack) manual handling safety concerns.

Vision

Deliver waste collection services that insofar as possible meet local priorities, meet government requirements, reduces waste and increases recycle rates.

In order to achieve this, we would need to look at options which may include:

- Glass collection kerbside
- Weekly food collection
- Ways to increase recycling
- Wheelie bins for residual waste
- Additional kerbside collections e.g. textiles, small electrical goods, etc.
- Timetable and frequency of collections

The core new service will include:

A New Glass collection service

Every two weeks, glass waste collected kerbside, from every home for recycling.

New food waste collections

Every week, food waste collected separately from other waste for recycling.

The collection will be for food waste only, not including any food waste packaging, which is placed in the reusable recycling bags.

New Curb Side Collection Service

Over time, reviewing what is collected, how, and how regularly may change to enable the full range of collection types envisaged.

Measuring success

It is important that we are able to measure progress during the life of this strategy, to understand whether our actions are effective. The ways in which we measure success may need amending during the life of this strategy, depending on other policy measures introduced. For example, introduction of a national deposit return scheme will have significant impact upon the amount and type of waste and recycling we

collect. In addition, new government targets introduced could require us to amend how we measure the waste strategy's progress.

Understanding resident satisfaction levels will be a key measure of our service success. Gathering resident feedback on our waste and recycling services will be a fundamental aim and will help shape further our waste strategy. A waste and recycling resident survey will be undertaken early in 2025. Progress towards the aims and objectives within this strategy reported annually to the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee. The overall strategy reviewed every five years or where a substantial change in legislation, policy or other circumstance merits a review outside that timescale.

Objective & Measures

1. Objective: To minimise carbon impact of the waste and recycling service - performance measure(s) tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. How this is measured - we will measure this by analysing the emissions associated with collection, disposal and recycling of our waste and recycling. This analysis carried out after the first full year of the new collection service rollout, and every 2 years thereafter.
2. Objective: Legislative and regulatory compliance. - performance measure not applicable
3. Objective: To reduce levels of household waste - performance measure kg of household waste per head of population. How this will be measured - monitoring the tonnages of all waste types.
4. Objective: To increase quality and quantity of recycling - performance measure percentage of household waste recycled which will be measured by monitoring the tonnages of all waste types. How this will be measured - general waste will be measured by monitoring the tonnages of general waste. Percentage of mixed recycling that is "contamination" will be measured by monitoring performance information from sampling of material at the materials recovery facility.