

## Leeds Household Waste Strategy - Update

Date: 11 December 2024

Report of: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### Brief summary

This report provides Executive Board with an update on relevant national policy, strategy and legislation; together with a strategy for managing household waste in Leeds in a way that meets national Simpler Recycling requirements and helps Leeds residents to reduce the amount of waste they produce that is not re-used or recycled.

In particular, the report seeks approval from the Board for the proposed way forward for kerbside collection of household waste in Leeds, through a “3-bin” approach to provide residents with the opportunity to recycle more at home without the need for more bins.

The report provides an update on the successful progress made since the approval of the existing Leeds Waste Strategy which has seen the addition of plastic pots, tubs and trays, plastic film and bags, and most recently glass bottle and jars to the list of materials/items recycled in Leeds through the green bin. The report explains that these additions, together with improvements to other waste disposal/recycling contracts and the successful energy recovery facility, means that only 0.2% of all household waste and litter collected by Leeds City Council currently goes to landfill.

Furthermore, as part of the 3-bin strategy and transitional approach to meeting Simpler Recycling’s food waste collection requirements, the report recommends the option to add food waste to the list of items allowed in the brown bin should a household choose to do so. Thus creating an organic waste collection service and enabling the brown bin collections to extended to all-year round. Approval is sought to delegate the implementation and related contractual decisions to the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment, subject to affordability within existing budgets.

### Recommendations

- a) To note the updated national position in relation to implementing the national Resource and Waste Strategy, revised/new recycling collection requirements set out in the Environment Act (2021) and the associated Simpler Recycling policy;

- b) To note the progress made so far in Leeds in meeting the Simpler Recycling requirements; including the recent introduction of glass bottles and jars as items now accepted in the green, household recycling bins;
- c) To approve the “3 bin” approach for Leeds, including adding food waste to the list of items allowed in the brown bin together with the associated extension of brown bin collections to all year-round and to up to a further 70,000 households citywide;
- d) Delegate the decision on the implementation and contractual arrangement for adding food waste to the brown bin to the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment, subject to affordability within existing budgets and procurement timelines.
- e) To note the current performance of the refuse service and actions taken to address the challenges in delivering the second largest household collection service in the UK, as set out in Appendix C, and;
- f) To note that the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment will be responsible for implementation of these recommendations.

## **What is this report about?**

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The council currently helps residents to responsibly dispose of and recycle their household/domestic waste in a number of ways:
- Kerbside collection through the refuse service – residual waste (black bins), dry recyclable waste including glass (green bins) and free garden waste (brown bins);
  - Eight free-to-use Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs) open 7 days a week all year round;
  - A network of bring banks, mainly for glass but also small electrical items, batteries, textiles and cardboard;
  - One free annual collection of unwanted bulky items per household, with further collections bookable for a small fee and further free collections for households in receipt of housing support, and;
  - Operation of the online Leeds Accredited Waste Carrier scheme, enabling residents to find responsible and council checked local waste removal companies/people.
- 1.2 In addition, the council directly supports and works with organisations that reuse unwanted household items to avoid them becoming waste in a number of ways, for example:
- the award-winning partnership with Revive for three dedicated re-use shops at Kirkstall and Seacroft HWRCs and the recently opened unit in Hunslet, making the most of items taken to our HWRC;
  - payments to local re-use charities to support the collection, re-use and resale of unwanted furniture and other household items, diverting them from waste disposal;
  - contract with the Leeds based Seagull Paints to collect and recycle paint from the HWRCs;
  - a lead partner, through Active Leeds, in the Leeds Equipment and Kit Exchange Partnership, and;

- supporting the hugely successful Leeds School Uniform Exchange and Together for Sport schemes organised by the Zero Waste Leeds movement.

- 1.3 This paper focusses on the kerbside collection of household waste. It proposes a way forward to improve the options available to residents to recycle more from their home through their kerbside collections, but in a way that makes that as simple as possible for the customer and minimises the need for more bins and sorting of waste materials in the house.
- 1.4 Crucially, the proposed approach will lead to the council meeting the new, national Simpler Recycling requirements, improve recycling rates, be deliverable within the resources known to be available at each stage and make the most of existing resources and infrastructure.
- 1.5 The successful delivery of changes to how households waste is collected will be critical and a summary of existing performance of the refuse service is provided in Appendix C, to be read within the local context provided in section 3 below.

## 2.0 National context (Simpler Recycling and Extended Producer Responsibility):

- 2.1 Initially called *Consistency of Collections* the Government’s Simpler Recycling approach aims to make bin day simpler, boost recycling rates, and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.
- 2.2 The Government has made clear through the related legislative guidance it expects councils to minimise the number of different bins households must sort their waste into, and to keep residual waste collections to at least fortnightly. Following consultations that started back in 2019 and the approval of the Environment Act (2021), [DEFRA announced in May 2024](#) that:

*“The government has set out how the drive to better and simpler recycling will work, listening to councils who want to avoid streets cluttered with bins while doing what is best for the local community. Councils will be allowed to collect plastic, metal, glass, paper and card in one bin in all circumstances. Similarly, food and garden waste will also be allowed to be co-collected. This will reduce confusion over what items can be recycled, as people will no longer have to check what their specific council will accept for recycling. It will also reduce complexity for councils and other waste collectors, ensuring they retain the flexibility to collect recyclable waste in the most appropriate way for their local areas.”...“This means local authorities and other waste collectors in England will provide a minimum of 3 bins to households: residual, dry recyclable and organic waste.”.*

- 2.3 We still await publishing statutory guidance for Simpler Recycling. However, on May 14<sup>th</sup> 2024 the Government published the much delayed statutory commencement regulations/statutory instrument relating to the Managing Waste sections of the Act which set out commencement dates as follows:

Waste stream(s)	New requirements by:
Glass, metal, paper and card, plastics (except plastic film*)	31 March 2026
Food	31 March 2026
Garden**	31 March 2026
New requirements for minimum collections of residual waste	31 March 2026
Plastic/metal drinks containers (national Deposit Return Scheme)	October 2027

\* Plastic film to be added to the plastics waste stream by 31 March 2027

\*\* Charging for garden waste collections will be allowed and the service can continue to be delivered seasonally

2.4 In late November 2024, the Government published a [Simpler Recycling in England: policy update](#) that included:

*“The new default requirement for most households and workplaces will be 4 containers for:*

- *residual (non-recyclable) waste*
- *food waste (mixed with garden waste if appropriate)*
- *paper and card*
- *all other dry recyclable materials (plastic, metal and glass)*

*These may be various container types, including bags, bins or stackable boxes.*

*This is the government’s maximum default requirement and is not expected to increase in the future. However, councils and other waste collectors will still have the flexibility to make the best choices to suit local need. This is a sensible, pragmatic approach to the collection of materials for every household and business in England.”*

2.5 The update also stated that *“Secondary legislation implementing the policy updates will be laid in December 2024, subject to parliamentary process.”*

2.6 In relation to the co-mingling of recyclable waste streams in order to achieve the minimum bins for the customer to manage, the revised policy states:

**For dry materials recycling:**

*“Local flexibility to co-collect paper and card with other dry materials remains where separate collection is technically or economically impracticable, or provides no significant environmental benefit.”*

*“Waste collectors will need to produce a short written assessment explaining their decision”.*

**For food and garden waste (organic) recycling:**

*“To maximise flexibility for local authorities and households, we are introducing an exemption to allow the co-collection of food and garden waste. There is no evidence that this would affect their ability to be recycled or composted, since the materials can always be processed through in-vessel composting when mixed.”*

2.7 Underpinning the Simpler Recycling aims are three key national schemes for which the successful and timely implementation will be critical in meeting the above timescales. These are:

**a. Packaging reforms: Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).**

Extended Producer Responsibility is an established policy approach adopted by many countries around the world, across a broad range of products and materials. It gives producers an incentive to make better, more sustainable decisions at the product design stage including decisions that make it easier for products to be re-used or recycled at their end of life. It also places the financial cost of managing products once they reach end of life on producers. The EPR scheme being introduced in the UK will focus on packaging.

Under the proposals, packaging producers will be made responsible for the full cost of managing the packaging they place on the market. This cost transfer, from the public purse and those who dispose of packaging waste, will incentivise producers to question whether the packaging they use is necessary, could be reduced or not used at all. The

Government originally estimated that their costs will be in the region of £2.7bn in the first full year of implementation, however a figure of £1.1bn for EPR was quoted in the October 2024 Budget announcements.

After a number of delays, [DEFRA have confirmed](#) EPR fees will be payable from 2025. In late November 2024 informed Councils of the estimated amount of on-going revenue funding they will receive from 2025/26 to pay for the collection, processing and recycling of packaging (including glass). This includes the related costs incurred by refuse collections, household waste and recycling centres and bring sites; but not litter collection/disposal.

Councils now have the opportunity to respond to the estimate/workings provided with a final figure expected to be published by April 2025. DEFRA have confirmed the Government will guarantee this estimated amount for the first financial year of EPR (2025/26), which for Leeds is £14.24m.

Under the plans, fees charged to producers will be modulated to further incentivise change and payments to councils subject to efficiency and effectiveness challenge.

**b. Food waste collections:**

In March 2024, DEFRA provided councils with a share of the one-off capital allocation to support the purchase of infrastructure required to collect food waste, i.e. refuse collection vehicles, bins and caddies. Leeds has been allocated £7.1m.

The Government has committed to providing councils with ongoing, new burden revenue funding to pay for the collection of food waste, but has yet to provide any information on how much that would be. It has also committed to providing councils with a share of transitional funding in 2024/25 and 2025/26. An update on both funding streams is expected as part of the Local Government settlement announcement in December 2024.

In terms of collection models/options the advice from DEFRA has moved towards the comingled collection of organic (garden and food) waste where that makes the most sense locally and supports the Simpler Recycling aims. The legislative requirement remains for a weekly collection from 2026 where food waste is included, despite fortnightly comingled garden/food collections being successfully delivered already in places such as Hull, East Riding and the Manchester area. However, the Government has yet publish the necessary statutory guidance and has indicated it will consider supporting transitional arrangements.

The continued absence of confirmation of the necessary funding and the required statutory guidance makes it impractical and unviable to make a decision to introduce separate, weekly collections at this stage, and so an incremental/transitional approach is being proposed that utilises the existing, unique level of infrastructure already in place in Leeds to make a significant impact in terms of introducing food waste collections to the majority of the city and therefore the behavioural/habitual change required.

**c. Plastic and metal drinks containers: national Deposit Return Scheme (DRS):**

As well as improving recycling rates for these items, the main aim is to reduce litter and help combat the effects of plastic pollution. The scheme will be for single use, polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles and steel/aluminium cans (restricted to bottles/cans of between 50ml-3 litres). Indications are that DEFRA are looking at a deposit value in the region of 20p per container/item.

DEFRA has announced the further delay of the scheme, pushing back the planned implementation to October 2027. This means the cost of collecting and disposing of these drinks containers (whether that be in green bins or litter bins) in the meantime remains the responsibility of councils, as they will not be covered by the EPR for packaging scheme.

In terms of impact for Leeds, we will need to factor in the reduction in plastic bottles and drinks cans from our green bins and the effect on collections, as well as the recycling materials sorting contract.

### **3.0 Local Context:**

3.1 In terms of what that means locally, Leeds has a number of challenges and opportunities in deciding on the best “Simpler Recycling” delivery option for residents.

#### **Practical challenges for bin storage, presentation and collections.**

3.2 Leeds is a large city, both in population and geography. As well as inner city and suburban areas, it has many towns and villages. Many estates/neighbourhoods have very limited space for households to store bins, together with shortage of space/places to present bins for collection without causing obstructions on pavements. There are huge areas of terraced housing in places such as Harehills, Headingley, Hyde Park and Beeston, with no driveways and small or non-existent garden/yard space. Estates such as Miles Hill, Cottingley and Holt Park have been designed and built with little regard to how refuse wagons can safely manoeuvre to access bins for collection. Cars compete in such areas for precious parking space making access even more challenging. Leeds also has numerous high-rise flats and expanding city centre living, mostly served by large numbers of communal bins. Some of the villages in the outer areas of the city present similar presentation and access challenges.

3.3 The Council has invested in recent years in ways to improve access to bins and therefore the reliability of collections, including use of new Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) and the planned trebling of streets served by smaller, “hard to access” refuse collection vehicles.

3.4 The capacity for additional bins/collections is therefore already limited, with households perhaps better served by having the option of an extra recycling (green) bin rather than being required to have additional colour bin(s) and further collection days.

#### **Improvements and Opportunities:**

3.5 Leeds City Council delivers the second largest refuse service in the United Kingdom; regularly emptying around half a million bins every week.

3.6 The kerbside collection recycling offer in Leeds is delivered through the green bin, which is emptied fortnightly for the majority of households. Unlike most towns and cities, the Leeds recycling bin accepts all dry recyclable materials in the same bin. Recycling markets are found for all the sorted materials, often above average market value; demonstrating the success of this “one recycling bin” approach.

3.7 The recent introduction (August 2024) of glass bottles and jars as items now accepted in the Leeds green bin, means the requirement for the five dry recyclable waste streams to be collected from the kerbside by 2026 is already being met (i.e. glass, metal, paper and card, plastics). Plastic film can also be recycled in Leeds through the green bin meaning that future Simpler Recycling requirement is already being met too.

3.8 Also in 2024, as part of the household waste collection strategy, the council increased recycling collections for 10,000 households, moving them from 4-weekly to fortnightly collections. Plans are in place for a further 20,000 properties to move to fortnightly green bin

collections and 20,000 properties in the most densely populated parts of the city to move to weekly green bin collections. This would mean that no household in Leeds would have a recycling collection less frequent than fortnightly.

3.9 The garden waste collection service is the largest in the country, currently emptying brown bins from about 221,000 households; a figure helped by the fact there is no extra charge for this service, unlike the majority of other council areas.

4.0 This unique existing level of infrastructure provides a huge opportunity to make early progress on the one remaining Simpler Recycling requirement, to offer a kerbside food waste collection service, and at the same time extend the garden waste collections to all year round (they are currently suspended in the winter).

#### **4.0 A three bin solution for Leeds – proposed incremental approach to food waste:**

4.1 Leeds has an opportunity to build on the existing infrastructure and approach to how household waste is collected across the city, to deliver a minimal bin and customer-based solution aspired to through the national Simpler Recycling policy guidance.

4.2 The proposed approach is to incrementally move towards full compliance with the Simpler Recycling requirements in relation to food waste. This needs to be done in a way that is affordable within confirmed resources and also provides residents with choices/options to support and encourage the changes in habits and behaviours required within the household.

4.3 As no year-on-year or transitional revenue funding has yet been confirmed by Government for food waste collections, the following incremental approach is proposed in order to make available the option to recycle food waste to as many households as possible ahead of 2026 and to begin the change in habits/behaviours required:

- Add food waste to the list of garden waste items allowed in the brown bin in Leeds.
- Change the collection of brown bins to all year round.
- Increase the number of households able to have a brown bin.
- Deliver a solution for the remaining households without a brown bin (predominantly flats and areas of dense, terraced housing).
- Review the fortnightly collection of food/garden waste in line with legislative requirements (e.g. for weekly food waste collections) and confirmed, available funding.

4.4 It is felt important to make decisions and progress ahead of any future confirmation of funding as there are significant procurement challenges that will increase in difficulty as more councils compete for the bins, caddies, liners, fleet and staff required in time for the 2026 timeline.

4.5 In implementing this new approach, it will be done so in a manner that provides flexibility in relevant operational and contractual arrangements to respond as required to national policy developments. So, for example, should Government insist on weekly food collections and provide sufficient funding to allow this, our approach will be re-assessed and reviewed to meet legislative requirements.

### **What impact will this proposal have?**

#### **5.1 Service Improvement/Customers**

Following presentation of the draft strategy/way forward to both the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Board and the Consultative Meeting for Members of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee in September, a FAQ style response to the common issues raised is provided in Appendix A. These focus on some of the practicalities for

customers/households for food waste collections through brown bins. The key points to highlight in terms of customer impact is that:

- The 3-bin strategy is customer focused – to minimise the number of different bins required to be presented and to make the sorting at home as simple as possible.
- The approach for food waste in the same as with glass, in that it provides the customer with choices on how they wish to best dispose of these waste streams, which may vary depending on the amount of waste they have at any time.

## 5.2 Helping the council meet new legislative requirements.

The national Simpler Recycling scheme requirements are summarised in Section 2. These deliver the new statutory requirements set out in the Environment Act (2021). The recent changes made and proposed way forward in this report mean the council will already meet the requirements in relation to the collection and recycling of glass, metals, plastics, paper/card, plastic film and garden waste. The 3-bin element of the strategy, including the increasing of recycling collections without reducing the residual (black bin) collection frequency, also means the council is meeting the Simpler Recycling objectives to minimise the number of bins required by a households and delivers the proposed requirements relating to the collection of residual waste. The proposal to begin the first stage of food waste collections across the majority of Leeds as part of an incremental approach to meeting the future legislative requirements and ahead of any confirmation of the expected Government funding to deliver weekly collections, helps households begin the changes in habits required to separate food waste so it can be collected and recycled rather than incinerated.

## 5.3 Recycling rates

The impact of the household waste collection strategy and proposed 3-bin approach in Leeds is forecast to increase the city's overall recycling rate from 35.4% to 52.3%. This includes the increase in the number of households receiving fortnightly recycling collections, new weekly recycling collections for the most densely populated areas, adding glass to the items recycled through the green bin, and the proposed addition of food to the items allowed in the brown bin and associated expansion of that service. The element of increase associated with the proposed addition of food waste to the brown bin (including increased garden waste recycling) is estimated to be +11%.

## How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 6.1 The improvements being made through the household waste strategy will improve recycling rates from 35.4% to over 50%. This complements the fact that only 0.2% of all household waste collected across Leeds goes to landfill.
- 6.2 The proposed addition of food waste to the brown bin, together with the expansion of the collections to all year round and to more households, will account for +11% of that increase.
- 6.3 By implementing a 3-bin strategy that maximises the use of the existing green and brown collection infrastructure, this considerably reduces the amount of wagons required and therefore the number of LGVs on the road in neighbourhoods, carbon impact, emissions and noise.
- 6.3 In addition, it is hoped the collection and recycling of food waste will contribute towards objectives of the Leeds Food Waste strategy, making clearer to households the amount of food waste they throw away and influencing a positive change in their behaviour towards food. A report published by WRAP in 2020 concludes that separate food waste collections “are significantly associated with lower total food waste arisings amongst householders”.



- 6.4 The proposed addition of food waste to the brown bin collections will therefore contribute towards the following Team Leeds objective within the Health and Welbeing pillar:
- “Promoting a vibrant and resilient food economy for Leeds so everyone can access and enjoy a healthy diet, where more produce is grown locally, and less food is wasted”.

### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: ALL

Have ward members been consulted?  Yes  No

- 7.1 A [report](#) summarising the proposed “3-bin” way forward for household waste collection in Leeds was presented to the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Board (19<sup>th</sup> September 2024) and the Consultative Meeting of the Members of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024). This included reference to the preferred option to add food waste as an item allowed in the brown bin.
- 7.2 The Scrutiny Board Members “welcomed the early engagement and look forward to further information as the proposal is developed”.
- 7.3 The CEAC meeting recorded “support offered by Members for the brown bin option for forthcoming food waste proposals”.

### What are the resource implications?

- 8.1 The Government has committed to providing councils with sufficient funding to cover the cost of collecting food waste from the kerbside on a weekly basis.
- 8.2 To date, the council has received a one-off £6.8m of capital funding from DEFRA to be spent on fleet, new bins and caddies to be used on food waste collections. A further £0.3m has been promised but has not yet been received. This money cannot be spent on caddy liners or delivery costs. This funding will be utilised to enable the first stage of the approach.
- 8.3 Although a commitment has been made by Government to fund the on-going annual collection costs from 2026 (e.g. for the cost of the crews, fleet maintenance/fuel, support services and facility costs), DEFRA has yet to confirm the amount that councils will get, the basis on which it has been calculated and the detail of conditions attached to the funding.
- 8.4 DEFRA has however previously announced a £60m “transitional resource funding” to be available from 2024/25 and into 2025/26, to assist councils in their set-up/project costs relating to food waste collections. It is expected that this funding will help pay for non-capital items such as liners and delivery costs as well as other project development costs. DEFRA stated in their November 2024 Simpler Recycling update that councils should expect, “by the end of financial year 2024/25, delivery of transitional resource new burdens funding to local authorities for weekly food waste collections”.
- 8.5 The progress of the incremental approach to eventually providing all households with access to a weekly collection of food waste will depend on affordability within the resources available to the council at each stage.
- 8.6 Therefore the proposed first stage, which would see the option for households to be able to utilise the brown bin for food waste, would need to be cost neutral in the absence of any DEFRA funding until at least 2026. Indeed it is calculated an initial annual net saving of up to £1.6m could be made related to the more efficient utilisation of fleet enabled by co-mingling

and the net reduction of the disposal cost of food (composting instead of incineration). This figure is included in the budget paper being considered by Executive Board at this meeting.

- 8.7 That figure should increase when the new burdens funding committed to by Government from 2026/27 is made available to cover collection costs. It also assumes the transitional monies committed to by DEFRA will be available in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to cover the delivery costs of caddies and liners, together with project management and communication costs
- 8.7 Future incremental stages would be dependent on the funding made available by DEFRA and the conditions attached to it.

### **What are the key risks and how are they being managed?**

- 9 The table provided in Appendix B identifies the key risks that will be managed and monitored as the strategy and the incremental delivery of food waste collections is implemented.

### **What are the legal implications?**

- 10 There are no direct legal implications of the recommendations in this report.
- 11 The implementation by the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment of the decision to add household food waste to the list of items allowed in the organic waste bin (brown bin) will involve delegated decisions relating to waste disposal contracts and procurement of caddies and liners.
- 12 The future legislative requirements that recommended strategy/approach will help meet are set out in Section 5.2.

## **Options, timescales and measuring success**

### **What other options were considered?**

- 13 Two other options were considered:

*Do nothing.*

This option would have meant no fleet or disposal savings in 2025/26, and a further year's delay in improving recycling rates and in beginning the significant change in habits/behaviours required within households to get food waste out of the black bin and recycled instead.

*Introduce weekly, separate food waste collections.*

The additional annual cost of doing this citywide would be £5.7m in 2025/26 and with no guarantee of sufficient Government new burdens funding to meet those costs from 2026/27. It would also potentially require the purchasing and crew for a further 30 refuse collection vehicles and the facilities building for the additional fleet/staff (the cost of which is not included in the above £5.7m figure and the practicalities of which would make the timescale impossible for 2025/26 implementation and unlikely for 2026/27). A smaller, first phase area was considered but that would still require additional funding/resources to implement in 2025/26 and would have had much less impact in terms of improving the city's recycling rates. This option would also necessitate moving to a 4-bin strategy for household waste collections with a separate kerbside bin/container for food and gardens waste, and mean that garden waste collections would remain seasonal and not extended to more households.

## How will success be measured?

- 14 The main measurable outcomes will be:
- An increase in the city's recycling rate following the introduction of glass and food as waste residents can choose to put in their green and brown bins respectively. The forecast is to increase the rate to over 50% once food waste collections is offered to all households.
  - The total amount of household waste collected from Leeds households that is disposed of in landfill will remain below 0.5%.
  - All households will have a dry recycling collection (green bins) at least once a fortnight, with the most densely populated areas receiving a weekly recycling collection.
  - The organic collection service (brown bins) will be delivered all year round;
  - The organic collection service (brown bins) will be expanded to cover 80% of households.
  - A solution for the weekly collection of food waste will be developed for those remaining households where a brown bin is not viable.
  - Collections rates (as measure through the existing methodology) will remain above
  - The national Simpler Recycling requirements will be met for the collection and recycling of glass, metals, plastics, paper/card, plastic film, food waste and garden waste.

## What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

- 15 The following as an indicative timetable, but will be subject to procurement timescales and deliverability within available budget:

Milestone	Timescale
Add food waste to the list of garden waste items allowed in the brown bin in Leeds.	Autumn 2025 (earlier if procurement allows)
Change the collection of brown bins to all year round.	Autumn 2025
Increase the number of households able to have a brown bin.	Autumn 2025
Deliver a solution for the remaining households without a brown bin (predominantly flats and areas of dense, terraced housing).	By spring 2026
Review the fortnightly collection of food/garden waste in line with legislative requirements (e.g. for weekly food waste collections) and confirmed, available funding.	Transitional arrangements to be agreed with DEFRA by 2026

- 16 The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment will be responsible for implementation.

## Appendices

- Appendix A: Adding food waste to items allowed in the brown bin – FAQs
- Appendix B: Key risks and how they will be managed/monitored.
- Appendix C: Refuse Service performance update
- Appendix D: Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening

## Background papers

- None

## **Appendix A: Adding food waste to items allowed in the brown bin – FAQs.**

**The following FAQ responses are based on current thinking on how the proposal would work, and are subject to change depending on resources, contract conditions and government policy.**

### **Who would be able to recycle food waste?**

Initially, the 221,000 Leeds households already in receipt of the brown bin collection service would be informed they can begin putting the additional item of food into their bin. Those households would then have the choice of how they dispose of their food waste. We would also look to extend this provision at the same time to those new housing developments that would normally be eligible for a brown bin for garden waste.

### **What about those households currently ineligible for a brown bin collection?**

Brown bin collections would be made available to more households citywide, possibly using a smaller size bin for those households with little or no gardens. Again, households will be able to choose whether to have a brown bin to use for garden and/or food waste. The scale and timing of this further rollout of the service will be determined by affordability and subject to procurement timelines (for example additional bins, food caddies and liners). Any initial expansion of the service would probably exclude households served by communal bins; primarily flats/apartments and other houses of multiple occupation. There is the potential to reach a further 70,000 households in this expansion phase, leaving about 70,000 households to create a separate solution for food waste collections.

### **Would households get any kitchen caddies and/or liners to help separate and dispose of their food waste in the brown bin?**

Yes. The proposed approach would be to provide households with a free kitchen caddy and a supply of compostable liners (though future provision of free liners could be dependent on sufficient new burdens funding from Government).

### **What food waste can be put in the brown bin?**

Pretty much anything, including bones. A full list would be provided to households.

### **Won't the brown bins get smelly and messy?**

It is worth reflecting that food waste is already thrown away into the black bins by households and then collected fortnightly. This proposed approach gives residents the choice whether/when to throw that waste into their brown bin and/or black bin. The more food waste that is put in the brown bins that better in terms of environmental and resource outcomes, but residents will have that choice. The experience shared from places that already do this (e.g. Hull, Greater Manchester, East Riding) is residents understand it is their responsibility to make decisions and to use the brown bin sensibly in how they dispose of food waste in it,

### **What happens to the mixture of garden and food waste that is collected?**

The details will depend on the contractor that wins the contract for the disposal of the waste, but it is likely to be through a process referred to as "in-vessel composting" (IVC) that results in the waste being made into compost within 6 weeks of collection. The compost is then usually used mainly for agriculture.

### **When will this start?**

There remains significant work to complete for a contract to be in place to take the waste to, to procure and distribute kitchen caddies and liners and to consider any changes that may be required to collection routes, particularly when additional households are offered brown bins. We also need to be confident the set up and ongoing costs can be afforded. The aim will be to start the first mixed garden/food waste collections in 2025.

### **When will the collections move to weekly?**

Funding for the cost of weekly collection of food waste has been committed to by Government as part of the national Simpler Recycling policy, which includes the requirement for weekly food waste collections from 2026. To date no details or confirmation of the funding have been provided to councils and it is unclear if any budget within DEFRA exists for this and there was no reference to it within the recent budget statement.

We estimate to deliver separate food waste collections across Leeds would cost in the region of £5.5m extra per year, and would require a 4<sup>th</sup> bin/container for households. It would require new depot space and facilities to be identified and built, as well as a new contract for anaerobic digestion of the food waste. Without confirmed funding and the detail on the conditions attached, the choice we have currently is to do nothing and continue to wait, or utilise the existing, unique scale of infrastructure we have in Leeds to introduce food waste collections to the majority of households and begin the change in habits required. When the required clarity has been provided we will be able to review the approach and discuss with DEFRA if, how and when we move to weekly collections in Leeds and the best, affordable way to do that.

## Appendix B: Key risks and how they will be managed/monitored.

Risk		Actions/Monitoring
1	The financial modelling of the option to add food waste to the items allowed in brown bins from 2025/26 includes the assumption the delivery of new Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs) can be made by the beginning of the financial year.	Fleet Services are leading the procurement process and on track for delivery in early 2025.
2	The financial modelling of the option to add food waste also assume the availability of the related transitional funding committed to by DEFRA for use in 2024/25 and 2025/26. It is assumed this will be available to use to offset delivery and project management costs.	<p>The decision relating to the implementation of the proposed addition of food waste to the brown bin will be with the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment. Consideration will be given to the affordability and timing in making that decision.</p> <p>Latest DEFRA update is to expect this new burdens transitional funding by the end of 2024/25.</p>
3	Currently the provision of garden waste collections (brown bins) is discretionary and priority is given to ensuring the general waste (black bin) and recycling (green bin) are collected. The option to put food in the brown bin will increase the need to ensure scheduled collections are made and brown bins are not left uncollected for a further 2 weeks.	In addition to the actions highlighted in this report to increase the operational staffing cover pool, the operational/financial modelling for the proposed addition of food waste to the brown bin collections includes provision for a permanent recovery crew and an extra loader for every brown bin crew during peak garden waste season.
4	The operational and financial modelling makes a number of assumptions re the amount of food waste that will be put in brown bins and the how the expansion of the brown bins up to 291k households and all year round will affect waste tonnages etc. A key assumption that has the greatest impact on the level of savings is that about 50% of the estimated food waste currently in the black bins will be put in the brown bin instead. Based on the best quality data comparator we have of a council who is delivering a fortnightly, comingled garden/food collection, this seems a realistic assumption. However it should be noted that the disposal costs would increase/decrease by approximately £0.4m for every 10% difference in that 50% assumption of the waste moving from black to brown bins.	The free provision of caddies and liners will encourage greater use of the brown bins for food waste. A composition analysis of waste in the black bins will be undertaken to assess how much food waste remains, plus contractor feedback on the amount of food waste in the co-mingled mix will help monitor the diversion rate. Public comms will focus on encouraging more food waste diversion from the black to the brown bin (as with glass from the black to green bin).
5	The modelling assumes an overall reduction in black bin waste of around	The ongoing route review (now at phase 2 of 3) will rework the route redesigns for the city's AWC

	<p>20% (when added to the lesser effect of glass moving to the green bin). This will require the current alternate weekly collection (AWC) routes to be redesigned on these new forecast tonnages from March/April 2025. It is assumed this will result in a reduction of 3 AWC routes, the savings for which will help fund the co-mingled garden/food waste collections (effectively moving those 3 route capacities across).</p>	<p>collection routes to take out the estimated diversion of glass and food waste. Initial modelling work indicates the assumption of at least 3 less routes being required is realistic. The completion of this work and implementation in time for the introduction of food waste to the brown bin in 2025 will be prioritised.</p>
6	<p>The plan assumes that from 2026/27 the council introduces a weekly separate food collection offer to the remaining 72k households without a brown bin, which includes households in flats/high-rise/terraced housing. The financial modelling assumes this has no net cost to LCC. Once funding has been announced by DEFRA, we can look at the options for how this is delivered, and whether that includes consideration of procuring this service.</p>	<p>This cannot progress without sufficient, new burden resources from Government so there is no net cost. Once the level of funding available is known we can test the market to determine what solutions are available/viable. One option may be to pilot an approach initially with any funding made available.</p>
7	<p>DEFRA are aware of our preferred phased approach and we have sought assurances about their support for introducing fortnightly food waste collections as a significant step toward eventual full compliance with Simpler Recycling as a practical and financial necessity.</p>	<p>Continue dialogue with DEFRA re future Simpler Recycling requirements and funding available for new burdens. Including possible concessions due to the economic and practical barriers to weekly food waste collections in Leeds.</p>



## Appendix C: Refuse Service performance update.

A request was made by Council at the September 2024 meeting for an update to be provided to Executive Board on “how the service can be further improved to benefit the residents of Leeds”.

This followed discussion in the Chamber on some difficulties experienced during late spring/early summer in completing all the bin collections on the scheduled day and concern expressed about the reliability of the “missed bins” information sent to ward members at the end of every collection day. Reference was also made to the improvements being made to recycling collections.

### 1. Problems completing all garden waste collections (brown bins) in late spring/early summer:

Leeds has by far the largest kerbside garden waste collection service in the UK with about 221,000 households (60% of the city) able to present a brown bin for collection every fortnight. Leeds is in the minority of councils who do not charge extra for this discretionary service. The kerbside collection of garden waste is designed to help those households with sufficiently sized gardens and complements the availability of the eight free to use Household Waste and Recycling Centres open 7-days a week, all year round; and home composting. Any property that does not receive the service can book up to 5 free collections of bagged garden waste per year.

The refuse service experienced difficulties in completing all bin collections on a number of occasions in May and June 2024. Unfortunately, due to difficulties mainly in getting driver cover, the ability to revisit missed streets was severely affected, meaning the service was unable to recover all bins within the two-day timescale aimed for, and a small proportion were not recovered at all.

On days the service is unable to send all 75 crews/wagons out to fully complete the collection rounds due, it would normally prioritise the statutory black and green bin collections. On the rare occasions the service needs to stand a brown bin route(s) it chooses the route(s) with the least amount of garden waste due to be emptied that day based on previous tonnage records. It also tries to avoid consecutive misses for the same collection route.

Between the restart of brown bin collections on 1<sup>st</sup> April and July 2024, on average the service successfully sent out 97.5% of crews scheduled each day. Of the 2.5% that were missed, half of those were successfully emptied within a few days, leaving just over 1% of scheduled collections uncollected and having to wait until the next collection.

Communications were sent to ward members on missed collections and the reasons why.

Despite these issues, during that first part of the year (from March to August) the garden waste crews collected about 10% more from brown bins than the 3-year average. This equates to just over 8% more garden waste collected compared to the same period last year and over 4,000 tonnes more than two years ago, as shown below;

Year	Tonnes of waste collected
2024	23,108
2023	21,336
2022	18,907

So, although there were some difficulties in completing all collections on the scheduled day, and with a small amount of collections missed altogether, the overall productivity of the service was higher than previous years and Leeds residents were able to dispose of more garden waste through their brown bins.

## **The effect on customer contact/complaints:**

The issues highlighted above, together with the later than usual restart of the garden waste collections (the first brown bins were collected on April 1<sup>st</sup> in 2024, 2/3 weeks later than in previous years), resulted in a higher than usual amount of contact from customer reporting and enquiring about missed collections.

This national/historic metric is used as the basis for the missed bins performance data that is provided to the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Board and to Executive Board as part of the Annual Corporate Performance Report. This includes customer reports/complaints of missed bins from 5pm on the day of the scheduled collection.

An analysis of that missed bin data available for the April to July 2024 period shows the reporting of missed brown bins by customers increased in comparison to the same period in last two years. The proportion of brown bins reported missed in the worst performing month of June was 0.48%; This compares to 0.18% in June 2023 and 0.19% in June 2022.

The analysis shows that since August 2024 the reports of missed bins by customers have reduced back to similar levels of previous years. The proportion of bins reported as missed in October 2024 was 0.12%; or put another way a success rate of 99.88%. This compares to 99.89% in October 2023.

## **Action taken by the service:**

### **a) *To reduce the risk of staffing resource issues impacting on collections:***

The cover pool of Loaders and Chargehands (drivers) has been increased through a summer recruitment drive, reducing the reliance on overtime and/or agency staff to cover for absences. Vacancies are being released for recruitment despite the general council wide freeze. An additional agency has been sourced to increase the availability of loaders and drivers at pressure points during the year should the increased staffing pool and overtime availability be insufficient.

### **b) *To improve the reliability of the information provided to Ward Members on the End of Day report:***

The service provides a report at the end of every collection day (Monday-Saturday) that summarises the streets where collections were not possible that day. The majority of the misses reported are due to access problems. This is copied to the sets of ward members that the streets relate to. The information contained in this report has been improved over recent years, for example to be more descriptive of the reason for the miss.

Further training and support has been provided to staff to ensure the importance of accurate recording is fully understood and they are able to carry out that task. An action plan has been developed and implemented to review and improve processes from the crews to back office. The amount of contact from Elected Members in relation to missed collections that are not on the End of Day report has now fallen.

## **2. Other service performance updates:**

The service has delivered significant changes to improve/expand the service offered to Leeds households during 2024. These are:

### **a) *The introduction of glass recycling through the green bin:***

On August 1<sup>st</sup> 2024, all Leeds residents were able to recycle glass bottles and jars for the first time through their green bin. The data for October shows that crews are emptying about 900

tonnes of glass each month through the green bin collections. Thanks to increased productivity, staff are now emptying between 20-30% more waste by weight on green bin collection days.

This means that the Leeds refuse service is already meeting the national Simpler Recycling/Environment Act requirements for 2026 in relation to the dry recycling materials that must be collected and recycled through kerbside collections (i.e. glass, metals, plastics, card/paper and plastic film). The projections are for this service improvement to increase the Leeds recycling rate by 3.2%.

**b) The expansion of fortnightly recycling collections (green bins) to 10,000 more households:**

In March 2024 the service introduced alternate week collections to 10,000 households in streets/areas that had been excluded from previous roll-outs of this service, This increased the green bin collection from every 4 weeks to every 2 weeks for these households.

The next phase is to undertake the same exercise for the remaining 40,000 households that still have a 4 weekly green bin collection. Plans are in place half of these households to move to weekly green bin recycling collection, with the other half increasing to fortnightly. However, all these households would stay on a weekly black bin collection due to being in areas of dense housing and concentrated populations. This phase should be implemented early in 2025.

The projected impact of these improvements is to increase the Leeds recycling rate by a further 1.8%.

**c) Landfill rate:**

Over the last 12 months, the service has helped achieve the city's lowest landfill rate on record, at 0.2% of all household waste collected. This compares to 70% of Leeds household waste going to landfill in 2010. It is the second lowest landfill rate of the UK's core cities.

**d) First all-electric refuse collection vehicles for Leeds:**

In November 2024, the service took delivery of the first two fully electric refuse collection wagons to operate in the service, with a third due to be delivered by the end of December. This will help further reduce the carbon impact, emissions and noise created by these LGVs.