

## Portfolio Holder Briefing Food Waste and Simpler Recycling Update Feb 2025

This portfolio holder briefing outlines details of the legally required weekly domestic food waste collections and an outline of the Simpler Recycling changes announced by government, and the implications for Fenland.

### Weekly Food Waste Collections

Members will recall that the national changes to domestic waste collections have been in consultation and ongoing discussion since originally set out in 2018.

The government outlined a plan for:

- the weekly collection of domestic food waste (from April 2026),
- a deposit return scheme for drinks containers (now commencing October 2027),
- extended responsibility for packaging producers (commencing April 2025) and,
- simplification of recycling systems across the country (from April 2026).

Following delays because of the pandemic, the weekly collection of food waste from all properties will be a legal requirement for Fenland and all other English collection authorities from the end of March 2026.

Officers have a detailed project plan in place to successfully deliver this change to domestic waste collections in Fenland and are working up a Fenland specific communication plan for member approval.

‘All properties’ includes flats, communal collection areas and remote properties. For Fenland there are around 1,709 (3%) of properties that are on either narrow or extremely remote roads, 3,953 (8%) are flats and 16,257 (33%) are rural.

Defra have provided capital funding of £1,061,991 towards the vehicles and other equipment, such as food waste caddies, required for the implementation.

The food waste specific collection vehicles have been ordered and Cabinet approval will soon be sought to secure the required containers for the food waste collection.

### Waste Analysis



Figure 1: Residual Waste Analysis Results

Fenland’s most recent waste analysis demonstrates large percentages of food waste within residual (green bin/black bag) waste.

The waste analysis shows that each property creates almost 180 kg of food waste each year. This is more than a third of the residual waste collected.

We know from the experience of other authorities that, with ongoing good quality communications and the provision of kitchen caddies and liners, around half of this material is separated for the food waste collection by customers.

If participation is good, the additional food waste collections have the potential to reduce the amount of resource required for residual collections.

### Collection Caddies

Below are the standard receptacles that suit the vehicles ordered. These are a small 5 litre kitchen caddy to help customers separate their food waste in their homes, caddy liners to improve cleanliness and uptake, and the 23 litre lockable outdoor container that is presented by the customer to allow the crews to collect the food waste.

Communal collection points will also be provided to allow customers who live in flats to access the service, along with kitchen caddies to all properties.

5 litre kitchen caddy	All properties	
Roll of caddy liners	All properties	
23 litre outdoor caddy with lockable handle	All properties with a suitable kerbside waste collection point	
120 – 240 litre wheeled bin housing	Communal collection points shared by flatted properties.	

## What Is Collected

The detail of the types of food waste customers will be able to recycle will require confirmation from the County Council and their contractor, but will likely include:

- Food waste, such as plate scrapings and spoilt or mouldy food
- fruit and vegetables, including peelings, rinds and cores
- All food scraps, including eggshells, bread, rice, pasta
- cooked or raw meat and fish, including bones
- dairy foods, such as cheese, eggs, yoghurt
- teabags and coffee grounds
- the plastic or paper bags used to line the kitchen caddy

The food waste service will **not** collect:

- garden waste
- food packaging, including cardboard
- metals or glass
- animal waste, litter or carcasses
- other household waste.

## Communications

A clear communications plan is being developed for approval of the portfolio holders such that all households have the correct guidance and information to make best use of the new service.



The government funded charity, WRAP, have provided Fenland with a whole series of communication templates to match planned national campaigns, and in cooperation with the portfolio holders these will be utilised to develop the bespoke Fenland literature and social media information.

## Funding

Alongside the capital funding and investment by Defra, a commitment has been made to cover the net revenue burden of introducing and providing the food waste service in line

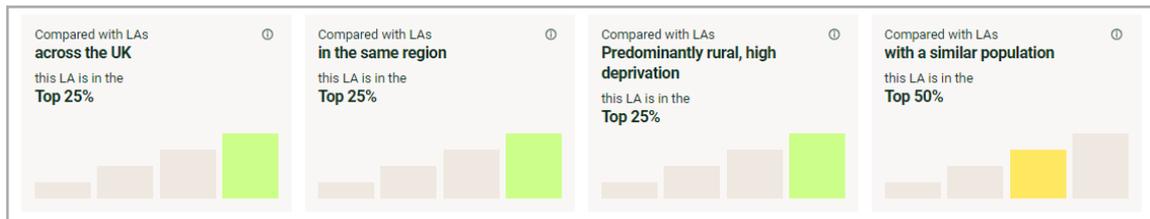
with New Burdens Doctrine, where any additional revenue funding of legislative changes is covered by government.

## Simpler Recycling

### Recycling Blue Bin Performance 2022/23

When considering the requirements of Simpler Recycling we also need to look at how effective the current recycling service is.

Defra’s most recently published waste and recycling information (2022/23) shows that Fenland’s customers actively use the recycling service.



**Figure 2: Defra 2022/23 Fenland’s Collected Weight of Recycling Performance**

When it comes to the weight of good quality recycling that Fenland’s customers put in their blue bins, they perform in the top quartile nationally, regionally and when compared to similar authorities.

THIS LAs AVERAGE YIELD PER HOUSEHOLD						
6 Core Materials	Paper	Cardboard	Cans	Glass	Plastic Bottles	Plastic Tubs And Trays
206.1kg	43.2kg	58.7kg	12.5kg	65.1kg	14.4kg	12.2kg
COMPARED TO LAs ACROSS THE UK						
175.7kg	33.7kg	47.3kg	11.9kg	56.9kg	14kg	11.8kg

**Figure 3: WRAP Average Weight of Materials Per Household (kgs) 2022/23**

On average each household in Fenland sorts more than 206kg of good quality materials for recycling each year. This is 18% more than the national average.

The Simpler Recycling policy paper announced by government recently sets out that councils still have the flexibility to make the best choices to suit local need, whilst also creating a need for separately collected paper and card unless there are economic, environmental or technical reasons not to.

Funded work provided by WRAP in 2022, showed that for Fenland there is no advantage to collecting paper and card separately.

The summary of the WRAP findings for Fenland were (costs from 2022):

- Where [separately collected] food waste is introduced there is an increase in the recycling rate from 40% to 45%.
- Where the dry recycling service is changed from comingled to two-stream or multi-stream, there is no change in recycling performance.
- Only when the residual bin capacity is decreased from 240 litres to 180 litres does the recycling rate increase again to 50%.

- Where a multi-stream [kerbside sort] recycling collection is introduced the increase in costs is highest at £1,179,000 but with no further impact on the recycling rate compared to other options.
- The next most expensive options are those with fortnightly two-stream dry recycling collections using a split body vehicle at between £879,000 and £926,000, but again with no increase in the recycling rate.
- Where a two-stream dry recycling collection using alternating collections rather than a split body RCV is introduced, this has the lowest cost increase but the same recycling performance as all other options.

### **WRAP's Conclusions**

The conclusion of this 2022 work was a 5% increase in the overall recycling rate as a result of introducing food waste collections, but that the more costly additional recycling services, such as an additional separate paper/card collection, do not offer any increase in the amount of recycling collected and as such are not practicable.

There are therefore currently no compelling reasons for the council to change the dry recycling collections at the present time.