

Waste & Recycling Update Overview & Scrutiny 30/9/25

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Scrutiny Focus

- The **Environment Act 2021** introduced **new duties** for local authorities with regards to the collection of **recycling** materials as well as other national proposals (e.g. **extended producer responsibility**). This was followed by more detail proposals in 2023 that are to be introduced through secondary legislation. This item will provide a summary of the proposals and the **actions being taken** to enact these.

Scrutiny Focus

-review whether further **steps** could be taken to not only comply, but also to **push our recycling rates beyond the 50% threshold**
- How does the implementation of **extended producer responsibility (EPR)** and improved recycling **support broader circular economy ambitions**, including waste reduction and material reuse.
- What are the anticipated **impacts of EPR** and related policies **on local producers, retailers, and small businesses**. Are there support systems or transition plans in place?
- **How will compliance be measured, reported, and enforced?** Is there a clear framework for monitoring performance at the district level, and how will local stakeholders be kept informed?
- **How are the environment and social outcomes being tracked** including carbon reduction, biodiversity impact, and public trust in environmental governance?

The Waste Service

- FHDC is the '**Waste Collection Authority**' (EPA 1990)
- KCC is the 'Waste Disposal Authority'
- Over **53,000** properties weekly.
- Alternate weekly collections with weekly food for **95% properties.**
- Garden Waste Subscribers **16,200**
- Local Litter Authority – 920km road **1000+ litter bins**
- Annual Budget **£6.3M** –
 - Household Waste £1.8M
 - Recycling (including Food) £2.4m
 - Street Cleansing £2.2M

The Waste Service

- Strong missed bins performance - average less than **35 misses per 100,000** collections (national best practice target of 50 misses per 100,000).
- Increased service coverage – GW reroute and UNR
- Reduced carbon emissions since contract start.

- **FHDC Recycling rate - 46% 2024/25**
- UK Recycling Rate - 44% 2024/25
- Kent WCA Average - 41.9% 2023/24

Risks

- **Frontline** - 53,000 weekly customers
- Biggest Contract – **inflationary** pressures
- **Seasonal** Demands – Street Cleansing
- **Frequent Regulatory Change** –
Strategic – Landfill, Simpler Recycling, ETS
Operational – Safety, POPS, EA Depot Licensing
- 46% Recycling - **UK target 50%**
- **Shared WTS** at Ashford – M20 vulnerability but mitigated by proposed J11 Project
- Safety – **Violence/Aggression**
- **LGR** – Contract ends **15 January 2029**

Next Contract (or other service arrangements)

- Contract ends on **15 January 2029**.
- Procurement will span the LGR period. However, procurement lead in times mean **we must start in 2026**.
- Risk of **binding the new authority** into long-term arrangements versus **risk of unstable**, short-term or no operational arrangements.
- **Vehicle fleet renewal** – end of operational life but in our ownership – gives some flexibility.
- Should we **extend the contracts**? Definitely an option but for how long?
- **How does this project fit** in with the wider waste operation transition and overall LGR project.

Next Contract (or other service arrangements)

- High profile widely used service. **No Day 1 crisis.**
- No single waste service from vesting day. Period of **transition** that could realistically take **four years or more.**
- Only through genuine alignment and investment unlock long-term **whole system efficiencies.**

- Stage 1 – **Options Appraisal** (Pre LGR reporting Dec 26)
- Stage 2 – **Service Specification** (Cross Over)
- Stage 3 – **Service Transition Stage** (Post LGR)

- Options – Contracted, LATCo, in house/direct and single or multiple authorities.

Simpler Recycling

- **Workplace Collections (March 2025)** – businesses and other workplaces are required to provide separate waste bins/collections for general waste, recycling (paper, card, plastics, metal and glass) and food. Implementation for businesses less than 10 employees is deferred until end of 31 March 2027. Businesses producing less than 5kg of waste per week do not need separate food collections. Industrial and construction type waste is exempt and covered by other legislation. It was anticipated that local authorities would be asked to take an enforcement role, but this has been retained by DEFRA. There was also an expectation of more commercial waste bins being stored (i.e. blocking) on the public highway, but we have not seen a surge in complaints. DEFRA has not reported so far on compliance or changes in volumes.
- **(Packaging) Extended Producer Responsibility (November 2025)** – Establishment of a national pEPR scheme for packaging producers administered by PackUK. The first instalment of pEPR funding to local authorities confirmed for November 2025.

Simpler Recycling

- **Household Collections (March 2026)** – Local authorities to provide all households with a general/residual waste collection, a recycling collection for the core materials (paper, card, plastics, metal and glass), and a weekly food recycling service. Recycling collection services to be compliant with the Environment Act 2021, and the Separation of Waste (England) Regulations 2024.
- **Plastic Film (March 2027)** – Expansion of the collection criteria to include ‘thin’ plastics e.g. (crisp packets, cling film, etc).
- **Deposit Return Scheme (October 2027)** – Deposit Return Scheme planned to start in October 2027. Requirements as set out in the Deposit Scheme for Drinks Containers (England and Northern Ireland) Regulations 2025 include a establishing a scheme administrator to determine the deposit amount payable by the consumer. All supermarkets, convenience stores, grocery stores, newsagents over 100m² to install return points/reverse vending machines for plastic, steel and aluminium drinks containers. Online retailers and direct deliveries can provide ‘takeback’ service. It is expected that this will reduce the volume of these target materials being collected from households as recycling, and as such could reduce Local Authority recycling rates.

Simpler Recycling

- **Household Collections (March 2026)** – Local authorities to provide all households with a general/residual waste collection, a recycling collection for the core materials (paper, card, plastics, metal and glass), and a weekly food recycling service. Recycling collection services to be compliant with the Environment Act 2021, and the Separation of Waste (England) Regulations 2024.
- Test 1 - Collection Scheme Compliance – Yes
- Test 2 - Material Compliance – Yes, we can collect. KCC to confirm processing.
- Test 3 – Scheme Coverage – Good at 95%

Simpler Recycling – Target 100%

- 5% - Mainly **communal properties** i.e. flats and HMOs.
- **Reasons** - Lack of space tried and withdrawn, or no history of recycling.
- We know the communal properties **who are not recycling but not necessarily why**. Retro fit spaces for more bins.
- Legal position on non-compliance? What is the **landlord's role**?
- Wider council role – Planning, Housing and Private Sector Housing.
- The need to prevent contamination reducing recycling quality overall.
- **No single rollout day**. Block-by-block, with over 2,200 households.

- Project Officer 2 Years Fixed
- Legal Opinion on landlord role/responsibilities
- New Bin Fund – pEPR & Food Defra Grant

pEPR – How It Works

- pEPR = Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility
- A **levy** applied to packaging producers and distributors to **cover the collection and the processing costs** of their product.
- Currently pEPR only applies to businesses with a **turnover over £2m and handle 50,000 tonnes** of packaging each year. The plan is to extend the scheme to smaller businesses – **SCRUTINY FOCUS**
- **PackUK** = Scheme Administrator
- Circular economy role – incentivise **lightweighting** of materials and reducing packaging, **re-use schemes** and **funding** for recycling services delivered by local authorities –**SCRUTINY FOCUS**
- FHDC assessment 25/26 £1.3M with £942K guaranteed
- pEPR to be allocated in budget process in line with PackUK regulations.
- 1st instalment in November 2025

pEPR – The Future

- The emerging role of PackUK as a (sort of) **regulator** and **auditor** monitoring and challenging **the performance of council recycling services (starting from 2026) – SCRUTINY FOCUS**
- The role of the **Producer Responsibility Organisation** as powerful lobby voice for the packaging industry.
- Increased scrutiny on how local authorities **use their pEPR payments** to deliver and promote recycling. **Power to reduce payments.**
- **Packaging in street litter** (currently excluded)?
- **Plastic bottles?** What will be the impact of DRS?
- Will future pEPR **payments decrease** due to packaging lightweighting?

Raise The Rate (50% Target)

- Current UK target – **50%** and **65%** by 2035 (EA2021). Current UK rate – **44%**.
- *What are we doing?*
- **Increase recycling scheme** coverage – UNR + 400 properties 2024, Garden Waste Re-route 2025 added capacity and Simpler Recycling the final 5%.
- **Ongoing Replacement bin budget** £130K p/a – over £1.5m since 2012.
- **Promotional campaigns** – RAISE THE RATE
- **Food Waste Stickers/Discounted Food Waste/Recycling Bin Promotions**
- Lots of activity - **0.3% increase 24/25**
- **Have we reached the culminating point?** – pEPR and Deposit Return Schemes designed to reduce materials going to domestic waste recycling making it harder to achieve 50% (let alone 65%)? However, 25%+ of general waste is food waste.

Scrutiny Focus - Responses

-review whether further **steps** could be taken to not only comply, but also to **push our recycling rates beyond the 50% threshold**
 - Simpler Recycling – add 5% properties to the scheme
 - Promotions/Targeted Campaigns
 - Lightweighting/Deposit return Schemes
- How does the implementation of **extended producer responsibility** (EPR) and improved recycling **support broader circular economy ambitions**, including waste reduction and material reuse.
 - Reduce packaging
 - Re-use schemes
 - Recycling Funding
- What are the anticipated **impacts of EPR** and related policies **on local producers, retailers, and small businesses**. Are there support systems or transition plans in place?
 - Limited at present as threshold over £2m/50,000 tonnes.
 - PackUK supporting business that are eligible.
 - Packaging industry interests promoted by the Producer Responsibility Organisation

Scrutiny Focus - Responses

- **How will compliance be measured, reported, and enforced?** Is there a clear framework for monitoring performance at the district level, and how will local stakeholders be kept informed?
 - PackUK – new performance monitoring role
 - DEFRA
 - KPI reporting
- **How are the environment and social outcomes being tracked** including carbon reduction, biodiversity impact, and public trust in environmental governance?
 - Annual report by Veolia on the environmental impact of the contract. Tracks carbon emissions.
 - Public Trust – Simpler and standardised recycling to improved understanding. End destination reporting to challenge the ‘myth’ it also goes to landfill or incineration.
 - Recycling data compiled by KCC and verified via Defra.
 - Recycling rate % is a corporate key performance indicator and regularly reported.

Questions?