

Briefing paper: Consistency in household and business recycling

June 2021

Introduction

The government published the Resources and Waste Strategy in 2018¹ and is now consulting on key areas to implement.

The areas currently being consulted on are: Extended Producer Responsibility packaging (EPR), the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) and, as discussed in this paper, consistency in household and business recycling².

Household consistency

From October 2023, local authorities will be mandated to collect a consistent range of dry materials (listed below), a weekly separate food waste collection and garden waste collection from all households.

The proposed core set of materials are:

- glass bottles and containers – including drinks bottles, condiment bottles, jars
- paper and card – including newspaper, cardboard packaging, writing paper
- plastic bottles – including clear drinks containers, HDPE milk containers, detergent, shampoo and cleaning product containers
- plastic pots, tubs and trays
- steel and aluminium tins and cans
- aluminium foil
- aluminium food trays
- steel and aluminium aerosols
- aluminium tubes, e.g. tomato puree tubes
- metal jar/bottle lids
- food and drink cartons, e.g. TetraPak
- plastic films, e.g. bread bags, carrier bags - by end of the 2026/27 financial year

Payments to local authorities for both the cost of managing packaging waste collected for recycling and packaging waste disposed of in residual waste, will be made under the packaging Extended Producer Responsibility scheme.

Separate collections

There will be a requirement for recyclable waste from each waste stream to be collected separately, unless an exemption applies, or is sought, due to it not being technically or economically practicable.

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765914/resources-waste-strategy-dec-2018.pdf

² https://consult.defra.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/consistency-in-household-and-business-recycling/supporting_documents/Recycling%20Consistency%20Final%20Consultation_May%202021.pdf

An exemption would allow local authorities to co-collect recyclable waste in a recyclable waste stream with at least one other material. Local authorities collecting the proposed recyclable waste streams together would not have to complete a written assessment for the statutory exemptions.

The proposals are to include exemptions to enable the following waste streams to be collected together from households:

- plastic and metal
- glass and metal

This will mean that, to co-collect recycling as Brighton & Hove does presently e.g. collecting paper and card together with metal and plastic, a written assessment will be required. Further work will be required once the outcome is known, to determine the number of written assessments required.

Food Waste

Included within the Environment Bill is a statutory requirement to provide a separate food waste collection to households, at least once a week. It proposes food waste includes: food scraps, coffee grounds and tea bags.

It is proposed that food can be collected with garden waste, although will still need to be collected weekly. Authorities wishing to do this must submit a written assessment to demonstrate that it is not 'technically or economically practicable' to collect food separately. This is important for the council as the route for food waste disposal would be the existing IVC composting facility where garden waste already is sent.

Local authorities would be required to arrange for the weekly, separate collection of food waste for all properties including flats by the transitional end dates, unless an exception applies (for example extensive high density housing stock in which case food waste could be co-collected with garden waste).

In terms of costs, the consultation mentions meeting the costs of 'additional bins and vehicles' and government will ensure that local authorities are resourced to meet any new burdens arising from this policy, including up front transition costs and ongoing operational costs. This requires much more clarification, including whether disposal costs are covered.

Garden Waste

Government see charged for garden waste services as being a barrier to increasing recycling rates and are proposing free garden waste collections.

Government proposes local authorities should be required to introduce a free minimum standard garden waste collection with a 240-litre container, on a fortnightly collection frequency and throughout the growing season.

Alternative proposals on the offer of a free service are suggested as:

- produce updated guidance on reasonable charges of £18-30 per year; Brighton & Hove currently charge £65 per year
- clear communications to non-participating households
- increasing home composting

Statutory and non-statutory guidance

The consultation seeks views on the areas that could be included in statutory guidance and details the intention to publish non-statutory guidance.

The areas in relation to statutory guidance include:

- service standards for collection arrangements and frequency
- considerations relating to circumstances where separate collection of recyclable waste streams may not be technically or economically practicable or may not provide a significant environmental benefit.

Business recycling

Businesses will be expected to collect a core set of five recycling materials; these are: glass, metal, plastic, paper and card and food waste for recycling or composting.

Considerations

There are significant changes being proposed in this consultation which will require further work. These include:

- Feasibility study into the Material Recovery Facility's capacity to accept new materials
- Identification of a waste transfer station for food waste
- Implications for the Integrated Waste Management Services Contract (IWMS) with East Sussex County Council and Veolia
- Availability of containers, caddies and liners
- Availability of new vehicles to accommodate the changes
- Implications for the Operator's Licence and space at the depot
- Viable end markets
- Implications of providing a free garden waste service
- Public realm impacts
- Public health implications
- Operational service changes to kerbside, communal and flats
- Changes to recycling and residual tonnages
- Funding availability through EPR and new burdens
- Assessing whether recycling materials can be collected separately

Next steps

The consultation on consistency in household and business recycling closes on 4 July 2021. The Environmental Bill is making its way through parliament is expected to receive royal assent later this year.

