

Report to: Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 12 March 2024

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Food Waste – Environment Act 2021 requirements

Purpose: To update Place Scrutiny Committee on the Council’s preparations for future district & borough food waste collection services.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) The Place Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report.**
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1 Background Information

- 1.1. Government’s Waste and Resources Strategy (2019) contained a commitment to ‘Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfill by ensuring that every householder has a weekly separate food waste collection’. Since that publication the introduction of food collections has been delayed several times.
- 1.2. On the 21st October 2023 the Government published its latest consultation response to ‘Simpler Recycling’ (formally Consistent Kerbside Recycling). This provided some clarification on what is required of councils when they introduce food waste collection services.
- 1.3. The final stage in the legislative process is for Government to publish the final Statutory Instrument (Regulations). However, sufficient information is now available for local authorities (and the other industries and organisations affected by the new Environment Act) to make progress with more detailed planning activities. The requirement for councils to provide food waste collections is statutory and is something that councils must do. In terms of food waste collections, the requirements are:
 - i. Waste collection authorities in England must arrange a weekly collection of food waste for recycling or composting from all households by 31 March 2026
 - ii. Waste collection authorities must collect food and garden waste separately from the other dry recyclable waste streams in all circumstances

Communal Food Waste Collections

- 1.4. The proposed Statutory Instrument suggests that for some flats and communal properties where residual waste is already collected from shared bins, it may be appropriate to similarly collect food waste from shared food waste bins.
- 1.5. Our District & Borough councils will be responsible for the design of their own communal food waste collections. The partners within the East Sussex Waste Collection Partnership are discussing implementation with their contractors (Biffa) and Lewes and Eastbourne are also planning their new services. Although District & Borough Councils have been advised of their capital funding allocations for food waste containers and vehicles, they are still waiting to hear about transitional funding for 2025/26 and revenue funding 2026 onwards, which makes future service planning difficult. Whilst no firm implementation

timelines are agreed as yet, all the District & Borough Councils currently without a food waste service (including EBC) expect to meet the March 2026 deadline. Most communal solutions are located within bin stores, but it is not uncommon to see kerbside solutions adopted (see appendix 1 for examples). The March 2023 Joint Waste and Recycling Committee meeting had a update on the East Sussex Joint Waste Partnership's service planning for food waste

<https://council.wealden.gov.uk/documents/s82669/Food%20Waste%20Implementation%20Final.pdf>

Funding for Food Waste Collections

- 1.6. Funding for food waste collections is only provided for waste collection authorities. As a waste disposal authority, East Sussex County Council will receive no government funding. Our disposal facility for food and garden waste is the Woodlands In-Vessel Compositing facility (IVC), at Whitesmith. The additional food waste expected in the future will need to be managed and transported from a number of transfer locations to the IVC. Specialised sealed containers will be required, and extra vehicles to transport them may be required. Adaptations to existing facilities including Woodlands IVC may be required to be prepared for the increase in food being managed by the contract. All of these may result in additional costs for the authority.
- 1.7. Officers are working with Veolia to consider and agree the required changes to operations and infrastructure.
- 1.8. On 9th January each Waste Collection Authority received a letter from DEFRA advising of the New Burdens capital funding allocations that will be made before end of March 2024. The capital allocations have been made for bins and vehicles only. Lewes District Council already collect food and have not been awarded any funding.

Authority	Kitch Caddies (plus spares)	Kerbside caddies (plus spares)	Communal Wheeled Bins (plus spares)	Vehicles (plus spares)	Total capital Funding (revenue funding tbc)
Eastbourne	£104,843	£241,138	£0	£511,500	£857,480
Hastings	£92,545	£192,775	£24,318	£511,500	£821,138
Lewes (already collect food)	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Rother	£97,186	£199,257	£29,396	£716,100	£1,041,939
Wealden	£153,680	£327,894	£30,970	£1,125,300	£1,637,844

- 1.9. In a 26th January 2024 report to the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee (JWRC) (<https://council.wealden.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=829&MId=5626>) Officers highlighted that there is a potentially significant risk of a funding gap when the full extent of New Burdens funding (capital and revenue allocations) are known. Partnership finance officers are preparing to conduct an analysis as soon as Government makes all of the required information available. DEFRA provided a short window for authorities to appeal their allocations and the outcomes of these appeals are expected to be known in March 2024.

2 How much food waste is there?

2.1. Food waste forms a significant part of the black bag residual waste stream. From the last waste composition analysis carried out in East Sussex (2017), 36.9% of black bag waste was food waste.

2.2. A new composition analysis for East Sussex is being procured now and due to be completed in May / June 2024. Looking at other recent examples of waste composition, the following black bag food waste levels were recorded:

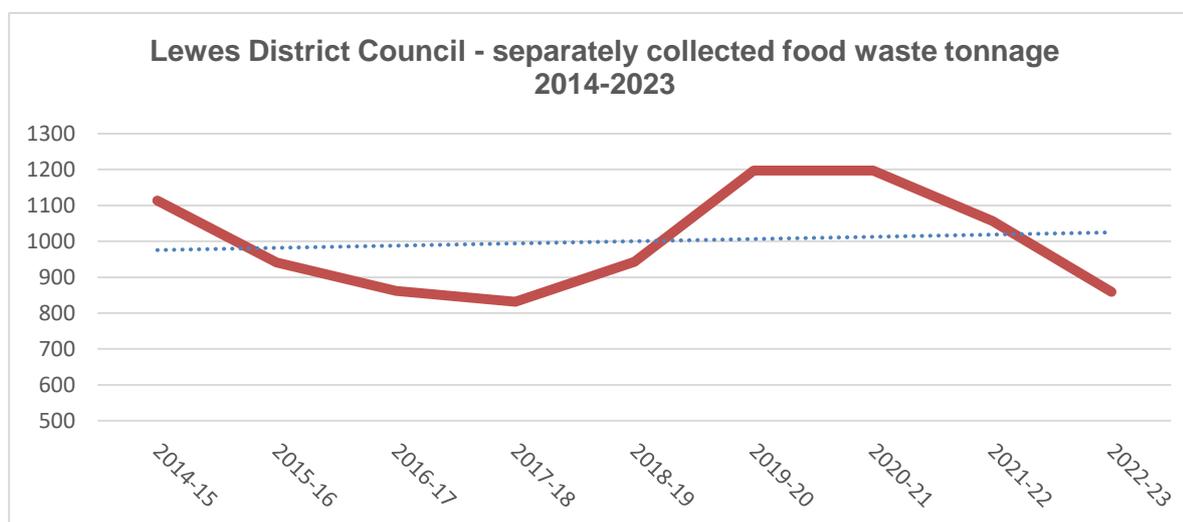
Authority	Year of Analysis	Food Waste % of black bag	Food waste collected separately
Brighton & Hove	2022	38.1	No
Merseyside*	2022	39.1	1 authority out of 6 collects food waste separately
Surrey	2021	24.0	Yes
Hampshire**	2018	40.0	1 authority out of 11 collects food waste separately
East Sussex***	2017	36.9	1 authority out of 5 collects food waste separately

*St Helens collects food waste separately – here 27% of black bag waste is food

**Eastleigh Borough Council collects food waste separately (no individual authority data available)

***Lewes District Council collects food waste separately – here 27% of black bag waste is food

2.3. In East Sussex, Lewes District Council already collect food. In 2022/23 860 tonnes of food was collected for composting and 2023/24 is projected to deliver around 870 tonnes. Participation and amounts of food collected would be higher if residual waste was collected fortnightly, rather than weekly.



- 2.4. Using data from other comparative authorities, we are forecasting that we may receive up to 16,500 tonnes of food waste when all five East Sussex districts & boroughs start collecting.
- 2.5. Taking into account the ideal proportion of food to green waste as part of the IVC mix (paragraph 3.4 below), we are exploring possible alternative capacity for organic waste at certain times of the year, when the inputs diverge too far from ideal 70% green / 30% food ratio. Options could involve utilising an alternative Veolia facility or a third-party facility.

3 Composting the food waste

- 3.1 When the food waste is delivered to Woodlands IVC it will be mixed with garden waste. The facility works on a 6-week process with the incoming material shredded and batches put into one of 8 composting tunnels. The composting process is started by the naturally occurring micro-organisms already in the waste. These break down the material, releasing the nutrients and in doing so increase the temperature of the material to the 60-70°C needed to kill pathogens and weed seeds. Oxygen levels, moisture and temperature are carefully monitored and controlled during this stage to ensure the material is fully sanitised.
- 3.2 The next part of the process is maturation. The material is transferred from the tunnels to the maturation hall where it is held in piles until the organic material has fully composted.
- 3.3 The compost is finally screened into two grades. These are 10mm and 20mm. 10mm is used for Pro Grow for gardens and 20mm is used by farmers. Both products are very high quality and the compost is PAS 100 certified.
- 3.4 Woodlands IVC can compost around 60,000 tonnes of food and green waste every year. Veolia considers the ideal ratio for the facility is around 70% green waste and 30% food waste.
- 3.5 The application of compost improves soil health and soil drainage, creating healthier, more resilient environments for crops to thrive, as well as capturing carbon in the soil. Digestate from anaerobic digestion, another form of food waste treatment, produces a fertilizer which has a more limited application potential due to the levels of nitrogen. It can only be used on certain types of land, and at certain times during the agricultural year.
- 3.6 Green waste and food waste is collected from households and then returned, after composting, to East Sussex's gardens and fields as a high-quality soil improver. The IVC is a good example of how our contract with Veolia is delivering local, circular solutions for residents' waste.

4. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 East Sussex County Council is in a good position to respond to the introduction of food waste collections by already having the Woodlands IVC facility for the composting of food waste. Lewes District Council's food waste is already composted at Woodlands IVC.
- 4.2 The waste team will continue to plan and implement necessary changes to our infrastructure to prepare for the introduction of food waste collections across the county. This will allow us to ensure that all district and borough councils are able to deliver food to a local facility when they are operating their new service.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All.