

# **Municipal Waste Strategy for Thurrock 2021-2031**

## **CONTENTS**

### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **CHAPTER 2: THE CURRENT WASTE SITUATION**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The National Picture
  - 2.2.1 The Strategy for England – A Brief Overview
  - 2.2.2 Key Milestones for ‘Resources and Waste Strategy for England’
  - 2.2.3 Reasons for Change
  - 2.2.4 Local Key Milestones
  - 2.2.5 Best Practices – WRAP / APSE Guidance
  - 2.2.6 Materials Collected by other councils
  - 2.2.7 Collection Frequencies adopted by other councils
  - 2.2.8 Changes to Collection Regimes by other councils
  - 2.2.9 Promotion of Recycling used by other councils
  - 2.2.10 Electric Collection Vehicles
- 2.3 The Local Picture
  - 2.3.1 Current Collection Regime
  - 2.3.2 Pilot Recycling Scheme in Flats
  - 2.3.3 Household Waste Recycling Centre-Linford

### **CHAPTER 3: WHAT OUR RESIDENTS SAY**

- 3.1 Analysis of Public Consultation

### **CHAPTER 4: HOW WILL WE GET THERE?**

- 4.1 Our Strategy on a Page
- 4.2 Communications
- 4.3 Our Strategic Objectives
- 4.4 Waste Crime and Enforcement Options
- 4.5 Changes to the Collections Scheme.

### **CHAPTER 5: THE NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 Waste Disposal Contracts
- 5.2 Waste Strategy Implementation and Monitoring

5.3 Waste Strategy Review

5.4 Conclusion

**Supporting Documents:**

- i. Waste and Resource Strategy for England-Overview
- ii. APSE 'State of the Market' Report 2019
- iii. Thurrock Strategy Timeline
- iv. Public Consultation Summary
- v. Electric Collection Vehicles
- vi. Communications Strategy Overview
- vii. Enforcement Options

## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION:

### *Statement from the Chair of the Waste Working Group*

The national Resource and Waste Strategy has set out a direction of travel that will guide councils in playing their part in the global responsibility to save our natural resources and work towards minimising the need for these resources, while maximising their lifetime usage through encouraging, promoting and supporting recycling and re-use by their residents, local businesses and themselves.

Thurrock Borough Council has a legal and moral obligation to increase recycling and re-use rates in order to mitigate waste-related environmental problems, and has committed itself to reaching this goal. Thurrock are fully committed to improving their recycling performance and in doing so aim to become a leader in this area, as much by its actions as its policies. This strategy lays out the path Thurrock will take to engage with and encourage our residents to actively contribute, by ensuring our waste services are the best they can be so that together we can reach this goal.

It will be through education, awareness and support for residents that they will be able to provide high quality recyclables for us to collect. Our disposal choices will ensure we make the most of the materials we collect and through the continued provision of a top class collection service will improve our recycling performance and will become a high-performing council.

This Waste Strategy for Thurrock is a 'living document' that will require our continual nurturing and attention in order to fulfil its aim. It is also the tool with which we will improve and increase our recycling performance, to meet and exceed national targets.

## CHAPTER 2 - THE CURRENT WASTE SITUATION

### **2.1 Introduction:**

This section summarises the current situation in Thurrock in terms of the existing waste collection and disposal regimes, quantities of waste being managed, the services provided and current performance against statutory recycling and composting targets. It begins with an overview of the National Picture and notes which aspects of the Waste Strategy for England will directly and indirectly influence the Waste Strategy for Thurrock. The report also identifies how this influence may be exerted. This includes the areas being open to public consultation across the wider industry, gauging opinion on how best to deliver the national strategy to improve on recycling, galvanise the various elements of the industry and generate a closed-loop economy that makes best use of the natural resources still available to us.

## 2.2 The National Picture:

In the National ‘Resources and Waste Strategy’ published in 2019 the Government make their direction of travel very clear:

“To preserve our stock of material resources by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy. At the same time minimise the damage caused to the natural environment by reducing and managing waste safely and carefully, and by tackling waste crime”. The Strategy combines actions to be taken now with firm commitments for the coming years and gives a clear longer term policy direction in line with their 25 Year Environmental Plan. In the 25 year Environment Plan, the Government pledged to leave the environment in a better condition for the next generation.

“The plan is to become a world leader in using resources efficiently and reducing the amount of waste we create as a society. We want to prolong the lives of the materials and goods that we use, and move society away from the inefficient ‘linear’ economic model of ‘take, make, use, throw’.

The National Strategy	Thurrock Strategy	Locally We Can...
<p><b>Sustainable Production:</b> Invoke ‘Polluter Pays’ principal - full costs of disposal for packaging they place in the market.</p>	<p>Communications strategy: Change the attitude and behaviour of local businesses on the issues around single use plastic and unnecessary packaging</p>	<p>Build on the exiting plastics recycling campaign to encourage businesses, residents and council staff away from using single use plastic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasise the importance of recycling plastics properly</li> <li>• Educate residents and council staff of which packaging should be avoided and the harm it can do to our local environment</li> <li>• Educate residents on the excellent alternatives which exist and emphasise their use i.e. bags for life; reusable straws, reusable water bottles etc.</li> <li>• Take the lead as a corporate entity, ensuring our own practices are an exemplar for businesses across Thurrock</li> </ul>
<p><b>Helping consumers take more considered actions:</b> Incentivise consumers to purchase sustainably. We want to help consumers to be able to recycle the materials products contain and dispose of them in the most environmentally sensitive ways.</p>	<p>Increase reuse from the Household Waste and Recycling Centre and support the Third Sector</p>	<p>Emphasise the reuse of many items which might be thrown away, but with the right skills and outlook, could be returned to use in a new home</p> <p>Consider and build on closer relationships with craft-trade and community groups</p>

<p><b>Resource recovery and waste management:</b> Improve recycling rates by ensuring a consistent set of recyclable materials is collected from all households and businesses</p>	<p>We will work to increase recycling rates across Thurrock by the introduction of Alternate Weekly Collections to drive up recycling rates.</p>	<p>Increase recycling rates by ensuring our collection scheme reflects national guidance and making collections easy for residents to participate</p>
<p><b>Tackling waste crime:</b> Create a 'Joint Unit for Waste Crime' with tougher penalties for waste criminals.</p>	<p>We will consider the case for adoption of civil enforcement measures to aid the satisfactory resolution of non-compliance with requirements of a revised collection regime</p>	<p>Strengthen Intelligence-sharing and engagement across neighbouring authorities to tackle illegal activities.</p>
<p><b>Enough is enough - cutting down on food waste:</b> We are fully committed to reducing food waste, reducing our carbon footprint and also meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goal to halve global food waste at consumer and retail levels by 2030.</p>	<p>To establish and provide a weekly 'separated' food-waste collection service from households within the Thurrock area.</p>	<p>Localised promotion for the distribution of excess food to local homeless facilities etc.</p>
<p><b>Global Britain-International Leadership:</b> Promote the goals of our Resources and Waste Strategy internationally and drive international political commitments through the ground-breaking Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance.</p>	<p><i>This element of the Waste and Resources Strategy for England raises the profile of issues of a global nature; while they warrant awareness and monitoring they are not within the remit of the Waste Strategy for Thurrock</i></p>	
<p><b>Research and Innovation:</b> In some areas we are seeking transformative change, our knowledge, data or technology has yet to match our ambitions.</p>		<p>Thurrock LDF actively promote and encourage local investment in such technologies etc.</p>
<p><b>Measuring Progress: data, monitoring and evaluation:</b> High quality data, information and insights are essential for effective policymaking, so we will work with our partners and stakeholders to develop a shared vision and bold new approach to data on resources and waste</p>		<p>Measure collections, tonnages data and participation</p> <p>Key Performance Information feeds into Waste-Data-Flow (Defra)</p>

## 2.2.2 Key Milestones in the 'Resources and Waste Strategy for England'

A number of key milestones have been identified within the Resources and Waste Strategy for England, in terms of necessary changes to legislation, the potential for mandatory adjustments to local authority collection regimes and the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging, plastics and electronic waste. All of these will impact council service delivery and should be considered as part of the Thurrock Waste Strategy to ensure compliance and appropriate inclusion from the outset.

- There is an ongoing debate around the introduction of taxation on packaging materials that do not contain a minimum of 30% of recycled materials. At Budget 2018, government announced that from April 2022 it would introduce a world-leading new tax on the production and import of plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled content, subject to consultation. Plastic packaging accounts for 44% of plastic used in the UK, but it produces 67% of plastic waste, and over 2 million tonnes of plastic packaging is used each year. The vast majority of this is made from new, rather than recycled plastic.
- Defra launched the consultation on 'Introducing a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) in England', in conjunction with the devolved administration in Wales and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland. The aim of a DRS would be to reduce the amount of littering, boost recycling levels for relevant material, offer the enhanced possibility to collect high quality materials in greater quantities and promote recycling through clear labelling and consumer messaging.



- The proposed roll-out of a 'Deposit Return Scheme' (DRS) would also have an impact on local recycling collections and it is broadly anticipated that there would be a shift from domestic kerb-side collections to more from 'reverse-vending' machines and their subsequent centralised collection points. Councils would likely be responsible for the collection and transportation of materials collected by the scheme and would be allowed to claim the collected tonnages against their own recycling targets.
- This when added to the increased amount of recyclables collected from businesses across the borough (as they are expected to recycle similar waste streams to domestic properties), may further increase the burden for councils. It is widely acknowledged that recycling from businesses is more costly, and that businesses experience difficulties around additional storage space for multiple recycling containers which limit the number of different streams that can be presented for collection.
- Greater collection of glass separately from paper and separate food-waste collections would also help to improve quality, increase revenue for local authorities and ensure more packaging can be recycled in closed-loop applications (e.g. cans to cans or paper to paper). As commercial waste collections are included in the councils overall waste-arising, any opportunities to aid in the reduction of residual waste should be considered.

Some of the planned changes such as the EPR would not directly affect the council or its activities, however it does have the potential to influence waste and recycling collections. Changes to the types of materials used for product-packaging may increase or decrease the amount of materials presented for recycling and collection dependent upon the council's scope of collected recyclable streams. While it is anticipated that the 'producer-pays' approach will shift the financial burden, the onus for collections remains with the council.

### **2.2.3 The Reasoning for Change**

Thurrock Borough Council has a legal and moral obligation to increase recycling rates in order to mitigate waste-related environmental problems, and has committed itself to reaching this goal. Thurrock's recycling performance has not improved over the past six years and has seen a steady decline to stagnation since 2014/15.

The Council's various waste disposal contracts are due for renewal in the coming year, which presents an excellent opportunity to adopt a revised waste collection regime that helps us to capture a wider range of recyclable materials at kerbside and generate an income from higher quality materials. Wherever possible these disposal contracts should be flexible enough to allow subtle changes within our waste collection regime to add to and change the waste-streams being collected; this will allow us to reflect the changing needs of the commodities-markets and shifts in public perceptions around the waste-streams they generate in their homes.

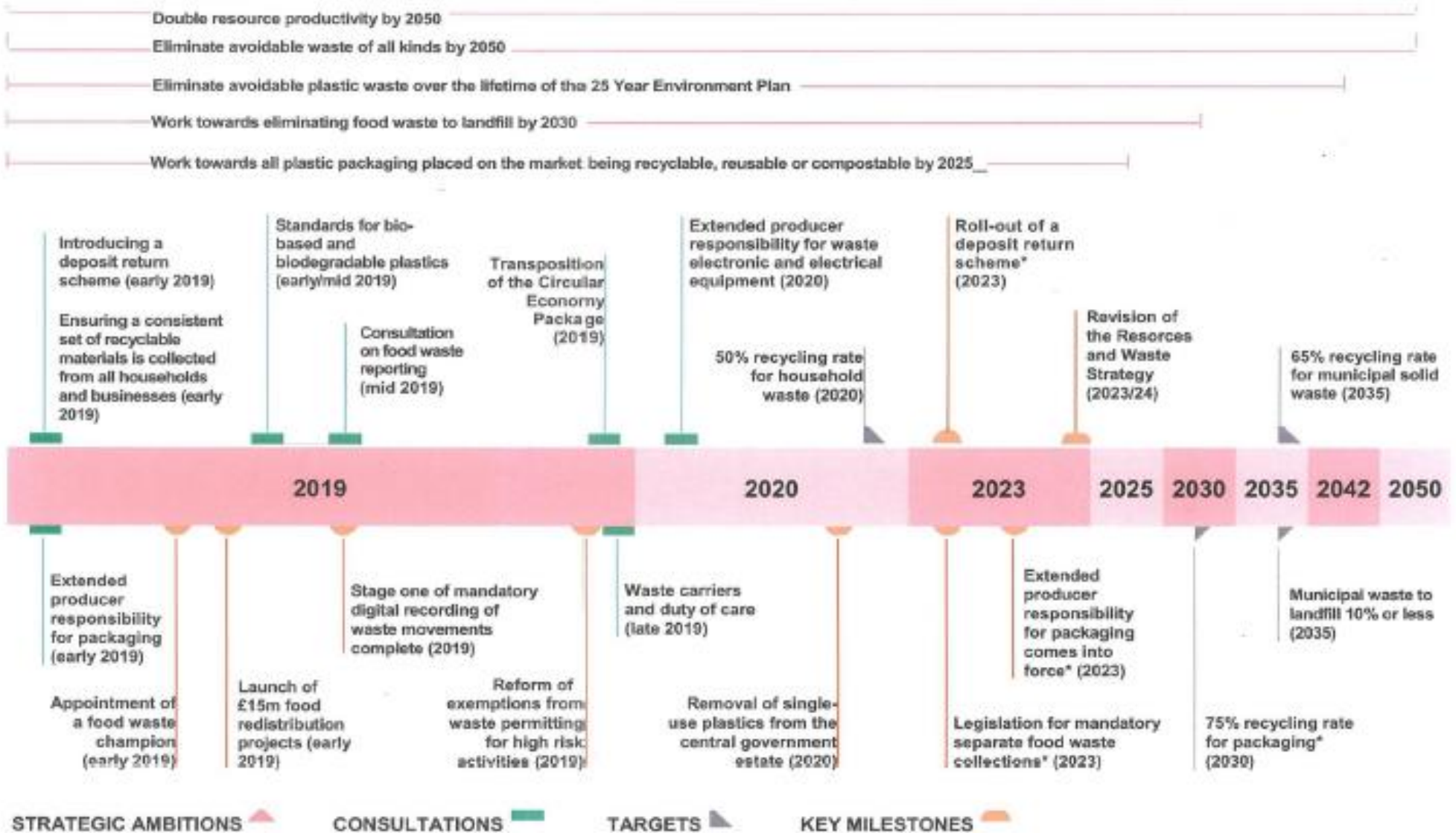
Targeting core recyclables with the potential to generate a revenue stream for the council (as opposed to a disposal or material-handling fee) raises the opportunity to design a waste collection and disposal regime in Thurrock that contributes to funding itself and eases the financial burden from this statutory service. The Government is already considering the mandating of a source-separated collection regime and this offers an opportunity to be ahead of the curve while improving on the quality of recyclable materials we collect. It also has the potential, when combined with suitable disposal contracts and facilities, to generate an income to offset treatment costs.

Alongside this consultation on core recyclable materials the Government are also consulting on establishing a greater consistency in household recycling in England. Targets for rationalisation include fewer collection and sorting systems to aid residents in participating and a common container-colour system that reduces confusion where residents move from one council area to another.



# KEY MILESTONES

Pre-Covid? Is 2020's 50% target under threat?



\*subject to consultation

## **2.2.4 Local Key Milestones**

The Waste Strategy for Thurrock needs to reflect and take into consideration the milestones set by the Resource and Waste Strategy for England. Key dates for change must be acknowledged and factored into this strategy to ensure sufficient time and resources are available to prepare the council's services for compliance where statutory changes take effect.

## **2.2.5 Best Practice – WRAP/APSE**

Organisations including WRAP (Waste Recycling Action Programme) and APSE (Association of Public Sector Excellence) carry out studies and prepare reports on the many aspects of waste collections including operating costs analysis, recycling performance, transport operating costs analysis and State of the Market reports.

APSE's 'State of the Market' report (*Annex Document*) published in August 2019 evidenced a number of statistics that included the numerous and varying ranges of materials that were collected by local authorities for recycling.

Thurrock Council makes use of both organisations to benchmark its own activities.

## **2.2.6 Materials Collected by other authorities**

As councils continually strive to increase their level of recycling, increasingly diverse materials are collected in an effort to further remove and reduce materials sent to landfill. Materials ranging from the widely-collected 'paper, card, cans, plastics, garden-waste and glass' to less widely-collected 'food-waste, textiles, batteries and bulbs' all contribute to the continual drive to improve recycling figures.

Some materials however, such as textiles and batteries, while relatively simple to collect, have been removed from collection regimes by a number of councils due to the relatively poor financial returns offered by end-markets. The 'used-textile' industry for example has a thriving e-trade in clothing, which is affecting both local authority collections and charity shop donations.

With regards to local authority food-waste collections, for the second year running there has been a slight decrease in the number of authorities collecting this material (down 5%). This is surprising, given the significant tonnage that can be collected to add to the recycling rate. In addition, where food waste is collected there is a 7% increase in councils collecting it fortnightly as opposed to weekly (which was the norm in the past).

Glass is now recorded as not being collected by 8% of councils that responded to the survey, which is a slight increase of 1% on 2018 figures.

While many authorities continue to collect recycling via co-mingled collections (i.e. all recyclables in a single container) as we currently do in Thurrock, many continue to operate a source-separated method using a number of individual containers and multi-compartment collection vehicles. Both methods have merit and can be efficient, dependent upon access to an appropriate disposal outlet.

'Source-separated' collection allows for the separation of streams which is known to considerably improve the quality of materials collected as contamination can be easily seen and potentially removed before being loading into collection vehicles. This method can be attractive to materials-processors as there is minimal further processing required before any onward sale to end-users. This on-vehicle separation allows for a level of quality pre-checking by the crew and therefore minimal intervention by processors, which keeps costs down.



However this method is historically more expensive for the authority to collect as either only one or two waste streams can be collected at a time, requiring more vehicles across the wider range of collections, or requires multi-compartmented collection vehicles which have reduced capacities per stream and require more vehicles to collect the wider range. This can be offset to some extent by improved revenue per materials which is more financially efficient. In addition a good and robust regimen of education and awareness for residents is crucial in order to minimise the non-target materials being put out for collection. This also does mean more waste containers to be stored at residents' homes and presented for emptying out on our streets.

### **2.2.7 Collection Frequencies used by other councils**

Many authorities offset this need for more collection vehicles by increasing the time between collections. This allows for the use of a vehicle on a number of suitable waste streams by collecting for example; paper & card on one week, then plastics, cans & glass the following week, with both streams presented in identical container types such as recycling-boxes or wheeled bins as the vehicle can be used to collect either type. This allows potential for a weekly-recycling collection to be provided while balancing the vehicle load-capacity as fewer materials are in each bin.

### **2.2.8 Changes to Collection Regimes by other councils**

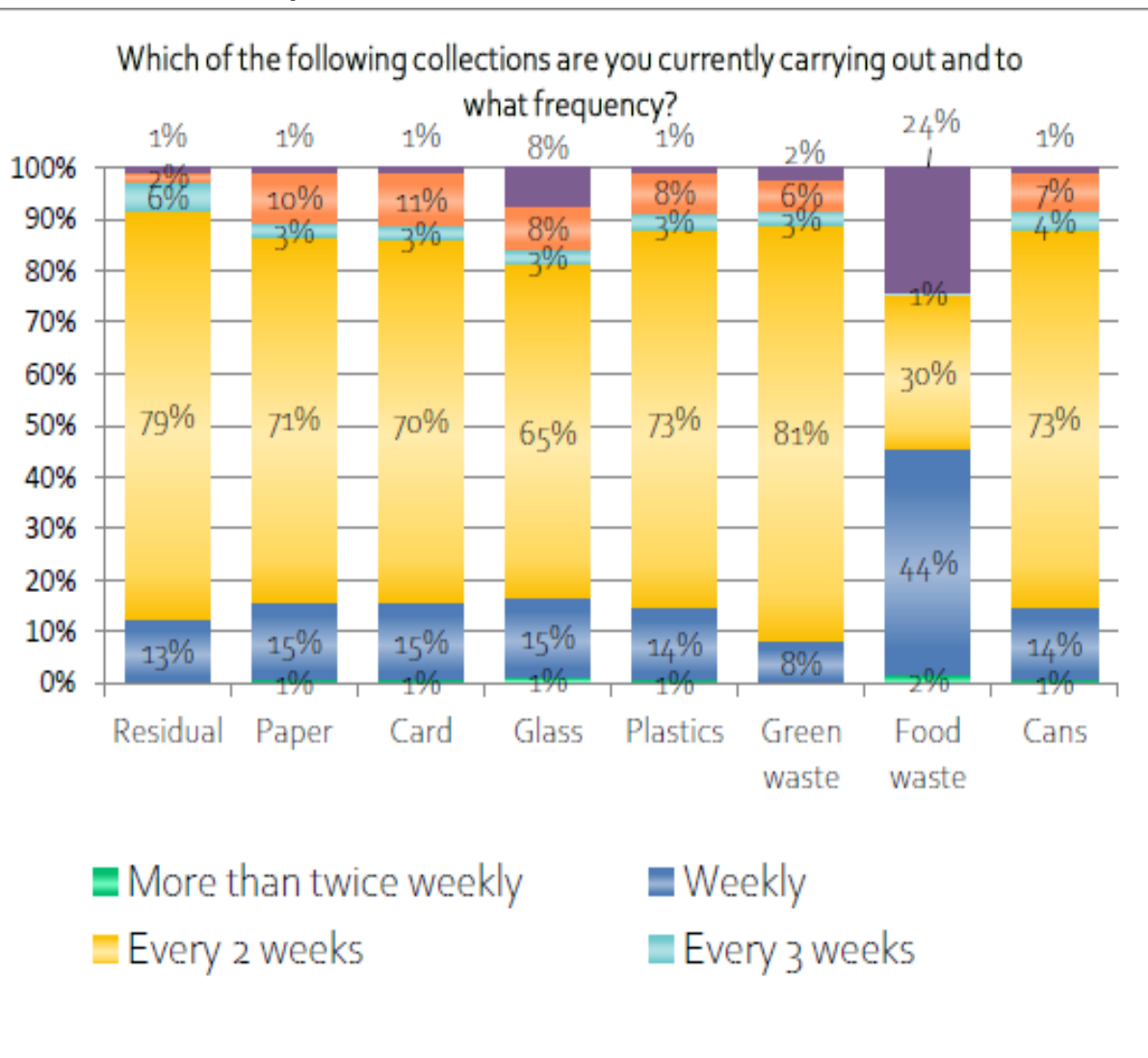
Over 75% of local councils across England have already taken the decision to move away from the once traditional approach of emptying refuse bins every week, towards local solutions that work to actively encourage residents to make more informed choices as to how they manage their waste at home.

Changes have included measures such as the introduction of a separated food-waste scheme which removes food waste from the residual bins and diverts it away from landfill and towards recycling targets. Where councils choose to change the collection of landfill bins from weekly to fortnightly, the main concern of residents is that food-waste creates potential pest and rodent problems.

Such changes are made to compliment the recycling collections that operate alongside refuse collections. Recyclables can be collected in various ways, including:

- source-separated recycling which puts the onus on residents to sort their recyclables into a number of different containers for the council to collect
- co-mingled' collections such as Thurrock currently use, which allows all different materials to be put into the one container and onto collection vehicles, for sorting by recycling processors further down the line.

**Table: Collection Frequencies**

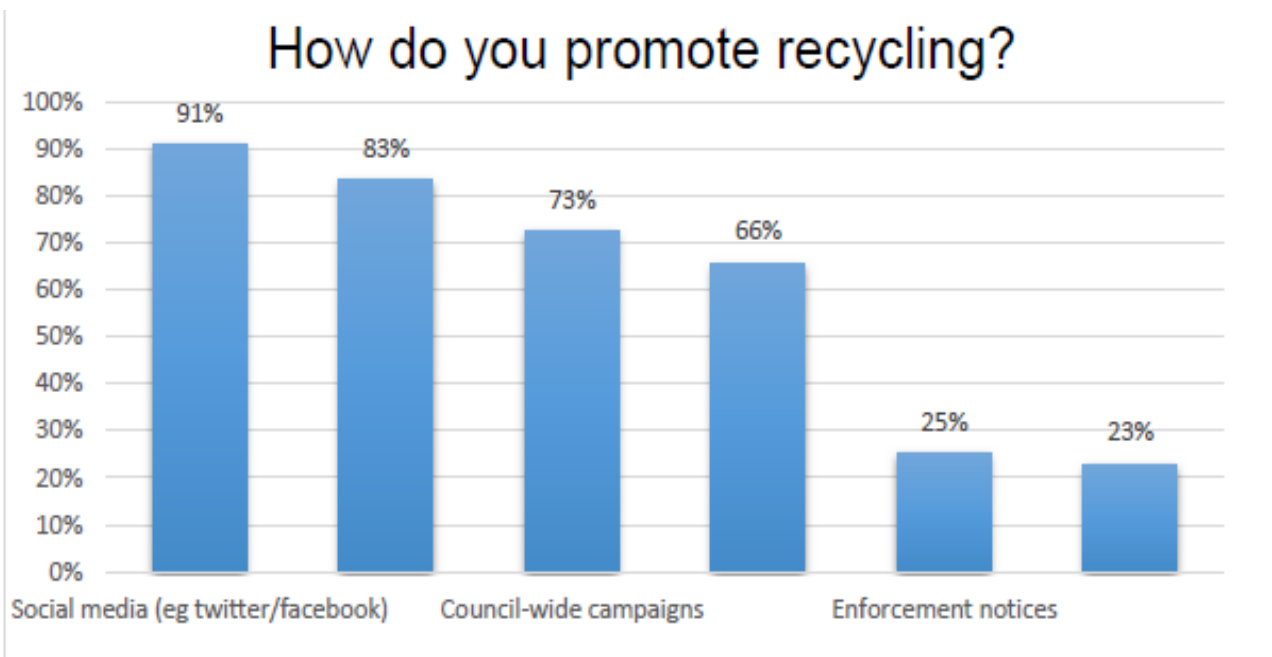


### 2.2.9 Promotion of recycling methods used by other councils

Active promotion of recycling is critical to the success of the scheme. The use of behavioural-change techniques through leafleting, school visits and social media are still the most popular methods used to promote recycling, and it is notable that social media in particular is continuing to grow in popularity as a means to promote recycling.

Where a significant change to behavior is required it is crucial that this is clearly explained and is understandable to residents for them to become engaged with the process and to help and guide them into breaking the ingrained behaviour of previous collection regimes.

**Table: Methods of promoting recycling used by councils**



### 2.2.10 Electric Collection Vehicles

Almost every waste collection round in the UK relies on refuse collection vehicles (RCVs) that are powered by diesel-fueled internal combustion engines. As local authorities become increasingly alert to the dangers of climate change and air pollution, and the urgent need for action, the days of ‘dirty’ diesel vehicles seem likely to be numbered. While there are several alternative technologies that might replace diesel, one of the best developed is battery-powered electric propulsion, recharged from the electricity grid. Municipalities around the world have adopted electric RCVs (e- RCVs), and in the UK the City of London is the first to start the process of implementing a new electric fleet. Meanwhile, several other UK local authorities are trialing them (*Annex Document*).



## 2.3 The Local Picture

### Location:

Thurrock is situated 25 miles east of the City of London on the River Thames, with over 18 miles of riverfront. It covers an area of 64 square miles, over half of which is green belt.

The M25 and A13 act as a crossroads of national importance. Regular rail services operate between London and Southend-On-Sea, serving seven stations and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link passes through the Borough. The Ports of Tilbury and Purfleet provide international connections for both passengers and freight.



### Thurrock's Population:

In the financial year 2018/19 Thurrock's population was approximately 172,500 and consisted of c: 69,000 households. The current population is expected to grow and reach 207,200 by 2033, a projected increase of 25%.

The majority of the population live in the main conurbations of Aveley, Grays, Purfleet, Stanford-le-Hope & Corringham, South Ockenden & Belhus, Tilbury and the developing community of Chafford Hundred.

#### 2.3.1 What currently happens to Thurrock's Waste?

As a unitary authority, Thurrock is responsible for both the collection and disposal of municipal solid waste, as well as being the waste planning authority. The Municipal Waste Strategy for Thurrock will set out six key aims for a long-term municipal waste strategy, namely:

- **Deliver the principles of the waste hierarchy** which is the mandatory way in which all waste should be dealt with to get the most from our natural resources



and best serve the environment

## The Waste Hierarchy



- **Deliver the diversion of biodegradable municipal waste from landfill** which aims to prevent waste that rots down and creates greenhouse gases, such as food-waste, from going to landfill.
- **Ensure that Thurrock recycling complies with statutory recycling targets** to help us improve upon our recycling figures and help save the environment
- **Ensure that Thurrock recovers sufficient value from residual waste to comply with statutory recovery targets** which we can do through sending waste that isn't recyclable to 'Energy Recovery' facilities rather than simply to landfill
- **Ensure that any procurement activities are in line with best value principles and achieve efficiency savings**, to help ensure our 'Waste does not go to waste'
- **Work towards achieving top-quartile positioning with respect to waste management provision in the UK** which simply means we will work to improve our recycling performance and aim to be one of the best-performing councils.

The council currently provide a weekly collection of refuse, recycling and garden & food waste from around 69,000 households in the borough. This in-house service is operated from the council's Environment and Highways Depot at Oliver Close in Grays.

Over 205,000 individual bins are emptied every week and 77,524 tonnes of household waste were produced in 2019/20, of which only 37% was recycled or composted.



Thurrock also have a successful commercial/trade waste collection from which the waste-tonnages collected contribute to the council's overall targets and tonnages. For

this reason a number of local authorities over the years have decided to sell off their commercial waste businesses in order to reduce their overall waste tonnages. In Thurrock commercial waste is a good revenue stream for the council. The planned focus by the government on ensuring commercial businesses are able to recycle the same types of materials as domestic households offers an opportunity to consider expansion to our commercial recycling service to further boost recycling in Thurrock.

Households have traditionally been provided with 240-litre wheeled bins for refuse, but all new-build properties and any replacement containers are now 180-litres in an effort to reduce the amount of waste being generated by residents and sent to landfill. The impact of this reduction in capacity is limited as the roll-out to new-builds affects a relatively small number of households. As replacement bins are chargeable this too has minimal impact.

The Council are committed to a number of waste disposal contracts with a number of suppliers, and end-disposal locations that are situated over a considerable area; these



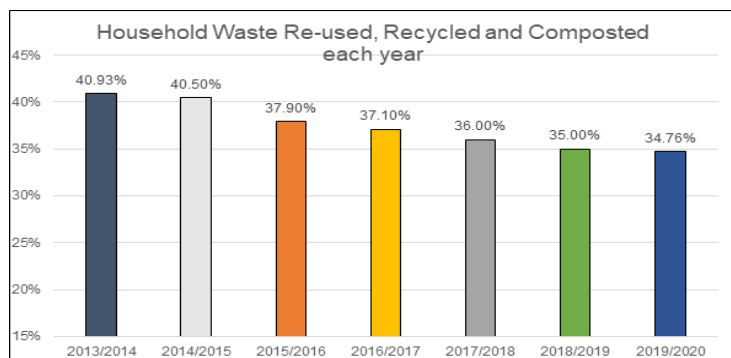
contracts have varying end-dates. Of the three separate waste streams the council collects, both residual and garden/food waste are disposed locally to a waste transfer station near to the depot. Recycling waste is disposed of in East London, and as a result vehicles are brought into the Oliver Close Depot loaded, parked until the evening then driven into East London for

emptying. This methodology is restrictive in that recycling collection rounds are limited to the capacity carried on a vehicle; furthermore it does not allow further collections after tipping, as do residual or garden/food collection rounds. There is opportunity to redress this as part of the disposal contracts renewal process over the coming year.

### **2.3.2 Pilot Recycling Scheme to Flats**

At present, a considerable number of Thurrock's residential communal buildings lack the facilities to recycle. Encouraging residents of communal buildings to recycle has proven to be a challenge for many local authorities, both nationally and internationally, as recycling contributions from these properties are generally lower than other households. The introduction of increased recycling opportunities in communal buildings could have a considerable effect on the overall recycling rate.



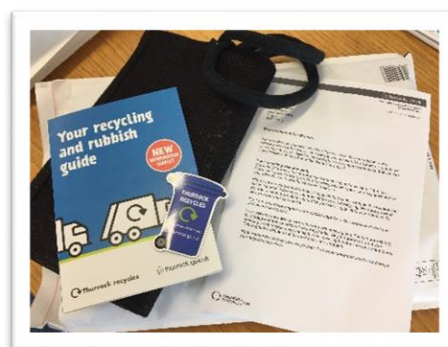


Thurrock’s current recycling rate is approximately 35%, and has seen a decline over the last five years. This is lower than both the 2020 national target of 50% and the average recycling rate in England, which is currently approximately 45%. Cost of recyclable waste disposal is

considerably lower than the disposal costs of residual waste. An increase in recycling would therefore not only benefit the environment, but would also realise financial benefits for Thurrock Council and its residents.

After extensive literature research, two versions of a newly designed recycling scheme were trialled at two sites in Grays: The Echoes and Worthing Close. Residents of these sites had in the past expressed an interest in recycling. Both sites are of similar size, and have similar characteristics. The pilot went live on 28 August 2019.

Residents were involved early in the process and received an introductory letter approximately one month before the launch of the pilot, with a follow up ‘recycling welcome pack’ several days before the launch. The welcome pack included a second introduction letter, a recycling guide, a fridge magnet, and two rolls of single use recycling sacks (Worthing Close) or a reusable recycling bag (The Echoes). Guides were designed keeping in mind the fact that some residents may not read or speak English. Graphics were used as much as possible in order to minimise this potential barrier.



For two months, both sites were closely monitored in order to determine whether the proposed arrangements were functioning as intended and whether residents were recycling as a result of these arrangements. Results showed that recycling bins were used effectively, with very low levels of contamination. Contamination levels were slightly higher at Worthing Close, with plastic carrier bags being the most common type of contamination. This might have been caused by the fact that plastic carrier bags closely resemble the single use recycling sacks (as opposed to the reusable bags), making residents more likely to resort to plastic carrier bags as an alternative.



Initial resident feedback from one-to-one interviews and online surveys shows that residents of both pilot sites rate the user-friendliness of their pilot scheme as high, and communications as effective. Overall, residents are pleased with the new arrangements. Although response rates for the online survey were relatively low, results show that residents of The Echoes were generally more positive about their reusable bag than residents of Worthing Close about their single use bags.

Actual tonnages from the project are not known as materials were combined with other locations, however crew feedback on participation and overall low-contamination levels have been very positive.

The Pilot Scheme has demonstrated that with the appropriate education, infrastructure and support recycling collections from communal locations can be both well received and productive, contributing positively towards raising the recycling rates across Thurrock. A capital bid was submitted and approved for the roll-out across the borough. This will be carried out in two phases over the following 18 months, planned to start in mid-September 2020, with Phase I focused on Council Housing locations and Phase II on private housing locations.

The first phase of the roll-out will introduce a further 300 recycling containers into the scheme and will bring the recycling collection service to around 2000 more council residents.

### **2.3.3 Household Waste Recycling Centre-Linford**

The Council have approved a capital project that will bring about the redesign and expansion of the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Linford. This will allow for improved access for residents, the potential expansion of materials that can be collected at the site and a safer working environment for our operating staff. This project has also allowed the Council to consider accepting commercial tipping by local businesses and tradesmen, while offering the opportunity to generate a revenue stream by doing so.

## **CHAPTER 3: WHAT OUR RESIDENTS SAY**

### **3.1 Analysis of Public Consultation**

In February 2020, the cross-party Waste Strategy Group formed to investigate ways in which the level of recycling in Thurrock could be increased, commissioned a consultation with all residents of the Borough. The consultation (Annex Document) was publicised under the strap-line of “Talking Rubbish” and was available to residents online or as a paper survey accessed through libraries and community hubs. The

consultation was advertised through postcard sent to all households, social media and a further letter to households that included an educational sticker for use on recycling bins.

The consultation covered 4 key areas:

1. Recycling
2. Education
3. Collection regimes
4. Waste processing options

The survey explored public opinion about the council's recycling collection service in terms of ease of use, education and the breadth of recyclables collected. In addition questions were posed around how often residents presented their waste for collection and how often they used the service.

A number of responses demonstrated the potential for some level of collection-schedule changes on the grounds that they would not adversely affect residents' capacity for storage of waste between bin-collections.

Another area of interest was the perception of how the council delivered messages relating to the collection service and the apparent confusion about which types of materials we include. This will be a learning point for communications and educational materials going forward.

When asked about future waste disposal options for Thurrock and the potential for us to further explore the Energy from Waste (EfW), Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) and Composting Facility options, there was strong support for Thurrock to consider building our own waste processing facilities to:

- Separate and process dry recycling
- Process compostable materials – both food and garden waste
- Generate energy through incineration

A small number of respondents however were opposed to further investigation or consideration of options.

Public consultation supports the aspiration of the Waste Strategy Group to introduce a separated food waste collection. This may be a desirable first step in achieving the goal of raising recycling tonnages. It will also put us ahead of the Resource and Waste Strategy for England, which will see the mandatory separation of food-waste introduced by 2023. In tandem with a weekly recycling collection and fortnightly refuse collections, this strategy has the potential to increase recycling tonnages and raise the recycling figure from a static 35%, to reach and even exceed national targets.

The proposed changes to recyclable collections offer have the potential to not only increase recycling levels but to generate a revenue stream where supported by appropriate recycling disposal-options and contracts. It must be said that residents may believe the removal of weekly refuse collections to be a reduction in service; however, waste will still be collected each week, it is the nature of the waste collected that changes.

## **CHAPTER 4: HOW WILL WE GET THERE?**

### **4.1 Our Strategy on a Page**

The delivery of the strategy and the waste hierarchy (Reduce, Re-use, Recycle, Recover, Dispose) should be through the 'three E's approach' – Empower, Engage and only then Enforce.

## Educate

- Staff, Suppliers, Residents

## Empower

- Led by example

## Enforce

- Extended Producer Responsibility – producer pays for disposal

## Your Actions

- Think before throwing items away

# REDUCE



## REDUCE

**Aim:**  
Eliminate single use plastics

## Educate

- Re-use, repair and repurpose workshops
- Love Food – Hate Waste

## Empower

- Re-use Partnerships with Charities
- Collaboration between Supermarkets and Food Banks
- Plant Fruit Trees

## Enforce

- Re-use considered before disposal

## Your Actions

- Support charities and use options such as Free-cycle



# REUSE



## REUSE

**Aim:**  
Promote Re-use

## Educate

- Accessible guidance
- Food waste collections
- Clear collection schedules
- Engagement

## Empower

- Recycling for Flats
- Reliable collections
- Review of collections and bins

## Enforce

- Reduce contamination levels
- Targeted and proportionate enforcement

## Your Actions

- Make sure that the right materials are going into bin



# RECYCLE



## RECYCLE

**Aim:**  
Increase recycling rate

## Educate

- Clarity on what goes in each bin

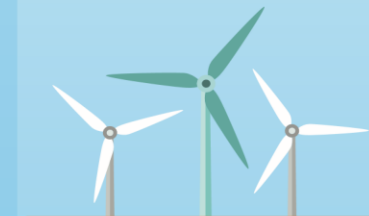
## Empower

- Create opportunities for re-use, re-purpose and recycling before disposal

## Enforce

- Effective Contract Management

# RECOVERY



## RECOVERY

**Aim:**  
Waste not re-use or recycled sent for Energy Recovery

## Educate

- Promote principles of the waste Hierarchy

## Empower

- Review Disposal arrangements

## Enforce

- Support reduction, re-use, recycling and recovery before disposing of waste



## DISPOSAL

**Aim:**  
Limit waste to landfill  
  
Reduce CO2 emissions from waste collection

## 4.2 Communications

Nationally there has been a shift towards favouring sustainable products and this will be a focus for a communications strategy to engage both residents and local businesses with more sustainable waste management. These messages will be supported by education on the use of for example, plastic-alternatives. This will help drive the aim of eliminating the use of single-use plastics, which are not always easily recycled.

We will actively promote ways to reuse and repurpose waste by taking everyday items normally thrown away and reusing them in new and inventive ways. This will be done through embracing national campaigns such as 'Love Food, Hate Waste' and involving local crafters and community groups.

The focus of messaging will be our core objective of increasing Thurrock's recycling to 45% by 2025 and to 50% by 2030. We will also continue to explain how Thurrock waste that cannot be repurposed or recycled will be diverted away from landfill and to Energy from Waste wherever possible. This will be supported by clear messaging on the importance of residents putting the right waste in the right bins.

A strong, targeted and robust communications strategy will be critical to our success. We will make information easy to understand, targeted to the right audience and delivered in a manner that is easy to engage with. We will ensure that residents and businesses understand how to participate, which materials we want to collect and most importantly why we are making the changes.

## 4.3 Our Strategic Objectives

### **Objective 1 - To eliminate unnecessary Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) and unnecessary packaging from the waste stream.**

How will we achieve this?

- We will help to educate our residents with regards to SUPs, creating a 'Plastic Pact' that residents and businesses, education facilities alike can sign up to and commit to reducing the use of SUPs.
- We will work with local businesses and join existing forums that focus on the elimination of SUPs, so that Thurrock Council is a local leader with regards to eliminating this unnecessary waste stream.
- We will lead by example and work with our supply chains, satellite-buildings and procurement channels to ensure that the Council does not buy products which cause unnecessary waste.
- We will support the enforcement of this by responding to the Government Consultations on the Plastic Tax and Extended Producer Responsibility.

Additionally we will support the objectives of the Government's 25-year Environment Plan, and the work of WRAP who aim to eliminate all unnecessary SUPs by 2025.

How will we measure this?

- Support the work of WRAP who are leading and monitoring this project to remove unnecessary SUPs by 2025
- Monitor the impact on waste-arising within Thurrock, with particular reference to Kgs produced per head.
- Observe the number of signatories to the 'Plastic Pact'.

### **Objective 2 - To minimise the production of waste and to create an awareness amongst our residents about the impact of waste**

How will we achieve this?

- Work towards setting up a Re-use Partnership, with a local charity or community group, to reuse or repurpose waste that has been brought into the Household Waste & Recycling Centre (HWRC)
- Redevelopment of the HWRC to include a Reuse area or facility to encourage and facilitate the reuse of materials and items.
- Support the 'Love food, hate waste' campaign
- Work and support existing re-use groups
- Support partnerships between supermarkets and food banks

How will we measure this?

We will monitor the following KPIs:

- Kgs per head
- Total Waste arising
- The tonnage reused from the Reuse partnership and HWRC.
- We will monitor the budget, and report any impacts that the reduction in waste has.

### **Objective 3 - Increase our recycling rate to 50% by 2025**

How will we achieve this?

- Provide separate food waste collections, and reduce the amount of residual waste that is collected.
- Ensure that we comply with the Government's Consistency Agenda, and collect the required materials from the kerbside.
- Redevelopment of the HWRC, and investigate best-practice to make recycling easier and a more attractive option to landfill
- Provide clear collection schedules
- Better utilise the 'Bartec' In-Cab Data System in the vehicles to enable real time reporting
- Provide clear information and infrastructure for residents in Flats to recycle

- Support Government proposals for a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)
- Reduce contamination in recycling bins through targeted communications
- Targeted and proportionate enforcement.

How will we measure this?

- We will monitor the percentage of household waste recycled
- Monitor the percentage of municipal waste recycled
- Monitor the recycling rate at the HWRC

**Objective 4 - Ensure that waste collection and waste disposal is carried out in the most carbon-efficient way.**

How will we achieve this?

- Investigate the use of Electric Refuse Collection Vehicles (E-RCV's)
- Ensure that we have long term waste treatment contracts in place, that offer the best possible environmental solution for residual waste
- Investigate the feasibility of developing a Waste Transfer Station in Thurrock, to enable our operational team to function more efficiently and to provide a facility for commercial waste disposal.

How will we monitor this?

- Percentage of household waste to EfW
- Percentage of municipal waste to landfill
- Carbon calculation through reduced vehicle mileages on Collection Rounds and onward Disposal Transportation.

**Objective 5 – To become an Authority that wants to send zero-waste to landfill**

How will we achieve this?

- Procurement of value for money contracts which avoid sending waste to Landfill
- Education of residents regarding the impact of landfill and the environmental benefits of waste reduction
- Leading by example in the materials we use and the processes we follow

How will we monitor this?

- Percentage of household waste to landfill
- Percentage of municipal waste to landfill



#### **4.4 Waste Crime and Enforcement Options**

Thurrock Council's Environmental Enforcement Team have a very good record of dealing with criminal acts of fly-tipping across the borough and such incidents are addressed through enforcement powers available.

Similar enforcement powers are available for the 'Civil Offences' that fall under the 'Environmental Protection Act (EPA) of 1990 under 'Section-46' 'Receptacles for household waste'. While enforcement should be an option of last resort, the ability to address individuals who are unwilling to act responsibly exists within the Council's toolbox.

However easy and simple a waste collection scheme may be for many residents, it may be challenging to others, or a minority may simply not care or wish to participate. Recyclable materials collected by councils may be an important revenue stream that falls under waste contracts; where incorrect materials are found in volume, this may lead to penalties. These incorrect materials, or contamination, generally come either from the resident simply not knowing any different (education scenario) or through a deliberate act (enforcement scenario).

There are several ways of addressing such matters, however it should always be the goal to rectify unacceptable behavior and any form of financial penalisation should be considered a last resort. The rectification of any unacceptable behaviour should then encourage willful and positive participation. A robust program of education and awareness to ensure all residents are able to participate, along with the ability for officers to carry out visits on residents to support them in areas of the collection scheme where they may be unsure or not understand is vital to the success of any recycling collection scheme.

Where such measures of rectifying unacceptable behaviour are unsuccessful Councils have the authority, obligation and ability to address it, as well as a duty of care under the Environmental Protection Act of 1990, and may use civil enforcement to do so.

The range of enforcement powers for both criminal and civil waste crimes are evidenced within the annex documents.

#### **4.5 Proposed Changes to Waste Collections in Thurrock**

The Waste Strategy Group have spent considerable time in discussion with council officers, have visited the materials recycling facility where Thurrock's recyclable waste is taken and long debated how best to change the waste and recycling collection regime in Thurrock to ensure it is able to achieve the main objective of this strategy for both improving recycling rates for the residents & businesses in Thurrock and enable us to meet and exceed the National Recycling targets over the life-span of this strategy.

Consideration to the national Resource & Waste Strategy for England with its proposals for the mandatory separate collection of food-waste and the source-segregation of some recyclable materials such as glass from paper by 2023 and the reduction of municipal waste to landfill to below 10% by 2035 has led the group to determine that a significant change to the collection regime in Thurrock is necessary to meet these challenges.

In order to meet these challenges the Council will:-

- Progress with the roll-out of the Flats recycling program to both council-owned and private locations and integrate them into the collection service.
- Retender and procure new waste disposal contracts which will support the changes proposed to the waste collection regime in Thurrock
- Carry out a comprehensive re-optimisation of all waste collections to ensure the service is efficient and fully inclusive to all its residents.
- Introduce and roll-out a weekly separate food-waste collection service that will divert food from the residual waste stream, contribute to the recycling rates and reduce spending on landfill disposal costs.
- Maintain a weekly dry-recycling collection service that will continue to support and encourage residents in recycling, and will be able to include the roll-out of Flats-recycling across the borough.
- Introduce a subscription service for the collection of Garden waste with a charge of £30 per year. This service will be provided on a fortnightly basis.
- Revise residual-waste collection to a two-weekly service in order to further encourage residents to recycle their waste

These changes to waste and recycling collections work together and continue to provide a waste collection every week by tasking residents to sort, separate and present their waste for varying collections.

## CHAPTER 5: THE NEXT STEPS

### 5.1 Waste Disposal Contracts

Thurrock Council currently has a suite of various waste disposal contracts in operation.

The table below sets out the current contractual information for waste disposal.

Type of contract	Contractor	Contract Start date	Term of contract	Contract extension	Tonnage
Residual Waste	FCC	Sept 2015	8 years six month	No extension	44,000
Organic Waste	BIFFA	Dec 2017	Three years	24 months 9 months have currently been requested with a variation for garden waste only	12,000
Mixed Dry Recycling (MDR)	Bywaters	Dec 2017	Three years	24 months 9 months have currently been requested	13,000
Reuse & Recycling Centre (RRC) residual disposal	Veolia	Dec 2017	Three years	24 months 12 months have currently been requested	5,000
RRC- Wood disposal	Suez	Dec 2017	Three years	24 months 12 months have currently been requested	2,500
Disposal and transport of recyclables	Aherns	Dec 2017	Three years	24 months 12 months have currently been requested	10,000
RRC – Green Waste disposal	Veolia	Dec 2017	Three years	24 months 9 months have currently been requested	600

### 5.2 Waste Strategy Implementation and Monitoring

The implementation of the Waste Strategy for Thurrock will involve a number of different elements across a period of time. This will require the following to take place:

- The successful roll-out and integration of recycling collections to Flats and Communal properties across Thurrock

- A clear, concise and ongoing communications programme to ensure our residents fully understand what it is we are asking them to do and why we need their help, to increase the recycling rates within Thurrock.
- A structured and workable Route-Optimisation of existing waste collection rounds that includes all properties for collection and that maximises efficiency of the waste collection fleet.
- Specify and procure suitable waste-collection vehicles that will allow maximum flexibility to incorporate changes to collections where alternate waste streams are considered, in order to further increase recycling levels.
- Procure and deliver food-caddies for food-waste collections
- To procure and ensure that cost effective waste disposal contracts are in operation.
- Continually engage with key stakeholders to ensure that they are kept aware of planned changes within the Service, and where appropriate seek input and feedback on operational considerations.

### **5.3 Waste Strategy Review**

In light of the changes proposed in the Resources and Waste Strategy, it is imperative that we continue to review Thurrock's Municipal Waste Strategy to ensure that we are able to comply with changes to National policy and legislation.

The 'Strategy Timeline' (*Annex Document*) shows the key dates within the National Strategy, with which we will need to comply. This means we will have to continually review our own strategy to ensure compliance.

As the national strategy changes and adapts to further increase recycling figures and protect our natural resources it will become necessary to review and determine how we can incorporate changes and ensure continued compliance while providing our service to the Public and keeping spending within budget.

The commodities markets for recyclable materials is ever-changing and demand levels for materials is fluid, which in turn affects fees and charges from disposal and treatment providers. This fluidity should be built into disposal contracts where possible to allow the council every opportunity to benefit from the recyclables we collect and again keep budget-spending to a minimum.

Review of the strategy should be regular and operational service plans adjusted where required. As the borough's population grows over the coming years and households

added to collection rounds it is good practice to regularly review collection rounds to incorporate new properties and maintain maximum efficiencies across the service.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The Waste Strategy for Thurrock needs to be considered a 'living document' that will require continual nurturing and attention in order to fulfil its aim. It is also the tool with which we will improve and increase our recycling performance, to meet and exceed national targets. The strategy will be dependent upon a number of critical factors for it to succeed.

We must firstly fully **engage with our residents** to encourage them to participate in providing as much recyclable materials as possible. This participation will be fully reliant upon our providing and delivering a **collection service** that can be relied upon every week, is as efficient as possible to ensure continued best-value and to resolve service issues quickly and maintain engagement. We will need to provide **information and education** to residents to encourage inclusion in a service that reaches every household across the borough, providing us with high quality recyclables and minimum contamination. The continued **engagement with our front-line staff** will be vital in ensuring they are informed, motivated and engaged to deliver the changes to our collection regime that are necessary to achieve our goal of increased recycling.

We will look to provide our front-line staff with the **necessary tools** to maximise these efficiencies, while allowing the service to be flexible and facilitate subtle changes to collection methods where the recycling markets may require us to adapt and change. By providing **waste collection vehicles** that allow us to implement changes more quickly we will maximise the available resources and minimise the number of vehicles on our roads.

Finally, **continual reviews** of both the national strategy and this document will ensure we are in the best position to evaluate, plan for and react to our ever-changing needs and ensure we reach the targets we have set ourselves.

\*\*\*\*\*