

# LGA response to Defra consultation on consistency in household and business recycling collections in England



10 May 2019

## 1. About the Local Government Association (LGA)

1.1. The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We are a politically-led, cross party membership organisation, representing councils from England and Wales.

1.2. Our role is to support, promote and improve local government, and raise national awareness of the work of councils. Our ultimate ambition is to support councils to deliver local solutions to national problems.

## 2. Introduction

1.3. The LGA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultations on resources and waste reforms, first set out in the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy. Here we set out an overview of the LGA's response to the package of reforms. We have also answered the individual questions in each of the consultations.

1.4. The LGA supports the ambition for an increase in recycling rates. As the Resource and Waste Strategy notes councils have a good story to tell on the growth in recycling, which has been maintained at its current level of around 45 per cent in recent years even though central government funding for councils has reduced by £15bn, nearly 60 per cent, since 2010. The local government sector is ready to take on the challenge of improving recycling levels and the overall waste service it provides to its residents. Our work in understanding the reforms continues and we are grateful for the engagement with DEFRA. Below we set out some of the areas that need further engagement and consideration, but first we set out the emerging sector wide view of the reforms based on our engagement with councils:

- The reforms to the producer responsibility schemes are long overdue and we agree with the Government's broad proposal that producers should be responsible for 100 per cent of the costs of managing packaging waste.

# Submission

- The majority of councils are already collecting a set of dry recyclables resembling that proposed in the consistency consultation. Where there are substantial additional costs for councils in complying with the proposed set, these should be met by new burden funding and/or transition funding. However, consistency cannot be applied to collections alone, it must also be a principle in the design and recyclability of packaging.
  - How waste is collected should continue to be determined locally. Current approaches reflect a range of local factors. The vast majority of people are not constantly on the move and they do not have to negotiate different local systems. Residents need to know what can be recycled, which is dependent on producers making this very clear on packaging, and their local method for collection. The current differences in the collection service will take into account local geography and housing types and the investment in and availability of sorting and reprocessing infrastructure.
  - The mandating of food waste collection means that all councils should receive new burdens funding to pay for this service even if they have previously been collecting food waste on a voluntary basis.
- 1.5. Councils should continue to be allowed to charge for garden waste collection. In our view residents are willing to pay for this service and from our engagement with councils there is little evidence of garden waste being diverted to residual waste as a result of the charge. We make the following additional general points on the package of reforms.
- 1.6. DEFRA is to be congratulated in bringing forward this major package of reforms focused on increasing recycling. The reforms seek to change the behaviour of the public, businesses and those involved in the waste industry, by transforming the practice, funding and risk profile of those organisations with responsibility for waste management. The LGA is supportive of the Government's intention, but the consultations must be seen as a milestone in the discussions with the various sectors, rather than an end point. We need to continue to interrogate the assumptions that underpin the reforms to ensure that the desired outcomes are achievable and are value for money. The Department has engaged with the local government sector, but only a limited amount of the additional information that the sector needs to assess and fully understand the impact of the reforms has been provided. We hope that the engagement can be stepped up as we move to the next stage of developing the reforms.
- 1.7. **Scope of the reforms:** the reforms focus on increasing recycling but also need to consider action first to prevent waste. The consultations have little to say on whether and how to reduce the overall level of packaging entering the system or the mechanisms for stimulating investment in end of life reprocessing infrastructure. The reforms

implicitly rely on market forces to stimulate the use of the right type of packaging, but do not reference an ambition to reduce the overall level of packaging entering the system. Similarly it is assumed that the market will absorb an increase in the supply of recyclable material but there is no discussion on whether incentives are required, the types of preferred reprocessing procedures, the siting of infrastructure, or the timescales for bringing new infrastructure on stream. The current reprocessing market is patchy both geographically and in the depth of its capacity.

- 1.8. Reduction in the quantity of packaging entering the system should be an explicit aim. The government should also signal its long-term preference for how we reprocess recyclable material and consider the incentives that might be required to encourage investment in the right infrastructure in the right place. The Government must also recognise the investment that has taken place already at the local level, for example in energy from waste plants, with the support of past Governments. Any policy and/or tax changes to legacy systems will have a significant financial impact.
- 1.9. **The relationship between the reforms:** The individual reforms will have an impact on each other, but these feedback or spill over effects are not explicitly articulated or mitigated in the consultation documents. One example is the impact of an all-in DRS system on the net cost of kerbside collections. A second is how the EPR and DRS systems interact in the discharge of the overall producer responsibility and the relationship to payments that councils will receive for their role in recycling. The links between the various reforms need to be made more explicit so that councils can understand fully the implications of taking forward any particular set of reforms.
- 1.10. **Funding:** Local government needs clarity about the future funding of the waste service. The Government states that “the funding to meet [packaging waste] costs will transfer from central and local taxpayers to businesses”.<sup>[1]</sup> Current funding of local authority waste services is not transparent. Councils’ funding is made up of council tax, retained business rates, Revenue Support Grant (RSG), specific grants, fees and charges and commercial activities. There is not a line in central government’s budget that is specific to waste services and changes in the composition of local government finance, through a series of financial reforms, means that it is not possible to assess how much funding has been made available by central government for local authority waste collection and disposal.
- 1.11. It is imperative that producers fully fund, through the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) measures, both the current waste collection and disposal costs as well as costs associated with increasing the recycling rate. The funding arising from the EPR should flow in its entirety to local government.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Consultation on reforming the UK packaging producer responsibility system  
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- 1.12. It is important to note that as part of the Government's Review of Relative Needs and Resources, MHCLG is developing a series of formulae to fund local authorities' services including waste. DEFRA will need to work with MHCLG to ensure that the payments to councils arising from EPR are compatible with the outcome of the Review of Relative needs
- 1.13. The 'polluter pays' principle with regard to packaging has been incorporated into European legislation for the past 25 years.<sup>1</sup> In that time the proportion of recycling costs that have been paid for by businesses in other European countries has far exceeded that paid by businesses in the UK.<sup>2</sup> In 2017 producers paid £73 million towards the cost of managing waste packaging. This compares with an estimated cost to councils of £700 million for managing the collection and disposal of packaging waste.<sup>3</sup> For years councils have borne the cost the packaging recycling that should have been the responsibility of producers. The Government must now commit to the funding that comes from an improved producer responsibility system being additional.
- 1.14. **Assumptions:** a range of assumptions inform the impact assessments associated with the proposals and they also help shape the Government's emerging preferred options. We would like to thank the Department and WRAP for their engagement with the sector on these assumptions. We have worked with waste experts and financial analysts to understand the assumptions and there are signs that this element of the Department's work should be treated with some caution and by extension we should be wary of a narrative of technical objectivity.
- 1.15. WRAP has been gathering and analysing data on waste management and recycling for the last 15 years and it has undoubted expertise in this area. However, as it stands we have not seen the underlying WRAP data and we are unable to reconcile councils' data on costs with the data that WRAP uses to populate its model. The model itself is limited in scope and does not take account fully of high rise flats. In our view this materially restricts the explanatory capacity of the six rurality categories used in the model that underpins the analysis, particularly in terms of the consistency consultation. The model employs standardised costs derived from actual costs provided by councils. We are told that the variation between actual gross costs and standardised gross costs is relatively small (although we have not been able to test this), but this masks greater variation in net costs (which take into account income to councils from recyclable material).
- 1.16. The model stylises an ideal collection system, a preferred model being multi-stream collection, and uses this as a basis for determining the extent to which councils are 'efficient'. This approach

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<sup>1</sup> EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 94/62/EC

<sup>2</sup> European Commission report: Development of Guidance on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), Final Report 2014

<sup>3</sup> The Packaging and Recycling Obligations, NAO 23 August 2018 para 3

is used in the impact assessments to project savings as a result of councils moving to an idealised system. The model does not take into account, and nor can it, the peculiarities of geography and housing types in any given area. What WRAP determines as inefficiencies and therefore potential savings, are in our view the product of good local decisions based on a range of local factors that seek to optimise the waste service within the constraints of geography and housing types.

- 1.17. **Future work:** We have answered the questions in the consultation as fully as we can. However, we note that in many cases the high level nature of the consultation documents and the accompanying impact assessments make it difficult to provide definitive responses. More work is required to understand and refine the reforms and we look forward to our continued engagement with DEFRA on these matters.

## **2. Answers to consultation questions**

Note: Questions 1-4 cover individual contact details and are not relevant at the LGA is responding as an organisation

### **3. Part 1: Measures to improve the quantity and quality of household recycling collected by local authorities**

#### **4. Proposal 1: Collecting a core set of materials for dry recycling**

*4.1. Summary of proposal 1: Legislation will be brought in to require councils to collect a core set of dry recyclables in kerbside collections. Any new burdens will be assessed and funded appropriately.*

#### **5. Question 5: Setting aside the detail of how it should be achieved, do you agree or disagree with the proposal that local authorities should be required to collect a core set of materials for recycling?**

5.1. The LGA agrees with the ambition to introduce a core set of dry recyclable materials and supports this proposal. Collecting a core set of dry materials will simplify recycling for residents. However, the decisions on how that material is collected must be taken at a local level. While it is helpful to set a core set of materials, we would also welcome support for councils with an ambition to go further than the core set.

#### **6. Question 6: We think it should be possible for all local authorities to collect the core set of materials. Do you agree with this?**

6.1. It should be possible for councils to collect the core set of materials. Most of the proposed set of core materials are already collected consistently by councils – paper and card, plastic bottles, steel and aluminium tin cans. The gaps in collection are on glass and pots, tubs and trays. Please see our answer to Question 10 for our views on the core set of materials. It should be possible for councils to add the remaining materials, although this may require changes to contracts and investment in new infrastructure. This must be fully funded and we welcome the commitment to a full assessment of the new burdens on councils.

#### **7. Question 7: What special considerations or challenges might local authorities face in implementing this requirement for existing flats and houses in multiple occupancy?**

7.1. Research by LWARB identified three specific considerations for flats<sup>4</sup>:

- space constraints in people's homes
- the space and location of communal bins
- confusion over what residents can and can't recycle

7.2. Communication can help with the last of these points, but limitations of space and access to communal bins are difficult to solve and relies on the co-operation of building managers and landlords.

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<sup>4</sup> Resource London Recycling in Real Life Report

<https://resourcelondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Recycling-in-reality-report.pdf>

7.3. Solutions might involve a more flexible collection arrangement, providing communal bins of a different size or type and stickers or adding signage on the bins. This requires a tailored solution for each block and an investment in time and equipment. Residents may still be put off by the location of bins for example in dark spaces, or in places where the bins attract mess and fly tipping.

7.4. Recycling rates in flats vary between areas, but they are generally much lower than from low rise properties. Recycling from flats in London is estimated to be around 10%<sup>5</sup>. Contamination rates can also be higher than average. The Surrey Waste Partnership has run a successful programme to increase recycling in flats. A baseline figure of 21% contamination of recycled materials was reduced to 9% in a pilot project. This was achieved through a mix of communication with residents and the introduction of lockable bins.

## **8. Question 8: What other special considerations should be given to how this proposal could apply to flats?**

8.1. Councils will need the co-operation of building owners and managing agents in flats and multi-occupancy properties. Many will respond positively to effort to increase recycling, but experience shows that some will resist change or see efforts to increase recycling as a burden.

8.2. Some of these issues can be avoided by thoughtful design of new developments. Councils have a role to play in this through their planning function and communication with developers. For example, Watford Council provides detailed advice to developers on design specifications to allow comprehensive recycling facilities to be included in new developments and conversions<sup>6</sup>.

## **9. Question 9: Do you have any other comments to make about Proposal 1?**

9.1. The LGA is keen to work with Defra to carry out further analysis around how to support consistency in blocks of flats and other types of property where access to bins will be difficult. It may be helpful to draw on the research and pilots carried out in London, Greater Manchester and other major cities.

## **10. Proposal 2: the required set of core set of materials**

10.1. *Summary of proposal 2: The proposed core set of dry recyclable materials is:*

- *glass bottles and containers*
- *paper and card*
- *plastic bottles*
- *detergent, shampoo and cleaning products*
- *plastic pots, tubs and trays*
- *steel and aluminium tins and cans.*

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.lwarb.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Flats-Programme-Report-final.pdf>

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[https://www.watford.gov.uk/info/20135/bins/693/waste\\_and\\_recycling\\_bin\\_allocation\\_storage\\_and\\_collection\\_guidance\\_-\\_new\\_developments\\_and\\_conversions/4](https://www.watford.gov.uk/info/20135/bins/693/waste_and_recycling_bin_allocation_storage_and_collection_guidance_-_new_developments_and_conversions/4)

10.2. *The consultation paper suggests that 70% of local authorities already collect the proposed core set of dry recyclable materials.*

**11. Question 10: Do you believe that all of these core materials should be included or any excluded?**

11.1. We agree with the core set of materials, provided that councils are fully funded to meet the cost of filling any gaps in kerbside collection services. From the proposed list, the materials that are not consistently collected from the kerbside are glass (collected by 80% of councils) and pots, tubs and trays (collected by 77% of councils<sup>7</sup>).

11.2. Adding glass to kerbside collection may increase costs in some cases. Councils will also need to consider the safety of those coming into contact with loose glass and a potential increase in noise. This may require additional investment in collection equipment and renegotiation of MRF contracts. Wrap research indicates that including glass in mixed materials for recycling adds around £10 per tonne to the gate fee<sup>8</sup>.

11.3. Pots, tubs and trays are made of a variety of different types of plastic and this makes them difficult and expensive to recycle. For example, some types of plastic cannot be recycled as they are too fragile to withstand mechanised sorting processes (e.g. polystyrene). Black plastic cannot be detected by the optical scanners used in sorting machinery and is not recyclable.

11.4. If councils are required to collect pots, tubs and trays then retailers and manufacturers must also play their part in making sure these materials are easy to recycle.

**12. Question 11: What, if any, other products or materials do you believe should be included in the core set that all local authorities will be required to collect?**

12.1. No product or materials should be added to the core set of materials unless there is a viable route for recycling. This requires consideration of the end destination of the material. It is important for the public's trust in the recycling system that items placed in recycling bins in good faith are recycled responsibly once councils have passed them on to the recycling and reprocessing industry. The current reliance on global markets is a concern, as China's restrictions on imported waste are being followed by other countries. This raises the question of whether there is sufficient domestic capacity to deal with existing and any new recyclates.

12.2. Food and drinks cartons are collected by some councils. They are made from more than one material and so have to be broken down into their separate components in the recycling process. They have a low value but are expensive to collect and sort from other materials. The introduction of extended producer responsibility and funding for councils could help with the cost of expensive items in the household waste stream, such as cartons. Further thought must also

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<sup>7</sup> Wrap analysis of local authority dry recycling collection services 2017/18

<sup>8</sup> Wrap Gate fees 2017/18 final report

be given to end destinations and investment in UK infrastructure.

12.3. Plastic bags and film are not widely collected by councils. The potential for recycling varies according to the type of plastic used in the manufacture of the product and this complicates the sorting and recycling process. The technology of MRFs may not be able to deal with bags and film in some cases.

12.4. Some retailers have encouraged shoppers to return used film and plastic bags in store for recycling. It may be helpful to learn lessons from their experience and whether this service could be expanded to replace or work alongside kerbside collection.

12.5. It is important that materials are considered across the piece and the interrelationship between consistency of collection, extended producer responsibility and a deposit return scheme must be taken into account. This could present new opportunities to review or expand the core list. Other consequences should also be considered. For example, the plastics tax might increase the amount of compostable packaging in household. However, this material is not currently recyclable due to a lack of infrastructure.

**13. Question 12: If you think any of these of other items should or should not be included in the core set immediately please explain.**

13.1. We do not see any reason to add further items immediately due to issues with end markets and limitations of the existing infrastructure for sorting household recycling. See our answer to Question 11 above for details.

**14. Question 13: If you think these or other items should be included for inclusion at a later stage, what changes would be needed to support their inclusion?**

14.1. As indicated in our answer to Question 11, this question needs to be widened to include the capacity of the UK's recycling infrastructure to accept a broader range of materials.

14.2. Producers also have a role to play by preventing waste in the first place and switching to products that are easy to recycle.

**15. Question 14: Do you have any other comments to make about Proposal 2?**

15.1. Questions 10 to 14 are focused on kerbside collection. This ignores the role that bring banks and household waste and recycling centres (HWRCs) can play in capturing material for recycling. For example, some councils may not be collecting glass in kerbside collections but are providing collection facilities at bring banks or HWRCs. These can provide significant volumes of good quality glass that can be sold on for recycling.

15.2. Government is proposing the introduction of a deposit return scheme for drinks containers. There is a strong crossover between the core set of dry recyclables and the materials in scope for the deposit return scheme. If drinks containers are diverted from household waste to a deposit return scheme, this will reduce the amount of higher value items that can be used to offset the cost of collection.

**16. Proposal 3: Review and expansion of mandatory core materials over time**

**17. Question 15: Do you agree that the core set should be regularly reviewed, and provided certain conditions are met, expanded?**

17.1. We agree that the core set of materials should be reviewed. Local government must be involved in the review process.

**18. Question 16: Do you believe that the proposed conditions a) to d) are needed in order to add a core material?**

- a) Evidence supports the benefits
- b) There are viable processing technologies
- c) There are sustainable end markets
- d) Local authorities would not be adversely affected, including financially

18.1. We support the proposed conditions.

**19. Question 17: Do you have any other comments to make about proposal 3?**

19.1. We support Government's involvement in the review process, but we would like to see a wider set of organisations taking an active role in the review process. This should include local government, but might also cover manufacturers and retailers, the waste industry and recycling industries.

**20. Proposal 4: Separate collection of food waste**

20.1. *Summary of proposal 4: Legislation would be brought in requiring all councils to provide all kerbside properties and flats with access to at least a weekly separate food collection, including the provision of containers and liners by 2023.*

**21. Question 18: Which aspects of the proposals do you agree with?**

**i) At least a weekly collection of food waste**

21.1. Cost is a significant barrier to the introduction of weekly food waste collection and we welcome the commitment to ensure that all relevant councils are fully resourced to meet new costs regardless of whether or not they have been providing a food waste service voluntarily. On this basis, we support the ambition to introduce weekly food waste collections.

21.2. It is important to understand the impact on contracts (for example mechanical biological treatment (MBT) plants and energy from waste (EFW)) and the financial penalties that could be incurred by councils. The LGA would be happy to work with Government to understand this issue in more detail.

**ii) A separate collection of food waste (i.e. not mixed with garden waste)**

21.3. This should be a local decision. Councils know the local infrastructure and the most cost effective solution.

21.4. This could have a cost implication for some councils where food and garden is collected together. Continuing with combined collections may be the most cost effective option in the short term, where councils have made upfront investment in composting technology and collection systems. Any additional costs from a requirement for separate collection would need to be funded.

**iii) Services to be changed only as and when contracts allow**

21.5. This is a pragmatic approach that we support. If any contract change should be required the costs should not fall on councils.

21.6. Separate collection is not the only way to extract food waste from other rubbish. The MBT process extracts food waste after collection and turns it into compost. Some councils have made a significant investment in this technology, for example in East London and South Yorkshire. It allows food waste to be extracted in areas where residents do not have space to store food caddies and where participation rates in kerbside recycling are low.

**iv) Providing free caddy liners to householders for food waste collections**

21.7. Councils report mixed experiences of providing liners to residents. This has worked in some areas, but others have had good results without the additional cost of providing liners. For example the Somerset Waste Partnership reports a participation rate of 62% in food waste collection without providing free liners.

21.8. There is no one size fits all approach to this question and this should be a local decision. Councils know the local infrastructure and have worked with their communities to ensure an effective service.

**22. Question 19: Are there circumstances where it would not be practicable to provide a separate food waste collection to kerbside properties or flats?**

22.1. Yes, many councils have raised concerns about the challenge of collecting food waste from flats.

22.2. Back to back and terraced properties have limited space for storage of bins. Existing space may be used up by residual and recycling bins, or residents may not have any storage space except on the street. This will make delivery of food waste collection very challenging.

22.3. As noted in Question 18, councils have invested in alternative technologies for collecting and treating food waste that could be significantly impacted by adding separate food waste collection.

**23. Question 20: Do you have any other comments to make about Proposal 4 including on circumstances where it may not be practical to provide a separate food waste service?**

23.1. While food waste collection has many benefits, evidence from councils indicates that separate collection does not eliminate food waste from the residual waste stream. Capture rates vary between areas but councils tell us that even with an established food waste collection as much as 50% of food waste can remain in residual waste. It would be helpful to understand what assumptions have

been applied to food waste capture rates in the impact assessment of this policy. We would be happy to work with Defra to ensure that the next stage of analysis is based on actual, rather than assumed data on capture rates.

- 23.2. It is important that food waste collection is supported by action to reduce food waste. Reducing food waste in the first place has the most beneficial outcome and should have equal emphasis in the implementation of the waste and resources strategy.

#### **24. Proposal 5: Funding and support to local authorities to put in place the necessary collections infrastructure**

#### **25. Question 21: what kind of support would be necessary to support food waste collection?**

- 25.1. The requirement for food waste collection will be introduced through legislation. This is a new burden on councils and must go through the new burdens assessment process.

- 25.2. Councils will need financial support to meet the practical and financial challenges of providing food waste collection services. This will vary by council, and there may be additional requirements for councils where there is no local infrastructure to process food waste. This will incur transport costs, and may also require investment in additional capacity in waste transfer stations.

- 25.3. Councils already providing food waste collections report that regular communication is an essential to making it work. The cost of local communication should be considered as part of the essential costs of providing a service.

#### **26. Question 22: Do you have any other comments to make about Proposal 5?**

- 26.1. It is helpful that Defra has recognised the need to provide funding and support to local authorities.

- 26.2. The LGA would be happy to work with Defra to understand the full cost implications for local government. Removing food waste and transferring more material from residual waste into recycling could impact on long term contracts for residual waste treatment. The transition costs will vary across councils, depending on local infrastructure and existing collection systems. This must be fully funded.

## **27. Proposal 6: proposals for collecting garden waste**

27.1. *Summary of proposal 6: At the moment councils have discretion to operate a free garden waste collection or charge residents for the service. Government propose that garden waste services should be free to residents from 2023. This would be a minimum fortnightly service of a 240 litre container. Local authorities could charge for additional provision. Local authorities would be provided with resources to meet new net costs.*

## **28. Question 24: Which aspects of the proposal do you agree or disagree with?**

28.1. Our preferred approach is for garden waste to be treated through home composting. This might require a small initial outlay for residents but it is a low cost, sustainable way of dealing with garden waste. The first step in a waste management strategy is normally to reduce and prevent waste, and only then to provide recycling facilities. The arguments for the benefits of free garden waste collection need to be tested against the additional cost that this would bring.

28.2. Residents can take garden waste to a household waste and recycling centre (HWRC). This is free and offers more flexibility on timing than a fixed kerbside collection.

28.3. The consultation paper reports research findings that indicate that “large proportions” of garden waste enter the residual waste stream when charges are introduced. It would be helpful to see the detail of the research as it conflicts with the evidence we have seen from councils who have introduced charges

For example:

- A waste compositional analysis carried out in September 2018 found that garden waste formed on average 3.6% of residual waste across the Project Integra Partnership (all waste authorities in Hampshire including the unitary authorities of Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils)
- Surrey’s 2016/17 waste composition analysis found that only 4% of kerbside residual waste was made up of garden waste. 10% of all garden waste collected at the kerbside was in the residual stream – this fell to 7% for the garden waste collected at Community Recycling Centres was also included
- In 2018 garden waste was on average 1.2% of the residual waste on average across Warwickshire

28.4. This is a costly proposal where the experience of councils does not align with the Government’s arguments for the benefits. We do not support this proposal.

**29. Question 25: Do you have any other comments to make about Proposal 7?**

29.1. Under current arrangements councils can charge to cover garden waste service costs based on local expenditure. If the Government's process for calculating the net cost payment is different there could be a loss for councils. This would have to be met from other budgets.

29.2. We welcome the recognition that councils will need additional resources to meet the cost of this proposal. It will need to be examined through the new burdens doctrine, and we would be happy to work with Government on this.

**30. Proposal 8: Separate collection to improve quality**

30.1. *Summary of Proposal 8: Government propose to amend the law to promote separate collection of materials. Local authorities and waste operator will decide on collection systems taking account of statutory guidance on minimum service standards.*

**31. Question 26: Do you agree the proposed approach to arrangement for separate collection of dry materials for recycling to ensure quality.**

31.1. This must be a local decision. Separate collection relies heavily on the willingness and ability of residents to sort materials for recycling, and may not be appropriate for all types of housing stock.

31.2. The proposals note that while separate collection can improve the quality of recyclates, it reduces the overall amount of material collected for recycling. This finding is consistent with feedback from councils.

**32. Question 27: What circumstances may prevent separate collection of paper, card, glass, metals, and plastics?**

32.1. Changing from co-mingled collection to a form of kerbside sorting will have practical implications for councils. Several councils have highlighted concerns about the health and safety of their crews in handling boxes at the kerbside and the collection of glass. Councils must also take account of research and guidance on health and safety where it impacts on kerbside sorting. For example, WISH guidance recommends "Methods of collecting glass that do not require the glass to be manually tipped or sorted at the kerbside will remove a significant source of noise exposure, and you should consider these when you are developing recyclable collection strategies." WISH guidance (2015)<sup>9</sup>;

32.2. There are also concerns about the practicality of separate collection from blocks of flats and communal properties. As with food waste collection, the barriers are practical due to limited bin storage and high levels of contamination. It will also require residents of flats to invest time and effort in sorting materials for recycling.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://wishforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/WASTE-16.pdf>

32.3. A switch from co-mingled to separate collection would reduce the need for materials to be sorted into separate streams at a MRF. This would have an implication for council contracts with MRFs and investment in sorting facilities. While the need for sorting would be reduced, councils will still need to put infrastructure in place to collect, store and bulk separate recycling streams. This additional cost needs to be considered.

32.4. There are also implications for the street scene and the environment which are not considered in the consultation paper or the impact assessment. Sorting recycling at the kerbside is slower than picking up one bin of co-mingled materials. This has an impact on air quality as collection vehicles are on the road for longer and are likely to slow traffic behind them. This needs to be factored into the financial and environmental impact of this policy.

**33. Question 28: Do you have any other comments about Proposal 8?**

33.1. We welcome further analysis of the high level cost scenarios set out in the Impact Assessment that accompanies the consultation. It would be helpful to understand the assumptions that underpin the significant cost savings that are estimated for separate multi-stream collection compared to twin stream and the existing base line. The assumption that gross collection cost in multi stream collection will always be cheaper is questionable. It is entirely dependent on the parameters which have been set to measure it. It is sensitive to local operational factors.

33.2. The assumptions underpinning the modelling of the different collection scenarios have not been provided. We are not able to confirm the statement that councils will have “significantly lower costs” through separate multi-stream collection without sight of the detail underpinning the impact assessment. Further clarity would be helpful on:

- The assumptions used in the modelling on gate fees and accuracy of these figures. A simple calculation of processing fees may not represent the full picture of any income or rebate from the sale of recyclates from co-mingled or twin stream collections
- Whether bulking costs have been applied to the cost of separate multi-stream collections. While multi-stream collection could avoid the need for sorting at MRFs material some councils will still need to store and bale materials before taking them to a reprocessing facility.

### **34. Proposal 9: Bin colour standardisation**

#### **35. Question 29: Do you agree with this proposal (that England should move to standardised waste container colours for recycled material, residual waste, and food and garden waste)?**

35.1. The choice of bin colour is currently a local decision and councils have invested considerable time and money in communicating local systems to residents. It is right that it remains a local decision.

#### **36. Question 30: There would be potential for significant costs from introducing standardised bin colours from a specific date. What views do you have on a phased approach or alternative ways to standardising the colours of containers for difficult materials?**

36.1. This should remain a local decision. A phased approach could lead to a situation where residents in the same area have different colour bins. This would not be helpful.

#### **37. Question 31: Do you have any other comments to make about Proposal 9?**

37.1. We do not support standardised bin colours. Should this proposal be introduced, a less costly option would be to indicate standard bin colours through a change of bin lid or coloured stickers.

### **38. Proposal 10: minimum standards for household waste and recycling services**

38.1. *Summary of Proposal 10: Government is proposing to issue statutory guidance to councils on minimum standards in providing household recycling services. Service standards would outline requirements for separate collection and provide advice on circumstances where this may not be practicable. The standards would specify alternative weekly collection of residual waste with a weekly collection of food waste as a minimum level of service.*

#### **39. Question 32: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to publish statutory guidance?**

39.1. We agree in principle with the proposal for minimum standards and support a consistent set of materials as part of that standard.

39.2. The decision on how to collect recycled materials and other waste must be a local decision. We do not agree that government should publish statutory guidance to councils on residual waste collection.

#### **40. Question 33: We propose reviewing the guidance every few years, revising it as required and then allowing sufficient lead-in time to accommodate the changes. Do you agree or disagree with this timescale?**

40.1. See the answer to Question 32

**41. Question 34: Subject to further analysis and consultation we propose to use the guidance to set a minimum service standard for residual waste collection of at least every alternative week. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal.**

41.1. This is a local decision. Government should not have any role in deciding the frequency of residual waste collection.

41.2. Some councils have implemented three weekly residual collections to support increased recycling and reduce costs. Changing to fortnightly residual waste collection would increase costs and could impact on contract thresholds and could impact negatively on recycling levels.

41.3. For example, the Somerset Waste Partnership's new Recycle More contract is expected to save partners millions whilst achieving increased recycling of 20% food waste, 30% dry recycling, and reducing residual waste by 15%. The service will include enhanced weekly recycling and food waste collections and three-weekly residual waste collections. The lower frequency residual collections are key to increasing capture of food waste and recyclables, achieving national policy goals and providing efficient collection services. Collecting refuse more frequently than required will add both costs and reduce the amount of recyclables captured.

**42. Question 35: Do you have any other comments to make about Proposal 10?**

42.1. We would be happy to work with Defra on the development of minimum standards.

**43. Proposal 11: communicating with residents about recycling**

43.1. *Summary of proposal 11: Government will continue to support the Recycle Now campaign and tools produced by WRAP to help local authorities communicate effectively on recycling.*

**44. Question 36: Do you have any comments to make about Proposal 11?**

44.1. Recycle now is a recognised brand and widely used by local government. Preparing communication at national level is an effective way to use resources and WRAP have an important role in this.

44.2. However, councils need to be properly resourced to carry out communication work. Delivery of recycling services will vary at the local level and so councils need to be funded to deliver tailored local messages. Financial pressures on councils have meant that many councils have had to cut back on communication with residents on waste and recycling services.

**45. Question 37: What information do householders and members of the public need to help them recycle better?**

45.1. The consultation on Extended Producer Responsibility proposes that producers should clearly label packaging as recyclable or not recyclable. We support this proposal as clearer labelling will help the public and increase their confidence in recycling systems.

45.2. Good communication needs to be a combination of national and local information. Understanding householders and providing tailored communication is often the key to increased recycling.

- The Resource Greater Manchester Partnership is a joint initiative between the Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority and Wrap. An ambitious behaviour change programme is part of a strategy to reach “zero waste”. The strategy includes focused campaigns, for example increasing food waste capture from high rise properties in Salford. It will also develop market segments to help tailor communications to specific audiences<sup>10</sup>.
- Leeds City Council is working in partnership with Hubbub on the #LeedsbyExample project to improve “on the go” recycling. Innovative approaches include bins that burb and blow bubbles when used. The project is testing different options for collecting coffee cups for recycling through trials of on the go bins and techniques to make recycling part of the social norm.

**46. Proposal 12: transparency on end destinations for household recycling**

46.1. *Summary of Proposal 12: Government propose to work with local authorities and others to improve transparency of information available to householders on the end destination for recycling.*

**47. Question 38: Do you agree or disagree with this proposal?**

47.1. The LGA would be happy to work with Government on increasing transparency on the end destination of recycled materials. The recycling and reprocessing industry must be part of this exercise as they are ultimately responsible for the destination of household waste.

**48. Question 39: Do you have any other comments to make about Proposal 12?**

48.1. There is existing good practice from councils that can inform the next steps on this proposal. For example, the Kent Resource Partnership produces an annual report for residents explaining the end destination of recycled materials<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://zerowastegm.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Waste-Management-Strategy-2012-16.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/partnerships/kent-resource-partnership/governance-documents>

#### **49. Proposal 13: End markets for recyclable materials**

49.1. *Summary of Proposal 13: Government proposes to generate new UK capacity by stimulating demand for recycled plastic through the introduction of a new tax on plastic packaging. Government also believes that the introduction of consistent household collections will bring forward private investments into the UK's sorting and recycling infrastructure.*

#### **50. Question 40: Please use this space to briefly explain any comments you have on the issues discussion in this section.**

50.1. The LGA would welcome investment in the capacity of the UK's recycling infrastructure. Our Wealth from Waste Review of 2013<sup>12</sup> highlighted the potential for the recycling industry to generate local economic growth and new jobs.

50.2. The Government's strategy places a lot of responsibility on consistent collection to stimulate investment. The responsibility for stimulating markets and delivering greater investor confidence is held broadly across a range of actors. Many of the factors influencing this are beyond our control. To take paper as an example, it is consistently collected by councils but end markets are dependent on global demand. LGA research showed that some councils' costs increased by as much as £500,000 in a year due to China's restrictions on imports of paper and certain types of plastic<sup>13</sup>. The Government is ultimately responsible for the conditions in which the domestic market for reprocessing can be stimulated, including the delivery of necessary infrastructure.

#### **51. Proposal 13: Non-binding performance indicators**

51.1. *Summary of proposal 13: non-binding performance indicators would include yields of dry recyclables, food waste, garden waste and residual waste. Government might consider expanding the indicator set to cover the number of complaints and contamination of recycled materials.*

#### **52. Question 41: Do you agree or disagree that introducing non-binding performance indicators for waste management is a good idea?**

52.1. We support the principle of transparency and performance indicators can play an important part in that.

52.2. The principle that indicators are non-binding is important. We will be seeking assurances from government that the purpose of the indicators is transparency and a prompt for learning and improvement, rather than performance management of councils.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/wealth-waste-lga-local-waste-review>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/china-waste-ban-impacting-council-recycling-services-and-costs>

**53. Question 42: Do you agree or disagree that the proposed indicators are appropriate?**

53.1. The proposed indicators cover information already collected and are appropriate in that sense, although it is questionable whether a performance indicator is needed for garden waste given that this is not generating a resource for recycling. Also, the potential for garden waste collection is dependent on the housing stock rather than council performance.

53.2. Performance indicators need to focus on the whole waste chain. The introduction of extended producer responsibility will change the nature of household waste and recycling collections. Any new indicators need to be broader in scope and recognise that responsibility will be shared by local authorities and producers in the future.

**54. Question 43: Do you have any comments to make about Proposal 14 or examples of indicators currently in use that may be of assistance?**

54.1. We welcome further information on proposals for new indicators on contamination and service delivery, as collecting this information would be an additional burden for councils.

**55. Proposal 15: Alternatives to weight-based metrics**

**56. Question 44: Do you agree that alternatives to weight-based metrics should be developed to understand recycling performance?**

56.1. We agree that a reliance on weight based indicators is a simplistic understanding of the broader impact of waste and recycling. It would be helpful to develop alternative metrics.

**57. Question 45: Do you agree that these alternatives should sit alongside current weight-based measures?**

57.1. Weight-based measures are established and easily understood. A dashboard approach that combines different measures would allow for a more sophisticated understanding of the metrics.

57.2. Research for the LGA<sup>14</sup> indicated that residual waste arisings (by tonnage) would be a helpful metric in understanding the role councils are playing in waste prevention, and could help to incentivise this behaviour.

57.3. An additional metric on greenhouse gas emissions avoided would also be a useful additional measure. While this is not an easy task, it would switch priorities away from tonnage to a broader focus on the management of waste to achieve the best environmental outcome.

## 58. Proposal 16: joint working between local authorities

### 59. Question 47: In what way could greater partnership working between local authorities lead to improved waste management and higher levels of recycling?

59.1. There are many good practice examples of partnership between councils. These have been brought about through local action, and they all vary significantly from each other. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to partnership or joint working.

59.2. We support collaboration between local authorities on improving waste and recycling services. This includes councils in two-tier areas and elsewhere. The sector has a range of effective partnerships across the country. All of the boroughs in London are in waste partnerships with at least three or four other London boroughs. This pattern is repeated across many of the counties such as Somerset, Hampshire, Leicestershire and Dorset.

59.3. Councils have identified a number of issues which help to deliver successful partnerships. These include shared interests (not always geographic), service style, demographics and effective governance and decision making processes.

59.4. Some councils make the point that partnership working does not necessarily lead to improved recycling rates. Sometimes it leads to savings. In some cases partnership working can actually lock a group of councils into a challenging situation. This has been the case with the East London Waste Authority who are all locked into a long term contract which cannot always be flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs of councils.

59.5. Partnership working case studies:

The **Oxfordshire Waste Partnership** was formed in 2007 by all Oxfordshire's district, city and county councils. This highly successful partnership delivered an increased recycling rate from 33% in 2006/7 to over 60% by 2013 and reduced reliance on landfill from 46% to 5%. By working together, authorities introduced comprehensive alternate weekly collections with weekly food and in-county food, green and residual waste treatment infrastructure. This set Oxfordshire authorities to top the recycling league the tables for many years, and we continue to do so. In 2014 a decision was made to dissolve the partnership however in early 2019 with stagnating recycling rates, the release of the Resources and Waste Strategy for England and a realisation that a better result could be achieved for the tax payer and for the environment by closer partnership work, it was agreed to create the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership.

The **Hertfordshire Waste Partnership** brings together 10 district councils and the county council with a jointly funded partnership unit. Partnership working has extended beyond the original focus on waste and recycling services to joint action to tackle fly tipping, bringing in partners from outside the councils. Fly tipping has reduced by 18% and the Hertfordshire partnership have been helping other councils to roll

out the “lets S.C.R.A.P” fly tipping campaign<sup>15</sup>. It has been adopted by 46 local authorities with another 64 due to implement and 55 interested across the UK.

The **Somerset waste partnership** (SWP) consistently demonstrates the benefits of a true partnership approach through customer satisfaction, improvements in recycling rates, waste minimisation, and financial savings. Working together has enabled partners to be innovative, starting the first large-scale food waste collection and an end use register showing exactly what happens to all recycling. SWP provide a consistent fully harmonised service across the whole County through a single county-wide collections contract, enabling the partners to ensure collection round design and depot locations are optimised without the constraint of district boundaries. Their overall recycling rate of 52.28% (2017/18) places them significantly above both the South West and England averages. The high quality of the materials collected is demonstrated though over 90% of the recyclables collected being recycled in the UK (of which over 50% is recycled within Somerset – including all food and garden waste).

Introducing a harmonised recycling and refuse collection service to one million residents across four south London boroughs was always going to be challenging. But by pooling their resources and expertise, Croydon, Kingston, Merton and Sutton councils have achieved just that through the **South London Waste Partnership**.

It's taken three-years and a phased approach to implementation, but on 1 April 2019 Kingston became the last of the four boroughs to join the new Environmental Services Contract. The contract was awarded to Veolia in 2017 and covers household waste collections, street cleansing, winter maintenance, fleet management, commercial waste and recycle material sales.

It may be early days but the contract is already delivering tens of millions of pounds in savings. Meanwhile the new collection service (which features weekly food waste, twin-stream recycling and fortnightly refuse) is helping the boroughs increase their recycling rates. In 2017/18 each resident, on average, produced 12kg less waste than they had the previous year and the average recycling rate across the four boroughs increased by four percentage points to 43.1%. Much of this was thanks to a huge surge in recycling in Sutton (the first borough to go live with the new collection service in April 2017), where the recycling rate increased by 13.5 percentage points from 36.5% to 50%.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/environment-and-planning/waste-and-recycling/hwp-annual-report-2017.18-final.pdf>  
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**60. Question 48: What are the key barriers to joint working?**

60.1. The financial pressures on councils can make joint working more difficult. At a local level, the barriers and opportunities will vary depending on contracts, geography and with other joint working arrangements between councils.

60.2. Where partnerships have formed, it has generally required significant effort from the councils involved and investment of time and resources.

**61. Question 49: How might government help overcome these barriers?**

61.1. Government could help by providing financial support to councils to help them with transition costs.

**62. Question 50: Do you have any other comments to make about Proposal 16?**

62.1. The broader picture of the Waste and Resources strategy could open up new opportunities for joint working, or example if the strategy succeeds in attracting new investment into recycling infrastructure. It may be helpful to return to this question once Government is in a position to confirm the next steps on extended producer responsibility, the plastics tax and funding to support consistency proposals.

**63. Part 2 - Measures to improve recycling by businesses and other organisations that produce municipal waste**

**64. Proposal 17: legislation to require businesses and other organisation to separate recyclable materials from residual waste**

**65. Question 51: Do you agree or disagree that businesses, public bodies and other organisations that produce municipal waste should be required to separate dry recyclable material from residual waste so that it can be collected and recycled?**

65.1. We support the Government's ambition to increase recycling, and the responsibility to deliver this must be shared fairly with all those who generate waste.

65.2. It is right that the obligations placed on councils and householders to separate waste for recycling should also apply to businesses and organisations generating similar waste streams.

**66. Question 52: Which option do you favour?**

66.1. Business waste covers a broad spectrum of activity and different types of waste, some of which require specialist disposal, for example clinical waste. We assume here that the proposal will apply to businesses that produce waste of a similar composition to households. Businesses should collect the same set of dry recyclable materials that are proposed for local authorities (glass bottles and containers, paper and card, plastic bottles, detergent, shampoo and cleaning products, plastic pots, tubs and trays, steel and aluminium cans). This will support the Government's ambition to secure investment in the UK's recycling infrastructure, and to increase national recycling levels.

**67. Question 53: We would expect businesses to be able to segregate waste for recycling in all circumstances but would be interested in views on where this may not be practicable for technical, environmental or economic reasons.**

67.1. In principle the LGA agrees that all businesses should be covered by the new recycling regulations. However, the LGA has not collected evidence from businesses. Councils that are providing waste collection services to businesses may be able to provide evidence and experience on this point.

**68. Question 54: Should some businesses, public sector premises or other organisations be exempt from the requirement?**

68.1. The consultation paper proposes that some small businesses should be exempt from proposed legislation and instead encouraged to use household waste services. Due to the lack of evidence it is difficult to say how much additional material would be diverted into the household waste stream. This is an issue that needs further testing to avoid any unintended consequences.

**69. Question 55: Do you have any other comments to make about Proposal 17? For example do you think that there are alternatives to legislative measures that would be effective in increasing business recycling?**

69.1. Any changes to legislation could consider the role that local authorities play as a provider of waste collection services to businesses. Not all councils do this, but many small businesses rely on councils to collect waste where there are gaps in the private market. Further thought could be given to additional powers for councils to enable them and support recycling by their business customers.

**70. Proposal 18: Legislation to require businesses to separate food waste for recycling**

**71. Question 56: Do you agree or disagree that businesses, public bodies or other organisations that produce sufficient quantities of food waste should be required to separate it from residual waste so that it can be collected and recycled?**

71.1. Yes, to avoid food waste going to landfill. The evidence from Wrap that businesses generate 4 megatons of food waste means that steps must be taken to divert that waste from landfill or other disposal routes.

**72. Question 57: Do you agree or disagree that there should be a minimum threshold by weight, for businesses public bodies or other organisations to be required to separate food waste for collection?**

72.1. Government has set out an ambitious plan for food waste collection from households that will extend to flats and other properties where collection will be challenging and potentially costly. We expect the same level of ambition to apply to businesses and other bodies.

**73. Question 58: Do you have any views on how we should define “sufficient” in terms of businesses producing “sufficient” quantities of food waste to be deemed in scope of the regulations?**

73.1. The LGA does not have a view on this question.

**74. Question 59: Do you have any views on how we should define food producing businesses?**

74.1. The LGA does not have a view on this question.

**75. Question 60: In addition to those businesses that produce below a threshold amount of food waste, should any other premises be exempt from the requirement?**

75.1. Please see our answer to question 57.

**76. Question 62: Do you have any other comments to make about proposal 18?**

76.1. No further comment

**77. Proposal 19: Government support for businesses, public bodies and other organisations to make the transition**

77.1. Local authorities as public bodies would need to be fully funded under these proposals.

**78. Proposal 20: Business waste data**

**79. Question 65: Do you have any views on whether businesses and other organisations should be required to report data on their waste recycling performance?**

79.1. We agree that reporting by businesses must be strengthened. Recycling must be a shared responsibility across businesses and households.

79.2. Business, like local government, should be transparent about the amount of waste they recycle.

79.3. Government will need robust and reliable reporting data from businesses and other organisations to monitor the effectiveness of the waste and resources strategy.