

**16 September 2022**



**To:**

Councillor Rosy Moore, Executive Councillor for Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity  
Environment & Community Scrutiny Committee, 06/10/2022

**Report by:**

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**Wards affected:**

All

Not a Key Decision

## **1. Executive Summary**

The Council Meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022 noted:

- That waste and recycling rates have remained remarkably stable over the past two years, despite periods of lockdown with most workers and school children staying at home plus periods of service disruption due to staff shortages.
- That total waste and recycle per household has reduced over the past four years, from 901.09kg per household in 2018/19 to 879.09 kg per household in 2021/22.
- That the weight of both residual waste and recycling collected has reduced.
- Despite service disruptions to green bin collections the weight of green bin waste has increased.
- That blue bin recycling rates have decreased over the past year and the proportion of black bin waste has increased as the weight of

residual waste collected has been reduced.

- The waste hierarchy is to reduce, reuse, recycle, recover, dispose.
- Reducing the amount of waste going into the residual bin and then to landfill is a priority of the shared waste service.

Council requested a report to the next Environment & Community Scrutiny committee to consider how this trend in residual waste reduction can be maintained and increased over the coming years.”

Following that request and a review of waste data and trends, this report concludes that:

- Black bin waste (Kg per household) has reduced back to 2018/19 levels after a small rise during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Blue bin waste (Kg per household) was lower in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21, aligning with the national trend which was influenced by higher levels of home working and schooling at the peak of the pandemic (as reflected in the high 2020/21 rates).
- There are several initiatives ongoing (and planned) to ensure that blue bin recycling rates continue to increase, and the trajectory of overall waste reduction / prevention is maintained.

## 2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

Note the analysis of the recycling and waste data recorded during the pandemic period and the actions being taken to conduct targeted behavioral change campaigns and increase opportunities for reuse, repair and recycling.

## 3. Background

Table 1 shows the trends in black, blue, and green bin tonnages over the past four years, represented as total tonnes, kilograms per household and percentage of total waste composition:

	2018/19				2019/20				2020/21				2021/22			
	No. of HHs	Tonnes	Kg/HH	%	No. of HHs	Tonnes	Kg/HH	%	No. of HHs	Tonnes	Kg/HH	%	No. of HHs	Tonnes	Kg/HH	%
Residual (black bin waste)	121,320	50,948	419.94	48.93%	123,180	50,221	407.71	49.01%	125,030	53,182	425.35	49.08%	126,840	53,076	418.45	49.50%
Dry Recycling (blue bin)	121,320	24,251	199.89	23.29%	123,180	24,078	195.47	23.50%	125,030	26,377	210.97	24.34%	126,840	23,523	185.45	21.94%
Organic (green bin)	102,847	28,926	281.25	27.78%	110,349	28,175	255.33	27.49%	110,349	28,789	260.89	26.57%	111,278	30,623	275.19	28.56%
Total Recycling rate				51.07%				50.99%				50.91%				50.50%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>104,125</b>	<b>901.09</b>			<b>102,474</b>	<b>858.51</b>			<b>108,347</b>	<b>897.20</b>			<b>107,221</b>	<b>879.09</b>	

Table 1: Household recycling and waste tonnages.

As shown in the table, for 2021/22 compared to 2020/21: blue bin recycling rates decreased by 2.4%, black bin waste increased by 0.41% and green bin waste increased by 1.99%.

The reduction in recycling rate correlates with the national picture where the overall recycling and composting rate for 2021/22 (43.8%) went down by 1.7% when compared to the 44.5% figure of 2020/21 (Source: Defra - waste statistics team, 15 December 2021).

There was a drop in recycling in 2021/22 of 2,854Kg (about 25Kg/HH). At the peak of the pandemic, dry recyclable materials that would otherwise have been collected in schools and offices as commercial waste would have been diverted to the kerbside blue bins, due to a significant increase in home working and schooling. As a result, the blue recycling collection in 2020/21 (211Kg/HH) was 15Kg/HH more than the previous year (196Kg/HH). The return to school environment, opening up of activities outside of the home and partial return to office working has meant some of these materials are now back in commercial collections. However, blue bin collection rates have not returned to pre-pandemic levels and this is an area of focus for campaigns.

Black bin waste per household has decreased in absolute quantity, from 425.35 Kg/HH in 2020/21 to 418.45 Kg/HH in 2021/22. Black bin waste per household in 2021/22 was also similar to 2018/19 levels, with the exception of the spike in 2020/21. Overall, the likely contributing factors to the spike in black bin tonnages are, an increased amount of materials that had to be disposed via the black bin i.e. face-coverings and Covid testing kits, and change in ease of access to Household Waste and Recycling Centres (changes to booking system/appointments). Service disruptions due to continued driver and loader shortages and Covid absences, and the consequent messaging about prioritisation of black bin collections (for public health reasons) may have also been a contributory factor. The blue bin rates follow the change in working and schooling location and show an overall reduction in the quantity of dry recyclable materials.

Furthermore, the overall priority is to reduce waste generation and thus waste and recycling amounts, rather than focussing on increasing recycling rates. Although it is better to divert waste into the blue bin for recycling rather than into the black bin for residual management, it's much better to avoid waste generation in the first instance.

#### **4. Planned Actions**

The Waste Policy team is designing behavioural change campaigns which are evidence/data based, incorporate the latest in behavioural change theory best practise as well as reflect change in national policy from The Resources and Waste Strategy (DEFRA December 2018). Although behavioural change campaigns can have delayed result and do not guarantee positive outcomes, close monitoring and evaluation will refine the approach. The following actions are under way to increase recycling rates and reduce residual waste generation:

1. Review of the Joint Waste Strategy by RECAP (Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) – the review is due to commence at the end of this calendar year and will amongst other things consider the impacts of the government’s imminent regulations on DRS (deposit return systems) and EPR (extended producer responsibility), which will have a significant impact on waste collection arrangements.
2. The Shared Waste Service will be implementing the following initiatives:
  - A. Fostering a Circular Economy
    - i. Work with Cambridge Carbon Footprint (CCF) to update their Circular Cambridge pages and directory of repair shops
    - ii. Promote relevant Transition Cambridge & CCF events e.g., clothing swaps
    - iii. Support setting up of Cambridge Library of Things
    - iv. Work with RECAP partners to promote washable nappies, wipes & period & incontinence products
    - v. Promote refill and reuse initiatives
    - vi. Community Action days
  - B. Prevention and recycling of more food waste
    - i. Stickers on black bins
    - ii. Continuation of separate food waste collections for 9205 households and monitoring
    - iii. Replenish event toolkit
    - iv. Promotion of home composting and discounted compost bins
    - v. Continued work with Food Hubs / food banks
  - C. Reducing contamination of dry recycling - streamlining monitoring process and feedback to crews
  - D. Promotion of recycling
    - i. Work with schools, RECAP, and other partners to deliver recycling education

- ii. Attendance at community events
  - iii. Advertising
  - iv. Welcome pack for new developments
- E. Increasing provision for recycling of WEEE (Waste electrical and electronic equipment)
- i. Installing WEEE collection banks at new locations
  - ii. Collection of WEEE from Repair Cafes
  - iii. Promotion of new collection banks

### **3. Implications**

#### **a) Financial Implications**

With the aim of eliminating materials entering the waste and recycling streams as part of the circular economy this will mean that as blue bin tonnages decrease, recycling credits received will change. This could have financial implications; however, this is counteracted by the environmental impacts noted in section d.

#### **b) Staffing Implications**

N/A

#### **c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

N/A

#### **d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

Waste policy is driven by waste hierarchy and therefore overall reduction of materials entering waste and recycling streams. This supports increased environmental performance and transition to Net Zero Carbon and Circular Economy.

#### **e) Procurement Implications**

N/A

#### **f) Community Safety Implications**

N/A

### **4. Consultation and communication considerations**

N/A

## **5. Background papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

## **6. Appendices**

No appendices