

Draft Communications Plan

1. Context

Addressing climate change is a key priority for the council and in November 2023, our Council appointed a cross-party working group to guide the development and details of the new service.

The working group has concluded its work and is recommending to committee that the council introduces a weekly food waste collection service in spring 2026, in line with the government's legislated target for all councils to introduce food waste recycling, in order to increase the district's recycling performance and reduce our impact on the planet.

With the current recycling and rubbish collection arrangements, the council achieves a recycling rate of around 58%, which has stagnated in the last five years and is significantly short of the forthcoming national target of 65% by 2035. Analysis of black bag contents showed that over a third was food waste and over 10% were items that could already be recycled in East Cambridgeshire.

To make the most of the new service in increasing recycling rates, promote waste minimisation, and to reduce carbon emissions, the working group is also recommending that at the same time as introducing weekly food waste recycling, the council should move to fortnightly black bin collection for residual waste. The current fortnightly blue lidded bin will continue as is, and the green lidded bin will be used just for garden waste.

These changes, if approved, will represent the first major new recycling service to be introduced in East Cambridgeshire in more than a decade and the most significant change to the council's recycling and rubbish collection service since the challenging round reconfiguration in spring 2022. It will therefore be important to support these changes with a comprehensive communications and engagement plan.

2. Aim of the communication plan

The aim of this plan is ultimately to support the council's agreed goal to tackle climate change by increasing household recycling and reducing household waste and carbon emissions, as well as complying with new government legislation.

To do that, however, we need to start with our residents to make sure they understand why we all need to change: that it is no longer feasible to continue as we are; and to support them to shift to weekly food waste collections and fortnightly non-recyclable (black bin) collections, alongside the current fortnightly recycling offer.

It is anticipated to generate some challenges to the reduction in frequency of the residual (black sack) waste collection service, and weaved into the communications plan will be responses to those. Many authorities have already been through this change and there is much information and lessons learned from those experiences,

that this Council can make use of. The service on the whole (subject to approval) is to be enhanced, with a container for rubbish, an additional collection of waste and more opportunity to recycle, and removal of some charges.

We should also recognise that many residents are enthusiastic about being to recycle more (our recycling rate is one of the highest in the country, and the rate of contamination is relatively low) and therefore share positive messages and celebrate successes along the way.

3. Objectives – to be developed alongside the waste team

- Residents put out correct bins on correct days. Measured by feedback from ECSS
- Residual waste is reduced by in first six months
- Baseline for tonnage of mixed recyclables is established and then increased to reflect awareness raising of the need to recycle and additional materials being added to dry recyclables, such as pots, tubs and trays, cling film and carrier bags
- Baseline for tonnage of food waste is established and then reduced to reflect messaging around reducing food waste and only buying what you need
- Council maintains position in top 20 local authorities for recycling

Overall communications and engagement – how

4. Audience

- All residents, but with specific consideration of:
 - Children and young people
 - Larger households
 - Vulnerable customers / assisted collections
 - People on alternative service
 - Housing associations
 - Areas which have low levels of recycling / high levels of waste
 - Customers without access to the intranet
 - People who live in flats or areas which have difficult access (Fen rounds)
 - People who have moved into the district
 - Gypsy and traveller community
- Council Members
- Council staff
- Community organisations / parish councils
- Media

5. Key Messages

Message	Explanation	Why
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It's simple	There is nothing difficult about this. We can easily get it sorted.	Promotes ease of use for residents
We can easily be the best	Thanks to your support we already recycle half the waste we produce. By working together we can do better	Messaging based on WRAP's behavioural change concept: Encouraging people to do more by celebrating how well they have already done
It benefits the environment	These are easy to make changes that everyone can do to help reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and reduce damaging impacts on the environment	Supports the council's environmental objectives and empowers residents with a tangible means of tackling climate change
There are many benefits to this	FREE green lidded wheeled bin collection, can now recycle soft plastic, extra bin caddy to easily dispose of food waste, wheeled bin for left over rubbish	Highlights the positive benefits of change to residents
Support is on hand	Got a question? We can easily help with the answer	Humanises the campaign and provides residents with reassurance we can sort out their individual concerns

- East Cambs is revamping recycling to make it easier for residents to recycle more
- Residents will receive a weekly food waste collection service from February 2026. All food waste is to go into kerbside caddy
- Residents will continue to receive a twice weekly FREE green waste collection service
- Residents' rubbish (residual waste) collections will move to once a fortnight. What is going in your black bin. Generally don't need a big bin.
- These changes have been introduced following changes in government policy and are being brought in across England
- They help support the environment by reducing the amount of waste going to landfill and increasing the amount of recycling
- Help is here

6. Communications and engagement channels

- Social media - digital artwork, videos, engagement, targeted advertising
- Digital media

- Website
- Email newsletters
- Infographics
- Printed material
 - Leaflets: Teaser and new service pack
 - Letters
 - Hard to reach (assisted and alternative service customers and others where required) dedicated communications plan
 - Stickers and bin hangers
 - Stakeholder packs (FAQs, service leaflet, key dates)
 - Local media
 - Local websites
- Fleet and bin info
 - Livery
 - Stamps/stickers on bins
- Roadshows – council offices, markets, libraries, community events
- Schools education programme
 - Name the food waste truck competition
 - Personalise your caddy
- Door knocking
- Internal communications
 - Connect
 - Councillors – email
 - Briefings
 - FAQs
- Internal and external working group
 - Volunteer service change ‘champions’

7. Timeline

Activity	When
Outline comms plan – to be agreed	July 2024
Outline policy document – to be agreed	July 2024
Comms plan and timeline for 2024 to be signed off	August 2024
Internal comms – Connect to include details of proposed changes	August 2024
Press release to be drafted in advance of Sept committee	Before 23 September 2024
Op Services Committee	23 September 2024
Press release to be issued	24 September

Recycling Week	16-22 October
Comms plan and timeline for 2025 to be signed off	November 2024
Branding created	Spring 2025
All comms to be drafted	Spring 2025
Food Waste Action Week activities	3-9 March 2025
Website copy drafted	June 2025
Website updated	July 2025
Dedicated internal comms	July 2025
Dedicated Cllr comms	July 2025
Commence mini road shows	July 2025
Work on bin tags and stickers etc	August 2025
Print leaflets	August 2025
LAUNCH CAMPAIGN	SEPTEMBER 2025
Press release: Bins are coming	September 2025
Social media: Bins are coming	September 2025
Commence door knocking	September 2025
Commence schools education	September 2025
Parish Council comms	September 2025
Comms for assisted bin residents	September 2025
Comms for alternative service	September 2025
Paid for advertising (TBC)	September 2025
Bin tag 1: New bins coming	September 2025
Lorry livery in place	September 2025
Calendar and sack delivery	September 2025
Begin work on mini-videos	October 2025

Recycling Week activities	October 2025
Event: Christmas Market stall	November 2025
Comms plan and timeline for 2026 to be signed off	November 2025
Press release: New year, new bins	w/c 5 Jan 2026
Bin tag 2: New year, New bins	w/c 5 Jan 2026
Bin tag 3: New bins next week	w/c 26 Jan or 2 February
BIN DELIVERY ROLL OUT Bin tag 4: Welcome to your new bin	w/c 9 or 16 February
BIN COLLECTIONS BEGIN	TBC

8. Resources

9. Evaluation

To agree recording of complaints and reporting back to ECSS

Ensure arrangements for collection of data and monitoring protocols are agreed

Agree post roll-out review – lessons learned, regular updates between council and ECDC (specifically customer service, waste and communication teams)