

# Policy Committee

17 December 2025



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

<b>Title</b>	Simpler Recycling – Introduction of Glass Collections from kerbside
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Emma Gee, Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
<b>Report author</b>	Marcus Hermon, Recycling & Waste Services Manager / Chris Wheeler, Assistant Director Neighbourhood Services
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety
<b>Council priority</b>	Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future
<b>Recommendations</b>	That Policy Committee considers the report and approves the timeline for the implementation of kerbside glass collection as set out in section 11.

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the design, mobilisation, and go live plan for introducing kerbside glass collections. Round design work has been completed and confirms four (4) new service rounds are required to deliver the service to property numbers projected to 31.3 2026/27.
- 1.2 Collections will be provided on a fortnightly cycle and will be scheduled to take place on the opposite week to green waste collections. This will minimise the number of waste receptacles that are presented kerbside on collection days, by avoiding the timetable of general, recycling and food waste collections.
- 1.3 The government have set a compliance date for glass and food of the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 however like many authorities across the country we face logistical and procurement challenges in meeting this date.
- 1.4 Reading has been ahead many other councils in the conversion of the fleet's vehicles to electric vehicles in response to the Council's 2019 Climate Emergency declaration. Therefore, we have engaged extensively with the vehicle supply market in consideration of all options currently available to deliver this service. This engagement identified that there are limited manufacturers for the size and configuration of vehicle required (narrow with low entry), with the only viable option currently in manufacture being diesel powered. No tried and tested electric vehicle of the specification required exists in this market space.
- 1.5 Due to supply chain delays (vehicles and containers), the practical start of the service is predicted to be April 2027. The supply chain delays are a direct consequence of multiple local authorities all working towards the government's legislative timetable. Whilst the consequential delays are unwelcome, they allow for a joint programme of service enhancement to also include flexible plastics on our recycling rounds, required in April 2027.

- 1.6 A comprehensive implementation plan will underpin the introduction of the kerbside glass and flexible plastic collection service. Communications activity will begin well in advance of service launch, starting with early awareness messaging to residents from Autumn 2026. This will include clear information on the service timetable, container types, and what materials are acceptable, with a strong emphasis on reducing contamination. Multiple channels will be used, including social media, the Council website, printed leaflets, and community engagement events.
- 1.7 Container delivery will take place ahead of the service go-live, with the standard provision being 55-litre plastic boxes (or suitable alternative sacks as needed). Each household will receive their container, together with instructions on safe use and presentation. This staged approach ensures residents are fully informed and prepared before collections commence in April 2027.

## **2. Policy Context**

- 2.1. The UK Government's Simpler Recycling initiative, introduced under the Environment Act 2021, standardises recycling across England by mandating the collection of a common set of recyclable materials by March 2026. This includes weekly food waste, and kerbside collections of glass, paper, card, plastics, and metals.
- 2.2. Reading Borough Council (RBC) implemented weekly food collections from 2021 and continues to roll out provision to new build properties and flats, where bin storage constraints exist. However, RBC does not currently collect glass at kerbside, instead providing 201 bring banks across 46 conveniently located community sites that combined collect more than 500 Tonne of glass per Qtr.
- 2.3. To comply with legislation, the Council is required to provide kerbside collection of both food and glass to all residents by April 2026. At its July 2025 Policy Committee meeting the Council agreed a proposal for separate fortnightly glass collections using 55ltr kerbside boxes for households and 240ltr bins for communal properties/flats. Other container types may be required for properties that present unique challenges, and these will be agreed on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.4. The proposed introduction of glass collections in response to simpler recycling legislation aligns with key national and local environmental policies, including:
  - UK Government Resources and Waste Strategy (2018): Emphasises the need to move towards a circular economy, increase recycling rates, and ensure consistent collections across local authorities.
  - Environment Act 2021: Introduces requirements for local authorities in England to collect a consistent set of recyclable materials, including glass, from all households.
  - DEFRA's Consistency in Household and Business Recycling Collections (2021): Encourages separate, regular kerbside collections of recyclable materials, including glass, to reduce contamination and improve material quality.
  - Reading Borough Council Climate Emergency Declaration (2019): Commits the council to reducing its environmental impact and achieving a net-zero carbon target. Improving recycling services contributes directly to this objective by reducing landfill use and emissions from waste processing.
  - Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy: Supports harmonised and sustainable waste management practices across the region, promoting increased recycling through accessible and efficient systems.
- 2.5. The introduction of a fortnightly kerbside glass collection would ensure Reading is compliant with the government guidance, while demonstrating leadership in local climate action and sustainable resource management.

### **3. The Proposal**

#### **Methodology & Design**

- 3.1 As officers had identified the potential need, to save cost the round design on a fortnightly collection cycle, was undertaken as part of the 2025 round optimisation work completed by the recycling & waste service. This exercise maximised performance of existing collections and laid the foundations to meet the future requirements of Simpler recycling.
- 3.2 The majority of the implementation will see each household provided with a 55L kerbside box, with communal properties provided 240ltr bins. The town does have a number of properties with extremely limited capacity for waste storage, and officers will explore and make available alternatives such as suitable sacks.
- 3.3 Collections will be scheduled to take place on the same day, but on the alternative/opposite week, to the scheduled fortnightly garden waste collections. This is to avoid the timetable for general, recycling & food waste collections and to minimise the number of bins presented for collection on any one day.
- 3.4 Operational collection will be the same as all other kerbside collection rounds to maximise the efficiency of resources and enable operational resilience in the event of any service challenges.
- 3.5 Staff resources are synchronised and shared across all waste collection rounds to permit resilience in the event of staff sickness.
- 3.6 Waste collection prioritisation in the event of a challenge that prevents all rounds from being operated will follow the existing waste hierarchy, prioritising the collection of \*putrescible waste streams:
  - \*Food Waste
  - \*General Waste
  - Recycling
  - Glass
  - Garden

#### **Implementation**

- 3.7 Service introduction will cover two core property types with different challenges as follows;
  - Type 1: All street level properties and selected flats/HMOs where sufficient storage capacity exists.
  - Type 2: Properties with storage constraints (\*including flats/HMOs without adequate capacity) that we have been unable to address prior to service implementation are to be assessed individually by the Environmental Team, with tailored solutions put in place as constraints are resolved with stakeholders.

\*70% of communal bin stores that service blocks of flats have insufficient capacity to accommodate a glass waste bin. Each of these sites will require individual assessment and consultation with property managers to agree a suitable solution based on their specific constraints/challenges. This engagement work will be undertaken by our Recycling Enforcement Team, as is currently the case with the roll out of food waste collections to similarly constrained sites.

- 3.8 Vehicles will be narrow track RCV to ensure access to all roads. The vehicles will have a behind Cab storage compartment which provides a fire safe compartment for batteries and small Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) items to be collected kerbside. Whilst the collection of these materials is part of our current provision, capacity on our recycling vehicles is limited and take up has been low. The addition of this fleet and new glass service provides a prime opportunity to relaunch these services with the vehicles more able to deal effectively with demand, therefore, WEEE and batteries will be promoted

as taking place alongside glass collection, subject to appropriate operational delivery arrangements being designed and agreed with the re3 partner councils and Contractor.

#### Image of Typical Glass Vehicle Design



- 3.9 Access will be available to the broader refuse collection fleet for enhanced resilience in the event of breakdown and maintenance coinciding at the same time.
- 3.10 When scheduled for replacement the Glass waste collection vehicles will transition to spare fleet vehicles, replacing older diesel models, ensuring the resilience of the broader waste collection fleet.
- 3.11 Operations Plan
- Rounds: 4 x rounds providing collections on a fortnightly cycle.
  - 5 vehicles to cover 4 active rounds plus 1 spare to absorb downtime from routine servicing and PMI inspections and to support operational resilience.
  - Staff Resource: 5 x collection crews of 1 x Driver & 2 x Loaders, delivering 4 x daily collection rounds with 20% absence cover for leave, sickness & training.
  - Tipping arrangements: Smallmead Facility at Island Road Reading, with contingency provided at Longshot Lane, Bracknell in the event of loss of access to Smallmead.
  - Noise management: We will prioritise commercial/arterial routes earlier; to minimise early collections on noise sensitive streets.
    - Noise experienced by residents will be limited in length and will occur no more than once a fortnight. Noise dampening mats in the glass waste collection hopper will also minimise noise.
    - Adopt best practice in the management of risks associated with staff noise exposure, with the provision of noise minimising ear wear, risk assessment informed working practices & an annual programme of health monitoring put in place.
- 3.12 Performance & KPIs: The service, as with the introduction of food waste, will be expected to attain the following performance standards;
- Participation rate: target [70%] by month 3; [80%] by month 12.
  - Capture rate: [9.6kg/hh/per collection] target, based on benchmarking.
  - Missed collections: < [80] per 100,000 lifts.

## **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1. Simpler Recycling supports the Councils strategic aims by reducing waste to landfill and associated greenhouse gas emissions. Increased quality of recycling material encourages

circular economy practices, promoting responsible resource use and reduces environmental impact.

4.2. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading.
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint.
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children.
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future.

4.3. In delivering these priorities, the following set of principles will guide us:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

4.4. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Council plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective, and economical.

## **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1 Collection of household glass at kerbside may facilitate an improved recycling rate and material quality contributing to the Council's climate change targets.

5.2 Reduction in Carbon Emissions:

- Recycling glass uses 30% less energy than making new glass from raw materials.
- Producing new glass involves mining silica, soda ash, and limestone, processes with significant carbon footprints.
- While glass itself does not decompose or emit methane, improved glass recycling often indirectly reduces pressure on landfill systems.

5.3 The collection of glass from kerbside will increase the Council's vehicle usage, with the following consequences:

- Adding separate glass collections would increase fuel use and emissions from waste collection vehicles, even if mitigated with route optimisation.
- Higher Operational and Carbon Costs.
- Manufacture and distribution of additional boxes/bins has an embedded carbon cost.
- Energy use in reprocessing: While still lower than producing new glass, glass recycling is energy-intensive.

5.4 Consideration will be given to the use of Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) based fuel as an alternative to Diesel across the Council's full vehicle fleet.

- HVO can reduce lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions by up to 90% compared to conventional diesel, making it a cleaner alternative.
- HVO produces fewer harmful pollutants, such as nitrogen oxides (NOx) and particulate matter, contributing to improved air quality.
- HVO is compatible with existing diesel engines and infrastructure, allowing for a drop-in replacement without modifications.
- HVO typically costs 15% more per litre than conventional diesel, and this cost will need to be balanced against the environmental benefits that may be realised in consideration of affordability.

## 6. Community Engagement

- 6.1 This new service will encourage residents to recycle more by removing barriers where some do not have access to transport glass recycling to either Bring Banks or the Household Recycling Facility.
- 6.2 This is a major service roll out and as such will require a full communications programme including;
- Pre-launch mailer and service leaflet to all households on affected rounds.
  - Web updates, FAQs, and service finder integration.
  - Promotion of online bin collection calendar.
  - Social media countdown.
  - Assisted collection parity.

## 7. Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- 7.1. To ensure the Council has considered the impact of the new glass collection service on groups protected under the Equality Act 2010 and taken steps to mitigate any adverse effects.
- 7.2. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation of groups that could be directly affected by the introduction of kerbside glass collections.

Protected Group	Potential Impact	Mitigation
Older People	May find it difficult to lift and move glass containers	Continue and promote assisted collections; use manageable box design
Disabled People	Accessibility concerns for those with mobility or dexterity issues	Offer assisted collections, accessible information formats, and staff awareness training
People with Limited English	May not understand service changes or collection schedule	Provide translated leaflets, visual instructions, and community engagement
Pregnant Women	Physical strain moving glass containers	Assisted collection offered; targeted communication via health services

### 7.3. Due Regard Consideration

- The service improves access to recycling for all households.
  - Known barriers (mobility, language, information access) have been considered.
  - Proactive measures (assisted collections, inclusive communication) are in place.
  - Service design will include bespoke design for hard to reach and those properties with limited storage.
  - Ongoing monitoring through customer feedback and complaints will inform future adjustments.
- 7.4. In conclusion, the Council has taken proportionate steps to understand and mitigate any negative impacts of this service change. The introduction of fortnightly kerbside glass collections demonstrates due regard to equality duties under the Equality Act 2010.

## 8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1 The effectiveness of Simpler Recycling will be influenced by market demand for recyclable materials. Ongoing monitoring and partnership with waste contractors will help mitigate risks.

## 9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 Waste collection authorities are responsible for collecting household waste. They must collect the recyclable household waste streams for recycling or composting or arrange for a private waste collector to do so, where there is a duty to collect waste under section 45(1)(a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, section 45A will apply in England.
- 9.2 The UK Government's Simpler Recycling initiative was published by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) on 29 November 2024. The initiative is part of the broader Environment Act 2021, and it introduces standardised collections across the Country, with the same materials being recyclable everywhere regardless of location.
- 9.3 The initiative requires all local authorities to implement the requirements for its residents by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. Accordingly, the Council is required to take steps to commence collection of all dry recyclable materials and separate weekly food waste collections for residents by this date. Practical & Procurement obstacles indicate that Reading will not be able to achieve this date. There are a number of authorities across the country in a similar position, including our re3 partner and neighbouring local authorities.
- 9.4 Reading and its re3 partners have flagged with DEFRA the practical challenges experienced, and this has been acknowledged. Whilst disappointment was expressed regarding an inability to meet the compliance date, the DEFRA representatives acknowledged that we had identified a route to compliance at the earliest practicable time.

## 10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. Considering the lengthy lead times for vehicles, typically 12-15 months from start of a tendering process, early approval was sought and obtained from July Policy Committee to commence procurement of 5 vehicles. This exercise is nearing completion with an order due to be placed prior to end of November 2025.
- 10.2. The Spending Review 2025 confirmed that "The Local Government settlement also includes funding for local authorities to deliver Simpler Recycling as part of the Collection and Packaging waste reforms, which will help to stimulate investment in recycling services across the UK. Local authorities will continue to receive additional income through the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for packaging." The total Extended Producer Responsibility funding announced for 2025/26 was £3.074m, with an allocation of £3.145m in 2026/27. Allocations for future years have yet to be announced.

Financial Implications		
Fund	Description	Value £m
Capital	Vehicles x 5 (£0.220m each)	1.100
	55ltr Household container x 57,500	0.433
	240ltr Communal bins x 2000	0.036
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1.569</b>
Revenue	Staffing - 4 rounds plus 20% cover (£0.165m per round plus 3% inflation)	0.700
	Annual Fleet Maintenance including 3% inflation	0.077
	Replacement Container/bin Stock	0.010
	One off Delivery and Communications costs (2026/27 only)	0.120
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0.907</b>

## 11. Timetable for Implementation

Action	Period
Market engagement with detailed vehicle fleet specification and procurement.	Jul-Nov 25/ Completed
Place order for vehicles	Dec 25
Place order for waste containers	Jul 26
Recruitment of driving staff	Jul 26
Procurement of container delivery partner	Sep 26
Commence comms campaign	Oct/Nov 26
Recruitment of loading staff	Dec 26
Household container delivery	Jan/Feb 27
Go Live	April 27

## 12. Project Risks & Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Delays in container procurement/delivery due to national demand	Early tendering and collaboration with regional and re3 partner councils
Long lead times for vehicles due to national demand	Early Procurement of vehicles
Low Participation	Pre-roll out engagement with residents and landlords
Resident confusion over new rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online bin calendar updated to reflect new rounds</li> <li>Pre-roll out engagement with residents and landlords</li> <li>Phased comms, visuals and translations</li> <li>Targeted comms, incentives etc in areas of low participation</li> </ul>
Risk of being deemed not efficient/effective by packaging authority – resulting in an improvement plan with a future risk of reduced payments (max 20%)	Having a clear route to compliance and having a strong communications campaign before during and after roll out to maximise participation.
Risk of judicial review	Having a clear and timely route to compliance defined
Future drop in value of EPR payments	This is a market risk where suppliers improve and there is less money in the pot for distributing. Having a clear scheme that maximises participation and diversion will contribute towards mitigating the risk of future income loss from the packaging scheme.
Round overrun	Minor rescheduling after 8 weeks with resilience capacity tested and retained
Vehicle downtime	Maintenance SLA and reserve vehicle fleet, with access to hire
Worker safety (noise)	Adopt best practice safety practices, with robust management compliance checks and annual programme of health monitoring in place,

## 13. Background Papers

13.1. There are none.