

Report to:	Scrutiny Committee
Date:	3 February 2020
Title:	Improving recycling
Report of:	Tim Whelan, Director of Service Delivery
Cabinet member:	Councillor Colin Swansborough, Portfolio Holder for Place Services
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of report:	The report provides information on recycling performance for Scrutiny's consideration. Scrutiny Committee is invited to provide commentary and make recommendations for policy development on how best to adapt the waste and recycling service to meet challenging national targets.
Officer recommendation(s):	(1) That Scrutiny Committee considers the report and agrees any recommendations it may wish to make to Cabinet.
Reasons for recommendations:	Defra's Resources and Waste Strategy 2018 set out the UK Government's ambitions for higher recycling rates and increased resource efficiency at a time when rates across the country have plateaued. Scrutiny requested a report to help inform policy development to improve recycling locally.
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Defra's Resources and Waste Strategy 2018 set out the UK Government's ambitions for higher recycling rates and increased resource efficiency:
- The target recycling rate for household waste is 50% by 2020, increasing to 65% of waste recycled by 2035, at a time when rates across the country have plateaued.
 - The indications are that separate food waste collections will be mandatory and could be introduced in 2023, with resource from government provided to support implementation.
- 1.2 The percentage of household waste which has been sent by Eastbourne Borough Council for reuse, recycling and composting:

- Provisional rate for the 12 months to November 2019: 34.6%
- 2018/19, confirmed as: 35.2%

1.3 This report considers what these challenging targets mean for Eastbourne, given current performance and ambitions to increase the recycling rate.

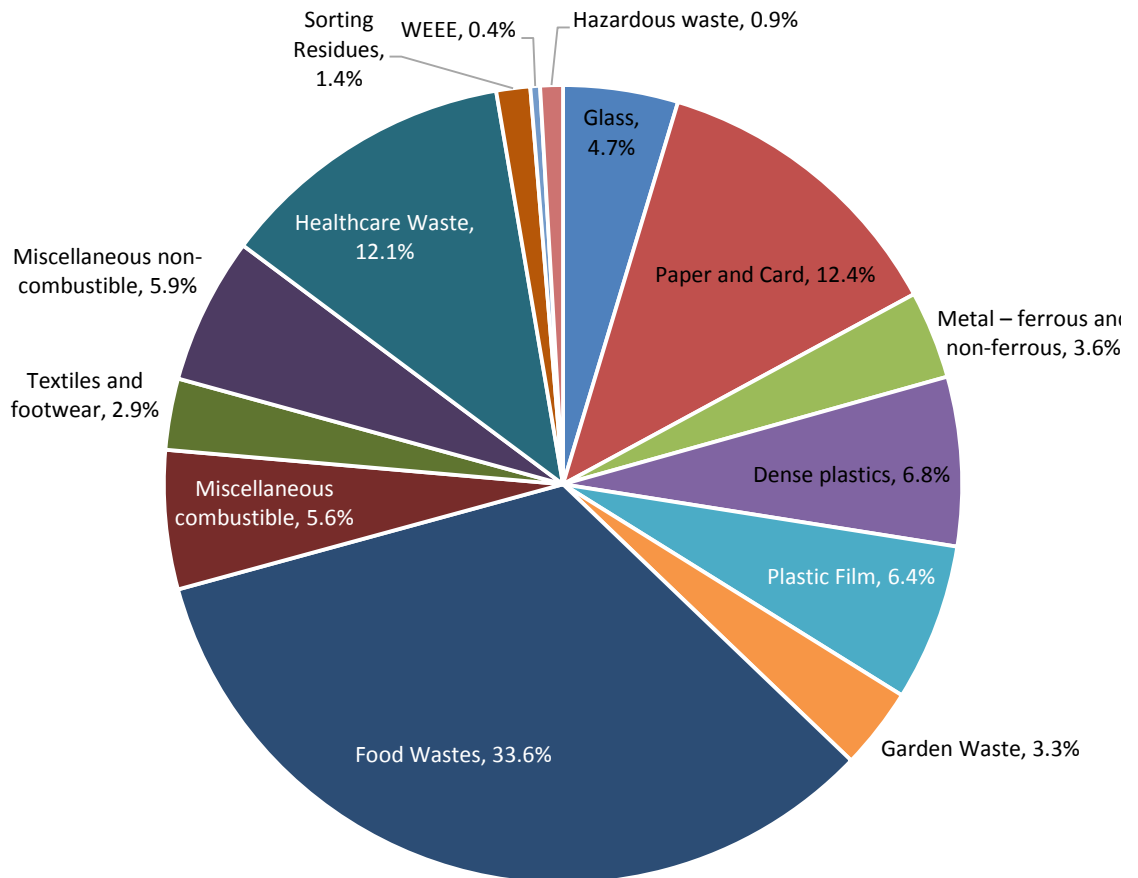
2 Background

2.1 The council's waste collection service is provided by South East Environmental Services Ltd (SEESL), as Environment First, and is structured as follows:

Refuse	Recycling	Garden waste
Weekly	Fortnightly	Fortnightly, charged-for

2.2 From the waste composition analysis carried out on behalf of the East Sussex Joint Waste Partnership in June 2017, there is strong evidence that recyclable material is still in the residual waste stream (see Figure 1 and Appendix 1). According to this report, over a quarter of the residual waste collected in Eastbourne could have been recycled at the kerbside.

Figure 1: Overall composition of residual waste in Eastbourne

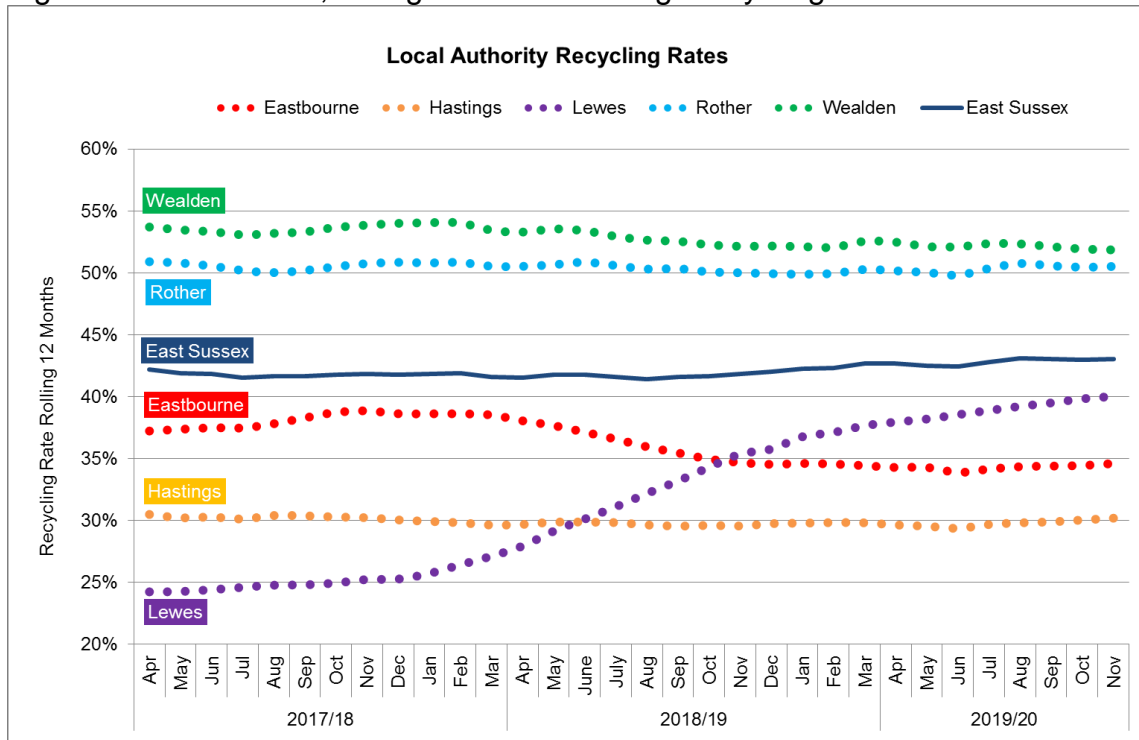


2.3 Broadly, the 'interventions' to improve recycling performance set out in this report, below, fall under the following: resident engagement, crew behaviour and changes to collections.

3 Current performance, dry mixed recycling

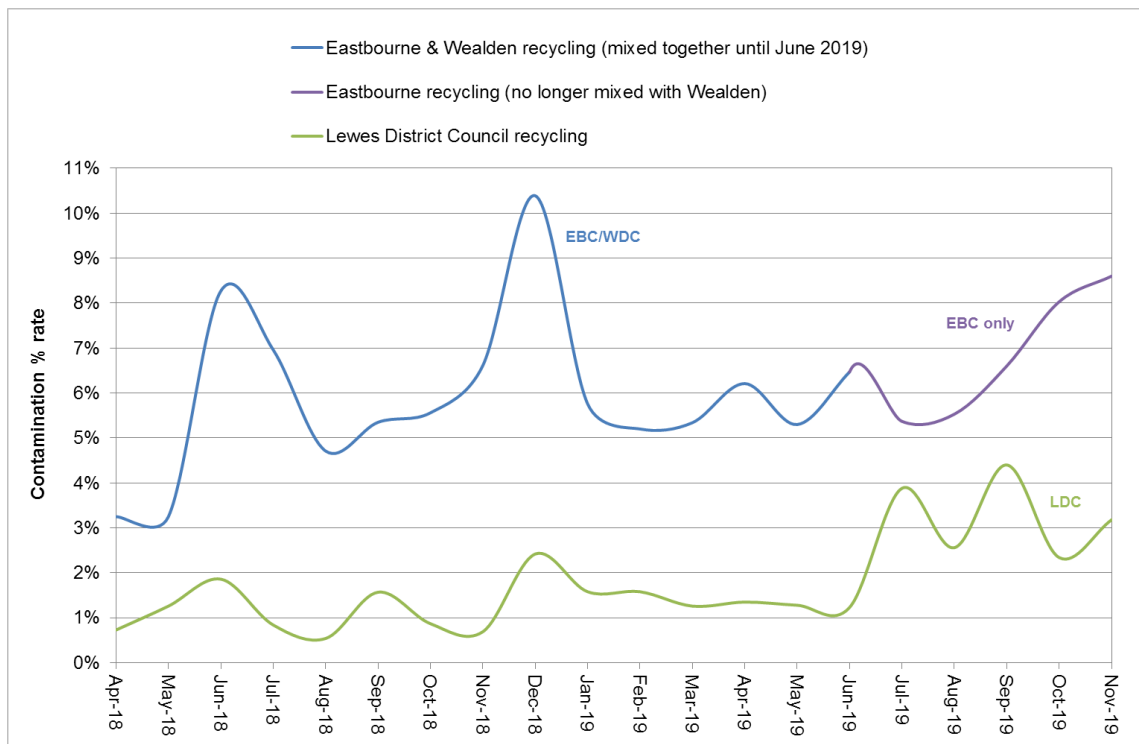
3.1 Figure 2, below, shows the latest local authority recycling rates for East Sussex including districts and boroughs, to November 2019, which is the most recently available data for the area:

Figure 2: East Sussex, rolling 12 month average recycling rates.



3.2 Highly contaminated loads of recycling are rejected at either the transfer station in Polegate or at Crayford Material Recovery Facility (and the rejected load is deducted from the recycling tonnage figure). This entails additional cost and transportation, to have the rejected material incinerated, and means the loss of clean recycling mixed in with the contaminated material.

Figure 3: Dry mixed recycling contamination rates.



3.3 Recycling quality dropped slightly during 2019. Materials such as food, textiles and hygiene waste are some of the main contaminants. It is important that only clean material is placed in the recycling container and that contamination is reduced as much as possible.

Figure 4: A summary of prohibited material (contamination) levels for both EBC and LDC recycling.

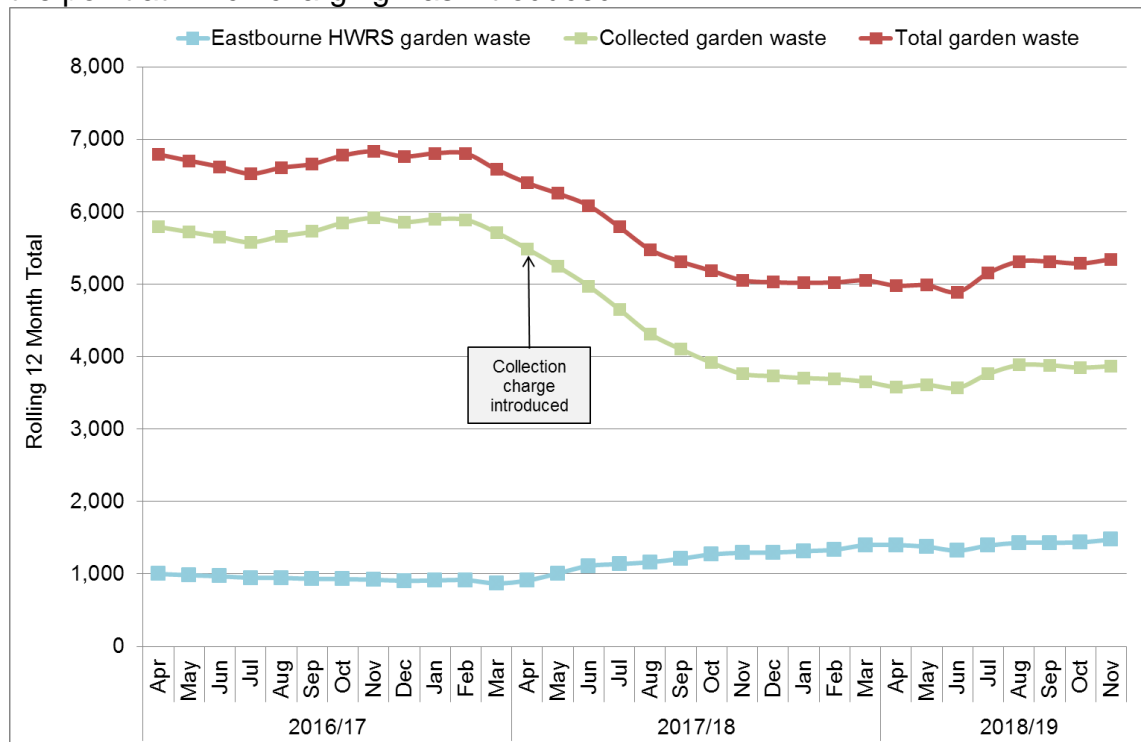
	LDC / Avg. Main Type	EBC Avg. Main Type
September	4.40%	6.60%
	Textiles	Textiles
	Green Waste	Food
	Beverage cartons	Wood
October	2.34%	8.03%
	Textiles	Food
	Wood	Textiles
	Beverage cartons	Wood
November	3.18%	8.60%
	Textiles	Food
	Food	Textiles
	Beverage cartons	Wood

4 Current performance, garden waste

- 4.1 Collected garden waste adds to the recycling total and some neighbouring, rural authorities rely on this waste stream for circa 15% of their recycling performance. Arguably, composting garden waste at home/on site is the most environmentally beneficial approach (as there is no haulage). It is also better for the taxpayer due to reduced disposal costs.
- 4.2 When the charged-for garden waste service was introduced in Eastbourne, garden waste collected from residents dropped by 1,843 tonnes (32%) per annum¹, during the same period, garden waste at Eastbourne Household Waste Recycling Site (HWRS) increased by 605 tonnes (69%). Overall there was a net reduction of 1,239 tonnes of garden waste (19%) in Eastbourne. When the collection charge was implemented, residents unwilling to pay were offered a free home composter as an alternative and this is a contributory factor to the reduction in the amount of local authority managed garden waste. As a consequence, the recycling rate for Eastbourne fell by about 3%, as anticipated. Please note that Eastbourne's recycling rate does not include garden waste taken to Eastbourne HWRS because this is allocated to ESCC's county-wide recycling rate rather than the rates of individual district or borough councils.
- 4.3 The charged-for garden waste service was launched in 2018. By year end, 2018/19, there were 12,000 customers and this number has been going up incrementally through 2019/20.

¹ This is tonnage for the 12 month period to November 2019, compared with the 12 months to March 2018 prior to the introduction of the collection charge.

Figure 5: Collected & HWRS garden waste rolling 12 month average, illustrating the point at which charging was introduced.



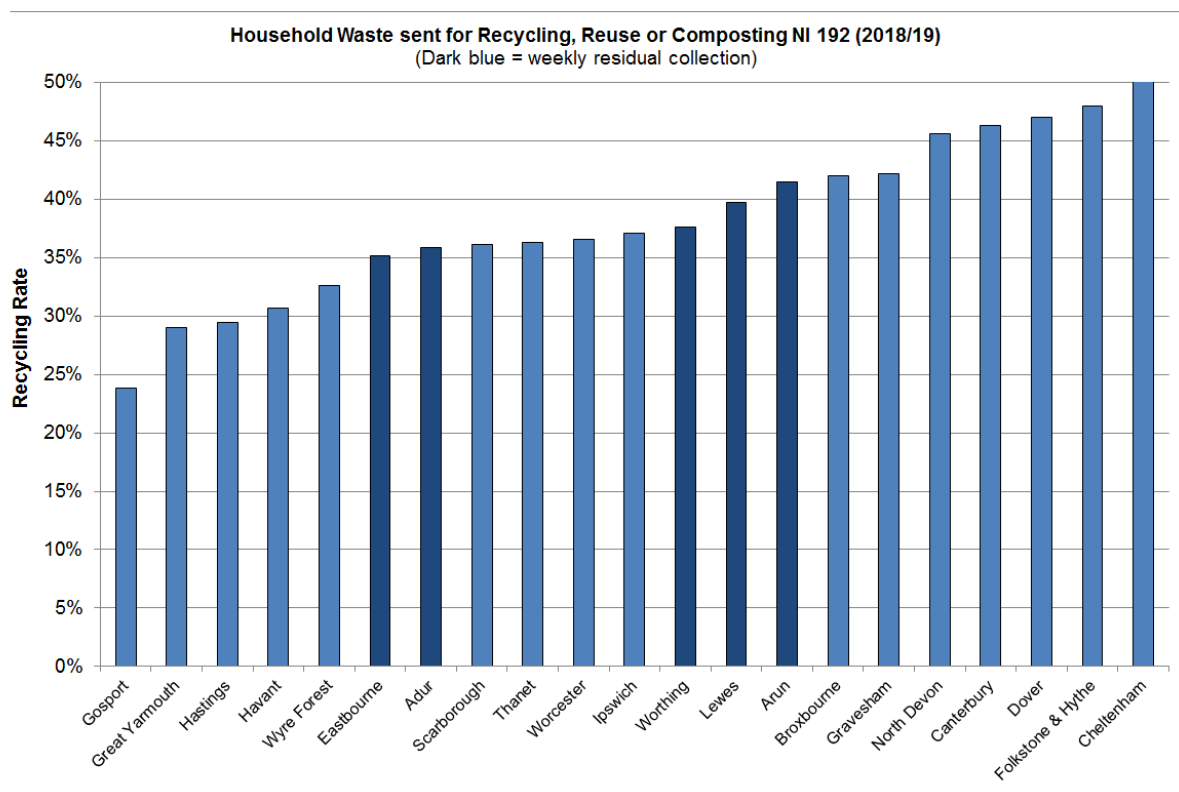
5 Action to date

- 5.1 Since July 2019, SEESL has been performing well (for example, reduced missed bins) and EBC offers an extra recycling container to households as required.
- 5.2 Resident education and engagement is effective – the team behind the improved performance in Lewes district is now working on campaigns for Eastbourne. See Appendix 2 for examples of communications and engagement.
- 5.3 ESCC has taken responsibility for the management of kerbside recycling disposal following the early exit of Kier, who had sub-contracted disposal of recycling to Viridor. ESCC has a new contract with Viridor which began on 29 June 2019. Since then, residents have been able to put glass in their recycling bin (rather than in a separate box) along with a wide range of other materials, making recycling even easier.
- 5.4 Other measures in recent months have included tidying up bring sites and educating residents, for example those living in HMOs (houses in multiple occupation), about how to recycle. The aim has been to reduce fly-tipping, reduce contamination and increase recycling.
- 5.5 There are plans to roll out 14 recycling-on-the-go bins across the town centre through February. If the material collected is 'clean', it will contribute to the overall recycling rate.

6 How to improve

- 6.1 Critical to our future success is continuing communications and engagement using a range of media, educating residents and crews (e.g. to check for contamination). Our partners at ESCC and Viridor are working with EBC on promoting the kerbside recycling service to residents.
- 6.2 In terms of changes to the service, other councils have been successful in driving up recycling rates and achieving operational efficiencies by offering alternate weekly collections of waste and recycling.
- 6.3 The experience at Ashford Borough Council provides a useful example. Ashford made a commitment to improve its recycling performance in 2012, as the worst in England at that time, with a performance of 12%. Ashford achieved a nationally recognised most improved recycling performance of 43% in 2013/14 after wholesale changes to the service including implementing alternate weekly collections and a weekly food waste collection. This improved further to 55% for 2014/15.
- 6.4 It is not recommended to introduce a separate food waste collection service until the national picture is clear and resource is in place to support implementation. In the meantime, food waste minimisation will be an objective of our communications and engagement work.
- 6.5 Figure 6, below, shows Eastbourne comparator authorities, 2018/19 (see Appendix 3 for more detail) – the top performers do not collect waste weekly. Just one in six councils in the UK still collect non-recyclable waste from the majority of homes in their area every week. Alternate weekly waste collections were introduced across Adur and Worthing in September 2019 in a bid to boost recycling. Some councils, such as Falkirk and Conwy, have moved to monthly collections while several do collections every three weeks.

Figure 6: Eastbourne comparator authorities, 2018/19



* Since this chart was produced, Adur Worthing moved to alternate weekly collections.

7 Financial appraisal

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The Environment Bill has some significant financial implications (food and garden waste) and it is not yet understood how any new requirements will be supported financially by central government.

8 Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report, as its purpose is purely to assist with policy development. It is a proper function of Scrutiny Committee to consider the policy issues and to make any recommendations it thinks appropriate to Cabinet.

Lawyer consulted 21.01.20

Legal ref: 008889-EBC-OD

9 Risk management implications

- 9.1 This report is strategic in nature. It is noted that there are reputational risks associated with not achieving the target recycling rate of 50%.

10 Equality analysis

- 10.1 An Equality Analysis is not constructive in this instance

11 Environmental sustainability implications

11.1 Eastbourne Borough Council’s goal is to minimise waste and to recycle or reuse as part of a circular economy approach to tackle the climate and nature emergency. To that end, improving recycling rates is a strategic council objective. Moreover, optimising waste collection operations to reduce fleet mileage would contribute to a lower carbon footprint and improved air quality in Eastbourne.

12 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Waste composition analysis, 2017
- Appendix 2 – Examples of waste communications in Eastbourne
- Appendix 3 – EBC’s comparator authorities

13 Background papers

The background papers used in compiling this report were as follows:
(please provide a URL link to each paper – remove this text from final version)

- The assistance of the waste team at ESCC in providing data for this report is acknowledged
- <https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/bin-collections/>

Appendix 1: Extract from Waste Compositional Analysis, East Sussex Joint Waste Partnership, June 2017

Eastbourne Borough Council

The weekly waste arising was calculated as 9.47 kg/hh/wk, the highest in East Sussex.

Table 7 and Figure 3 show the residual composition profile for the area.

Food waste accounted for the largest proportion of the sample, 33.6%. Paper and card accounted for 12.4%, healthcare waste (which includes disposable nappies and sanitary products, as well as pet excrement and bedding) made up 12.1% of the materials, dense plastic 6.8% and plastic film accounted for 6.4%.

Table 7: Overall composition of residual waste in Eastbourne, June 2017

Primary category	% Composition	Weight kg/hh/wk
Glass	4.7%	0.44
Paper and Card	12.4%	1.16
Metal – ferrous and non-ferrous	3.6%	0.35
Dense plastics	6.8%	0.65
Plastic Film	6.4%	0.60
Garden Waste	3.3%	0.33
Food Wastes	33.6%	3.11
Miscellaneous combustible	5.6%	0.56
Textiles and footwear	2.9%	0.29

Primary category	% Composition	Weight kg/hh/wk
Miscellaneous non-combustible	5.9%	0.52
Healthcare Waste	12.1%	1.21
Fines	1.4%	0.13
WEEE	0.4%	0.04
Hazardous waste	0.9%	0.09
Total	100.0%	9.47