

NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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HELP SHAPE YOUR FUTURE RUBBISH AND RECYCLING COLLECTIONS

Wokingham Borough Council launched a consultation today (10 October 2022) to seek residents' views on potential changes to its rubbish and recycling collections that could see the borough's weekly rubbish and recycling collections change to be more in line with the majority of local authorities in the country.

The council is proposing to keep weekly food waste collections, but move away from having general rubbish and recycling collected weekly, due to unprecedented financial pressures, new government legislation and its climate emergency goals.

The consultation, open until 5 December, is available online on the council's [engagement website](#).

Leader of the council, Cllr Clive Jones said: "We are facing tough times due to a continued reduction in government funding and rising costs in providing basic services. Changes to our waste services are inevitable. If we continue collections as they are now, an additional £500,000 per year would be needed on top of the £5 million waste service budget. If we make the changes, we could save up to £1.8 million per year, depending on which option we choose.

"We have to make savings of more than £25 million over the next three years. I for one would much rather see my general rubbish collected less frequently than for us to not be able to help our most vulnerable residents. We are for the most part a wealthy borough, but this cost of living crisis is going to hit many of us hard and we need to make savings wherever we can in ways that will protect our essential services."

Financial pressures

The cost of providing basic services is increasing dramatically, with inflation at a 40-year high and energy bills rapidly increasing. The council has to make savings of more than £25 million over the next three years due to a continued reduction in government funding and rising costs, particularly supporting older people with care needs.

Changes to waste collections could save up to £1.8 million per year, depending on which option the council chooses, if the changes are introduced in 2026. Early work shows that if the council were to introduce changes sooner, it could save £700,000 per year right away and then the higher figure from 2026. These savings would protect other essential council services.

Continuing weekly collections as they are now would cost an additional £500,000 for next year, if 10 per cent inflation continues.

Environmental impact

The council is committed to increasing its recycling rate from the 2021 rate of 54 per cent to 70 per cent by 2030. Other councils' experience shows that changing from weekly to fortnightly or three-weekly general rubbish collections will cause an increase in the borough's recycling rate. In both options, the council would continue to collect food waste weekly.

Collecting general rubbish less frequently limits the total amount of general rubbish each household is allowed to put out for kerbside collections, which encourages people to recycle more.

The council knows that many of its residents already do everything they can to reduce the amount of waste they produce including recycling as much as they can. These changes will have a greater impact on residents who currently use their blue general rubbish bags for food waste, plastics, paper, card and other recyclable materials and the council is urging those residents to switch to recycling more.

Reducing waste

Earlier this year, the council looked at what residents put into their blue rubbish bags and found that 57 per cent could have been recycled. Rubbish costs over £100 per tonne to dispose of and recycling costs less than £50 per tonne.

In 2021 the council disposed of 25,300 tonnes of rubbish -- which means residents threw away 14,421 tonnes of recyclable materials which were put into blue rubbish bags instead of the green recycling bags. This cost the borough's council taxpayers more than £720,000.

Residents are urged to take the consultation survey on the council's Engage platform (engage.wokingham.gov.uk), which outlines two options on the frequency of waste collections and the change to wheeled bins to cater to the proposed changes. Registration is needed for the platform's first-time users.

Cllr Ian Shenton, executive member for environment, sport and leisure added: “Changing how we collect waste and recycling doesn’t just make financial sense, it is also the right thing to do to help us meet our environment goals, by driving up our recycling rate, decreasing the total amount of rubbish we incinerate and send to landfill every year, and decreasing our carbon footprint.

“I know that our waste collections impact every single resident in the borough, so we want to hear from as many of you as possible. All residents are urged to take part in the consultation – we’ve sent a postcard to every household in the borough to get as many people taking part as possible.”

For help completing the survey, residents can call the council’s customer services team on (0118) 974 6000 or visit one of the borough’s libraries. Help taking the online survey is available over the phone or in person, and paper and electronic copies (PDF format) are also available on request.

The council is anticipating a high volume of interest in the consultation and is asking residents for their patience if they have difficulty accessing the webpage or survey.

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- 1. More from Cllr Clive Jones, leader of the council, at clive.jones@wokingham.gov.uk**
- 2. More from Cllr Ian Shenton, executive member for environment, sport and leisure, at ian.shenton@wokingham.gov.uk**