



**HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND WASTE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE - 4 JUNE 2026**

FOOD WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND
TRANSPORT**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Highways, Transport and Waste Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a summary of the introduction, current implementation and planned rollout of household food waste collections in Leicestershire, and the County Council's role as Waste Disposal Authority.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Committee previously considered a summary paper on waste reforms, collectively known as the Collection and Packaging Reforms (CPR) on 6 November 2025.
3. CPR support the objectives of the Council's Environment Strategy 2018-2030 and the 'Clean and Green' outcome within the Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026.
4. The management of municipal waste in Leicestershire is undertaken by Leicestershire County Council (as the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA)) and the seven district councils (as Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs)). WCAs provide kerbside collections of residual waste and recycling from households. As a WDA, the Council provides recycling, composting, treatment and disposal outlets for waste collected across the County by the WCAs and operates 13 Household Waste Recycling Centres for residents to use.
5. The Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy 2022-2050 considered the potential forthcoming legislative changes, and these are reflected accordingly within the Strategy, which was produced by the Leicestershire Waste Partnership (the County Council and the seven Leicestershire district councils).

Background

6. Legislation in the Environment Act 2021 enables waste reforms such as a consistent set of recyclables through Simpler Recycling, including a weekly food waste collection, a Deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers and Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging which makes the producers pay the full net costs of managing packaging, including the recycling and disposal. The Act supports

transition to a more circular economy, incentivising people to recycle more, encourages businesses to provide more sustainable packaging and supports the achievement of a national 65% recycling target for municipal waste by 2035.

7. The requirement for weekly household food waste collection forms part of the Government's Simpler Recycling requirements (published by DEFRA in November 2024). From 31 March 2026, WCAs must meet the household recycling requirements, including weekly food waste collection, unless a statutory transitional arrangement applies. The Environment Act 2021 (Commencement No.9 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024 set out transitional arrangements for specified authorities. Officers understand that no statutory transitional arrangement applies to the Leicestershire WCAs, but each WCA remains responsible for confirming and meeting its own statutory obligations.

Disposal Arrangements

8. The district councils are responsible for kerbside collection of food waste, but as a WDA, the County Council will need to be able to accept and treat the collected food waste. The statutory duty to arrange kerbside household waste collection rests with the relevant WCA; the County Council's role is as WDA for treatment, transfer and disposal arrangements for waste delivered to it.
9. The collected food waste is put through a process called anaerobic digestion (AD) where the food waste is broken down to produce biogas and biofertiliser. The process happens in the absence of oxygen in a sealed oxygen free tank called an anaerobic digester. The biogas created naturally in the sealed tanks is used as a fuel in a combined heat and power unit to generate renewable energy, i.e. electricity and heat. In some facilities the biogas is cleaned and subsequently fed into the national grid. What is left in the process is a nutrient rich biofertiliser which is pasteurised to kill any pathogens and often spread on farmland in place of fossil fuel derived fertilisers. AD is the Government's preferred method of treating separately collected food waste (further information is given in the appendix to this report).
10. Ideally, most district councils will deliver their food waste directly to an AD provider eliminating the need for the County Council to transfer the food waste. However, this will not be possible for all the district councils due to geographical and operational reasons.
11. Where the County Council does transfer the food waste, the district councils will deposit it at one of the Waste Transfer Stations and the County Council will transport it to the AD provider.
12. Three contracts are currently secured for AD capacity. Additional AD capacity could be sought where it is cost effective and needed.

District Council Collection Arrangements

13. To date, three district councils have started to collect food waste: Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, Blaby District Council and Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (see Table 1 below). The remaining district councils are due to roll out by November 2026 apart from Melton Borough Council which is seeking alternative arrangements. The former Leader of Melton Borough Council gave an update on the

implementation of food waste collections in Melton at a Council meeting on 12 February 2026 and has advised DEFRA of the intention to delay the roll out due to concerns regarding the financial settlement and delays in funding announcements.

14. The dates in Table 1 are reported WCA implementation dates. Table 1 - Reported WCA Food Waste Collection Rollout Dates

Waste Collection Authority	Food Waste Collection Roll Out Date
Blaby District Council	Started - 30 th March 2026
Charnwood Borough Council	Summer 2026
Harborough District Council	2 nd November 2026
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	Started - March 2026
Melton Borough Council	Anticipate April 2028
North West Leicestershire District Council	Likely November 2026
Oadby and Wigston Borough Council	Started - 30 th March 2026

15. The district councils will provide each household with a small kitchen caddy (7 litres) for use inside the house and a bigger outdoor caddy (23 litres) for placing next to the wheelie bin on a usual day for collection. There is no statutory requirement for caddy liners to be provided to households or for them to be used. However, local guidance encourages liners to help keep caddies clean. Current Leicestershire guidance states that any non-black bag/liner is acceptable, subject to local WCA guidance. However, as all bags are removed during processing, residents can use any type of bag (paper, plastic, compostable etc) as a caddy liner, with the exception of black / dark grey plastic bags which can be more difficult for processing equipment to remove.
16. Rolling out food waste collections at scale requires new vehicles, containers and specialist equipment as well as public communication campaigns and confirmed treatment capacity and this has therefore led to a delay in roll out in some instances.

What Can and Cannot be Collected

17. All food waste can be recycled including the following:

- Dairy
- Fish
- Fruit and vegetables
- Meat and bones
- Bread and pastries
- Tea and coffee grounds
- Rice, pasta and beans
- Ready meals removed from their packaging
- Pet food

18. Items which cannot be put in the food caddy include:

- Packaging of any kind
- Liquids
- Oil or liquid fat
- Compostable packaging
- Coffee pods

- Pet waste/faeces
- Garden waste and flowers

19. Unless local WCA guidance says otherwise, residents should follow the collection instructions issued by their WCA. (More information can be found at [Waste and recycling | Leicestershire County Council](#)).

Performance

20. Separate collection of food waste in England has increased since 2010, but the tonnage collected has been relatively small at 386,000 tonnes in 2017. Government analysis shows that if local authorities provide all households, including flats and communal properties, with a separate food waste collection service, this would increase the amount of food waste collected by 1.35m tonnes by 2029: an increase in the household recycling rate in England by approximately five percentage points. The current recycling rate for Leicestershire is 43.4% (over a 12-month rolling period up to and including Quarter One 2025/26).
21. A recent compositional analysis (October 2025) of Leicestershire’s residual (black bin) waste found that food made up the largest proportion of residual waste across all samples, accounting for 26%. Of the food waste identified, 66% was classified as avoidable, with most consisting of cooked or prepared food, either loose or still in its original packaging.
22. For the 2025/26 financial year, the County Council treated 342.7 tonnes of food waste comprising 107 tonnes of trade food waste from Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and 235.7 tonnes of kerbside food waste from North West Leicestershire District Council as part of its food waste trial. Based on Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) data analysis, the indicative annual food waste collection yield per household in the UK, when a separate, weekly service is provided, is estimated to be around 78 kg per household per year or approximately 1.5 kg per household (hh) per week.

Table 2 - Forecast tonnage for the first four years of the service

Year	2026/27 (Yr 1)	2027/28 (Yr 2)	2028/29 (Yr 3)	2029/30 (Yr 4)
Tonnage	<10,000	14,500	16,000	16,000

*Note: Forecast tonnages are indicative and subject to actual WCA rollout dates, resident participation, contamination and operational arrangements.

23. By following the waste hierarchy, households and businesses can ensure they use the most environmentally friendly way to manage their food waste. It is important to emphasise that avoiding and preventing food waste wherever possible is always the best option – recycling avoidable food waste does not justify creating it in the first place. WRAP’s ‘Love Food Hate Waste’ campaign aims to help citizens waste less food by making the most of the food available and the Council’s Less Waste website provides additional information to support prevention and reduction of food waste.

Previous Consultation

24. The Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy consultation was carried out between 31 January 2022 and 25 April 2022 and found that respondents were generally positive on the introduction of food waste collections (65% of respondents stated they did not see any barriers to participating in a weekly food waste collection service) but there were concerns raised of how it would work in practice, e.g. relating to bad odours and mess.
25. The concerns raised around smell and pests can be alleviated by emptying and washing the caddy regularly and if using liners, to tie them up. Both indoor and outdoor caddies have a lid, and the outdoor caddy has a sealable lockable lid which will stop smells getting out and anything getting in.

Resource Implications

26. Financial implications for food waste have been reviewed as part of the 2026/27-2029/30 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) process. Food waste collected separately is expected to present a saving because gate fees for AD are generally more favourable than gate fees for residual waste treatment and disposal, including Energy from Waste. The WCAs all received grant funding from the Government for the introduction and implementation of mandatory food waste collections. WDAs did not receive equivalent funding as the reduction in disposal gate fees is expected to generate financial savings. This is on the basis of modelled participation in the schemes. The savings are modelled and depend on actual WCA rollout dates, participation, tonnage captured, contamination levels, transfer requirements and treatment gate fees.

Table 3 - Updated savings profile

	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £000
Food Waste Implementation	-260	-575	-670	-670

27. Total capital expenditure for food waste in 2025/26 was £82,000, with £155,000 expected to be spent in 2026/27. A total of £1,139,000 is included within the 2026-2030 MTFS.
28. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer have been consulted on this report.

Legal Implications

29. The statutory duty to arrange household waste collection, including weekly food waste collections where required, rests with the relevant WCA under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 as amended by the Environment Act 2021. The County Council is the WDA and is responsible for arranging treatment, transfer and disposal capacity for waste collected by WCAs and delivered to it. The report should not be read as confirming the lawfulness of any WCA rollout date after 31 March 2026 unless that WCA has a valid statutory transitional arrangement or other lawful basis.

Risk Implications

30. The principal legal and operational risk relates to implementation dates for WCA food waste collection services after 31 March 2026. The statutory duty to arrange household food waste collection rests with the relevant WCA. Where a WCA implementation date is after 31 March 2026, the relevant WCA should confirm the statutory basis for that date, including whether a valid transitional arrangement applies. There are also financial and operational risks if participation, tonnage, contamination levels, treatment capacity, transfer requirements or gate fees differ from the assumptions used in the MTF5 modelling.

Conclusions

31. Members are asked to note the report and the ongoing implementation and operational position described.

Background Papers

24 April 2023 – Cabinet – Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy 2022-2050
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MID=7075#A174545>

13 June 2024 – Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Collection and Packaging Reforms
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s183335/Collection%20and%20Packaging%20Reforms.pdf>

6 November 2025 – Highways, Transport and Waste Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Collection and Packaging Reforms
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s192696/FINAL%20Collection%20and%20Packaging%20Reforms%20061125.pdf>

Defra, Simpler recycling: household recycling in England
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/simpler-recycling-household-recycling-in-england>

Defra, Simpler Recycling in England: policy update
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/simpler-recycling-in-england-policy-update/simpler-recycling-in-england-policy-update>

The Separation of Waste (England) Regulations 2024
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/666/contents>

The Environment Act 2021 (Commencement No. 9 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/639/contents/made>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

32. None.

Equality Implications

33. There are no direct equality implications arising from this report, which is for noting. However, the implementation of household food waste collections may have practical impacts for some residents, including disabled residents, older residents, residents in flats or communal properties and residents with limited storage space. WCAs are responsible for resident-facing service design, communications and any equality impact assessment required for their collection arrangements. The County Council should continue to support accessible communications through the Leicestershire Waste Partnership where appropriate.

Human Rights Implications

34. There are no human right implications arising from this report, which is for noting. Operational service decisions by WCAs should remain proportionate and compatible with Convention rights where engaged.

Environmental Implications

35. Separate collection and AD treatment of food waste can reduce the amount of biodegradable waste in residual waste treatment/disposal routes, generate renewable energy and produce digestate capable of use as fertiliser where regulatory and quality requirements are met. It lowers disposal costs and promotes a circular economy by turning waste into valuable resources. The Government's preference is for food waste to be collected for treatment by AD, which presents the best environmental outcome for the treatment of unavoidable food waste, due to the generation of biofuel and digestate. This digestate can be spread to land, ensuring nutrients are recycled, creating a more circular economy. The environmental benefits depend on effective participation, low contamination, appropriate transfer distances, treatment at permitted facilities and compliant use of digestate.

Appendix

Anaerobic Digestion Process Summary

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