

Scrutiny Briefing Paper (Part 1) – March 2026

Part 1 - An overview of Waste and Recycling collections for Residents, new legislation and the Council's programme to improve W&R services for residents

Authors Kristina Mould (OCC) & Maria Warner (OCC/ODS)

This paper covers:

1. Introduction to Waste and Recycling Services
2. Oxford's current recycling and waste performance, challenges and targets.
3. The upcoming legislative changes under the Environment Act and Simpler Recycling requirements
4. The approach to Simpler Recycling, including timelines and investment required.
5. Funding available through pEPR and other sources.
6. Governance
7. Improvement Programme for household waste collections.

1. Introduction to Waste & Recycling Services

Oxford City Council is currently the waste collection authority. It has the statutory responsibility for household domestic waste collections from all properties in Oxford City.

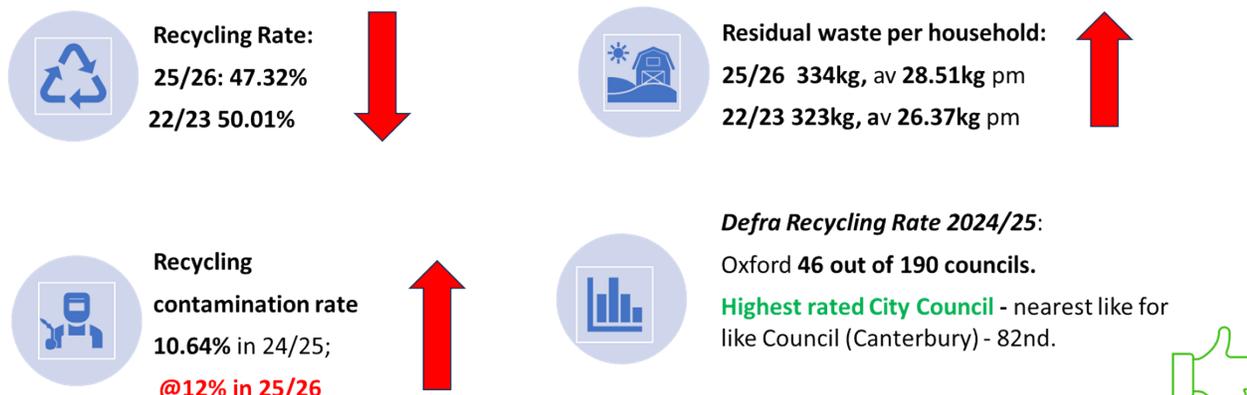
It collects waste from almost 64,000 households of the following types:

- Dry Mixed Recycling (paper, cardboard, glass, metal, plastic)
- Garden waste
- Food waste
- Residual Waste
- Bulky waste
- Other (batteries, small electrical items (including IT), vapes, clinical waste, etc)

It is also responsible for the disposal of recycling and receives a recycling credit from the County Council. Oxfordshire County Council as the disposal authority is responsible for the disposal of all other waste streams. The design and delivery of the recycling and waste collection service is set to recognise differences, whilst providing a consistent service for all demographics of Oxford, supported by targeted education and other support services required to successfully deliver the service. ODS acts on behalf of the Council to fulfill its obligations as the Waste Collection Authority.

2. Oxford's Current W&R Performance & Targets - Performance

Oxford ranks 46th of 190 councils nationally for 2024/25 - the highest ranked **city council**.



- Overall Oxford's recycling rate has declined; mainly card & garden waste, residual waste levels are increasing slightly.
- 40% of residual waste comprises food waste (28%) or materials that could be recycled (12%).
- Increasing contamination: 10.64% (24/25) to approx. 12% (25/26).
- Operational pressures: agency workforce reliance = up to 10% for loaders and 30% for drivers - this is an area of focus for ODS.
- Fleet age, congestion and LTNs impact collection efficiency, replacing fleet, early starts & route planning support good collection efficiency.

b. Targets

Oxfordshire modelling suggests Oxford should reach 63.40% recycling by 2029/30. DEFRA's national target is 55% by 2025/26 and 65% by 2035

Recycling Rate

Recycling rate as a % NI192	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	2030	2035
Ox City's actuals and predicted rates %	52.8	51.7	50.0	49.5	47.4	47.2			
DEFRA: Target Municipal recycling rate %						55%			65%

Focus for Improvement

- Increasing food waste recycling
- Reducing contamination rates of recyclates
- Increasing mixed other recycling rates

3. Legislative & Regulatory Changes

Simpler Recycling – Mandatory from 31 March 2026

All local authorities must collect a consistent set of recyclable materials, including glass, metals, plastics, cartons, paper and card. Weekly food waste collections will be required for all households, and garden waste services must be offered. Paper and card should be collected separately where possible.

Legislation and Regulatory update

Simpler Recycling - from 31 March 2026

- All local authorities in England must collect a **consistent set of recyclables**, including:
 - Glass bottles and jars - **yes**
 - Metal tins, cans, foil, trays and aerosols - **yes**
 - Plastic bottles, pots, tubs, trays and tubes - **yes**
 - Cartons for food and drink - **yes**
 - Paper and card - **yes**
- **Weekly food waste collection** for all households, including flats - **95% currently**
- **Garden waste**, collection service must be provided to households that request it; charges may be applied - **yes**
- Under the **Separation of Waste (England) Regulations 2025**, glass, metals and plastics (with cartons) can be co-collected. **Paper and card** should preferably be collected **separately** - **currently co-mingled**
- To maintain mixed recycling, councils must complete a written assessment - **TEEP assessment March '26**
- From **March 2027 - plastic film and bags** must also be collected for recycling - **not yet**
- **Deposit Return Scheme - Oct 2027-** drinks containers - **waiting further info**

4. Preparing for Simpler Recycling

Under Simpler Recycling legislation – Oxford is expected to move from co-mingled dry mixed recycling to separate paper and cardboard collections. Options on how to do this are being evaluated via the Oxfordshire Waste and Resources Partnership (all Oxon Councils), to ensure that any changes made align with LGR.

Remaining @2,500 properties without a food waste collection are now all being offered the service.

Estimated minimum capital cost of separating paper and cardboard = £1.5-2M.

We already collect, plastic and film, but intend to collect these in a separate bag as part of dry mixed recycling collections from March 2027.

A TEEP assessment can justify delay to implementation until 2027. This has been completed for 2026.

5. Funding

Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) is providing funding for local authorities to support Simpler Recycling measures. Known pEPR funding for OCC to support the collection and recycling of packaging is as shown below:

- 2025/26 - Guaranteed £1.98m
- 2026/27 - Notification of a provisional further £2.18m
- 2027/28 - Unknown (better recycling performance = more certainty of future funding)

- A further £50k received in 25/26 to roll out food waste to all remaining communal properties that do not currently have a collection.

Note - funding must be spent on household packaging waste management, with potential claw-back by DEFRA if non-compliant. Detail on spend related to this is shown in section 6.

6. Governance of all W&R Workstreams

There are three significant waste and recycling Workstreams that the Council and ODS are working on, as outlined below:

1. **The statutory and legislative requirements of Oxford City Council as Oxford's Waste Collection Authority (with ODS for its delivery).**
 - a. Improving the service to Oxford's residents and meeting the needs of changing legislation, including use of pEPR.
2. **County wide Partnership work & Joint LA collaboration and efficiency workstreams**
 - a. Oxfordshire Resources Waste Partnership (ORWP)
 - b. Waste and Environmental Services Partnership (WESP), feeding into LGR
3. **ODS Commercial Opportunities**
 - a. Commercial Waste, Expansion of Services, Infrastructure opportunities, etc

A W&R Steering Board, compiled of key OCC & ODS staff and chaired by Tom Bridgman has been created. The Board, via a collective W&R programme, will ensure cohesive approach for strategic direction, interdependencies, scope and any resource prioritisation. This also includes full governance of Workstream 1 & associated spend (pEPR for 25/26 & 26/27 = @£4M).

Workstreams 2. OWRP & WESP & 3. ODS Commercial work, have established own governance processes, their inclusion in the wider programme is to support strategic information sharing and identify inter-related dependencies, opportunities and risks etc.

7. Improvement Programme for Oxford Residents Household Waste Collections.

"An action plan has been drafted to ensure that the pEPR funding received, supports key workstreams that deliver efficient, effective and improved household waste management and recycling, fully aligning with the spend conditions".

4 x OCC/ODS Working Groups have been created to drive improvements to the household waste and recycling services for Oxford's residents, whilst aligning with changing legislative and LGR requirements.

4 x OCC/ODS Working Groups:

1. WG 1: Client & ODS - General Service & Strategic Review.
 - Process map all waste origin to end location
 - Partner working across service areas (Streets, enforcement)
 - Engagement Programme
 - Strategic governance, simpler recycling business case, TEEP assessment, composition analysis

- Using data to prioritise & focus
2. WG 2: ODS led – Operational Delivery, including implementing Simpler Recycling Collection Changes.
 - Waste contracts
 - Staffing
 - Waste systems, permits, innovation (cameras)
 3. WG 3: OCC led - Communal Dwelling Improvement Programme
 - Food Programme – almost completed
 - HRA
 - Private Rented Sector

Audit of all communal dwelling sites, to assess issues and interventions (physical, engagement etc)– working with Property, Housing & Enforcement

4. WG 4: OCC led - Policy & Strategy functions
 - Review of funding options for W&R in line with increasing households
 - Private Rented Sector – focus on landlords/agents/HMOS
 - Planning – TAN/Local Plan
 - Strategy updates/opportunities

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