

Food Waste - Success of the Scheme

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Nicola Herbert – Head of Waste Services
Papers with report	N/A
Ward	All

HEADLINES

This report summarises the food waste collection service within Hillingdon, detailing an ongoing communications and engagement programme, and summarising projects that are currently underway to support expansion of the service.

The key successes of the programme to date are:

- A 60% increase in houses subscribing to the service since November 2020.
- More than 10,000 tonnes of food waste recycled since separate collections began in May 2021.
- Introduced to schools in April 2023 with 28 schools currently participating.
- 2,300 flatted properties now have access to the food waste recycling service.
- Food waste collections launched for businesses in April 2024.
- A door knocking programme has increased participation from 20% to 60% in targeted areas and will be expanded borough wide in 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Residents' Services Select Committee:

- 1. Notes the success of the food waste recycling scheme to date; and**
- 2. Notes the planned works to continue the expansion of the food waste recycling service.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Weekly food waste recycling collections have been available to Hillingdon residents living in low-rise properties since October 2013, with food waste initially being co-mingled with garden waste and the mixed materials composted at a site in Harefield.

Residents can obtain a free food waste recycling kit by signing up to the service online. Biodegradable food waste liners can be obtained free of charge by either signing up to an automatic delivery scheme, requesting an ad hoc delivery online, or collecting from any of the Borough's libraries.

In May 2021, food waste was segregated from garden waste with five purpose-built vehicles purchased using £500k of funding provided by the West London Waste Authority to support the growth of the food waste service, and a communications campaign was launched to advertise the newly 'refreshed' service.

At the time of the service refresh, a competition was run which gave local school children the opportunity to name the vehicles. More than 150 entries were received, and the winning entrants has their nominated name printed onto the vehicle and were invited to meet the vehicles. (appendix 1)

Segregating the food and garden waste has three main benefits:

1. The ability to monitor participation of both services and use better data to inform engagement campaigns and service changes.
2. A reduced disposal cost.
3. More environmentally friendly as food waste can now be processed through an anaerobic digestion process to generate energy whilst garden waste is still composted locally.

Data collected in November 2020, prior to the introduction of the new segregated service, showed that 27,600 kerbside properties had registered for a food waste recycling kit. In March 2024 this number had increased by 60% to 44,100.

Communications and Engagement

Roadshows and events

Since the introduction of a recycling team in 2020, officers have carried out a series of summer roadshow events across the Borough each year, promoting recycling services and answering residents' questions. 19 events were held in 2023, engaging with almost 5,000 residents and resulting in a further 240 new signups for the food waste recycling service.

For National Food Waste Action Week in March 2024, the team held two events, taking the 'smoothie bike' to Botwell Leisure Centre and The Great Barn in Ruislip to encourage residents to re-use leftovers and reduce food waste whilst having the opportunity to pedal to make their own smoothie. (appendix 2)

Schools

The recycling team works with our local schools to promote food waste recycling, assisting with lesson planning, providing worksheets and quizzes and hosting assemblies. In 2022, 5 schools participated in a trial to introduce food waste collections in the kitchens, lunch areas and classrooms. The service was officially launched to all schools in April 2023, with a free service provided to state-maintained schools which use Hillingdon for their general waste collections. 28 schools are now participating in the service. (appendix 3)

Online resources

Twice per year, the recycling team run a 'zero waste challenge' which encourages participants to reduce their waste and recycling with weekly tips communicated to help them along the way. 80 residents completed the most recent challenge, with food waste reducing by 11% amongst participants during the four weeks that the challenge was run. (appendix 4)

Targeted Engagement

From June 2023 – January 2024, the recycling team carried out a series of door-knocking days, to speak to residents at home about the food waste service, promoting the service to non-users and guiding existing users in how to use the service correctly (appendix 5).

Participation was monitored before and after the door-knocking exercise to ascertain how effective this approach was. The outcome of this is detailed below.

Total number of properties targeted	Previously using food waste service	Signed up on the day or online later	Refused
4,928	1,087	1,886	95
Users pre-engagement		22.06%	
Users post-engagement		60.33%	
Refusal rate		1.93%	

Given the success of the scheme, from April 2024, a team of six dedicated officers have been recruited to continue the door-knocking programme for a six-month period across the Borough with a target to increase the number of subscribing properties by a further 19,800.

Projects to expand the food waste service

Food waste from flats

In 2022, five Hillingdon Housing flatted developments took part in a trial to collect food waste from communal bin stores. A range of units were utilised and following the trial a tender exercise was carried out to purchase up to 600 units as part of a programme to introduce food waste recycling to all Hillingdon owned properties by 2025.

To date, 137 units have been installed, providing a food waste collection service to more than 2,300 flatted homes within Hillingdon's own housing stock and more than 50 tonnes of food waste have been collected.

The waste and recycling guidance provided to developers during the planning stage has been updated to include a requirement to provide containers for food waste recycling to ensure that all new properties have access to the service in the future.

Food waste from businesses

Hillingdon provides a commercial waste collection service for businesses within the Borough, servicing more than 1,500 customers. A trial of food waste recycling collections took place successfully with 3 businesses in 2023 with the service being advertised to all customers from April 2024.

PERFORMANCE DATA

Performance of the food waste service is measured on the number of participating properties and the tonnage collected.

In 23/24, 821 tonnes more food waste was collected than in 21/22 when segregated collections began.

The number of participating kerbside properties has increased by 60% from 22,700 in November 2020 to 44,100 in March 2024.

Additionally, each year a waste composition analysis exercise is undertaken to understand the make-up of the waste that we collect and inform future projects to reduce waste and increase recycling. A sample of properties across the Borough had their general waste collected separately and the contents were categorised and measured by weight to determine an average composition for the Borough.

The amount of food waste by weight within the general waste for each of the last two exercises is shown below and supports the continuation of the current engagement projects to help reduce

the amount of food waste present:

	Kerbside	Flats
Dec-23	41.50%	27.60%
Nov-22	42.70%	35.80%

RESIDENT BENEFIT

All the resources required to participate in the food waste service are free for residents to access conveniently online, with a home delivery within 10 days. The free biodegradable liners help residents to keep their kitchen area hygienic, and the vermin proof outdoor caddy prevents waste being spilled when presented for collection.

Once using the service, many residents report a reduction in their food waste and the associated costs as the amount of waste they produce is more visible to them.

Once collected, the food waste is deposited at Victoria Road transfer station in South Ruislip, and then transported in bulk by vehicles which are powered by energy created from food waste.

The material is processed at an Anaerobic Digestion facility in Mitcham, Surrey. The process uses temperature-controlled tanks to breakdown the biodegradable materials, producing biogas which is then pumped into the National Grid to provide renewable, clean energy to thousands of homes and businesses across the country.

Once the energy has been extracted, a high-quality fertiliser remains which is distributed to local farms to help them grow new crops which are then fed back into the food waste cycle.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

More than 50,000 tonnes of general waste are collected in Hillingdon each year.

The current cost per tonne to dispose of general waste is £135. For segregated food waste, the cost reduces to £12 per tonne; a saving of £123 for every tonne of food waste which is recycled.

The average household participating in the food waste recycling service produces c.140kg of food waste per annum.

Based on the targeted increase of 19,800 participating properties following the planned Borough wide door-knocking programme, a saving of c.£340k per annum could be achieved in disposal costs and has been included as an MTFE saving for 24/25 and 25/26.

The cost to provide a food waste recycling kit to a new user is c.£10 per property which includes an indoor caddy, an outdoor caddy, a roll of liners, and a user guide.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

As a 'waste collection authority', Hillingdon is required to provide waste and recycling collections to all properties within the Borough under the Environment Act 1990.

In October 2023, a new 'simpler recycling' reform was announced which will require businesses to recycle their food waste by March 2025, and all residential properties to have access to food waste recycling by March 2026.

Details of New Burdens funding to support these changes have not yet been provided in detail, however planning is currently underway to ensure that these new requirements can be met by Hillingdon, with the existing projects supporting improvements towards these targets.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Appendix 1 – Glebe School children with the food waste vehicle named by one of their students.



Appendix 2 – A resident using the 'smoothie bike' during a Food Waste Action Week event.



Appendix 3 – The recycling team presenting on food waste recycling to more than 350 children at Yiewsley Infant School



Appendix 4 – The winner of the most recent Zero Waste Challenge with his prize, a zero-waste kit with reusable items.



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Appendix 5 – A Recycling Officer engaging with residents during door-knocking activities to promote the food waste service.

