

### 2022-25 Interim Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Strategy

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#### **Vision**

*“We will work together to promote resource efficiency and provide sustainable, safe and cost effective waste management in order to respond to our climate emergency, to conserve natural resources and to protect our environment.”*

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#### **Engagement and Partnership Working**

Joint working between partnership authorities has been at the heart of our waste management strategy for many years. We recognise that waste collection and disposal authorities must coordinate decision making, service development, communication with residents and other stakeholders, and service delivery in order to achieve the most efficient services and the best outcomes for residents. The GRWP exists in order to maintain this partnership working approach, and the revised strategy aims to emphasise its continued importance.

Avoiding or mitigating environmental impacts has remained central to our decision making, and clear commitments to addressing climate change have now also been made by the GRWP member authorities. We commit to developing a new strategy which prioritises climate action and facilitates close working with Climate Leadership Gloucestershire in support of common objectives.

There have been significant achievements to date in terms of Behaviour Change and Partnership Working, with a reduction in overall household waste being demonstrated and a continual decline in the residual waste per household since 2016. The exception to this trend was during the Covid pandemic, when household waste increased due to people staying at home. Despite these ongoing improvements there remains some way to go to meet our original 2020 recycling target of 60%. The latest published recycling rate in Gloucestershire, for 2020/21 stands at 50.8%. An analysis of waste composition in 2019 also showed a significant amount of recyclable

material still being disposed of by residents as residual waste (see figure 1). For example, only around 40% of available food waste is recycled, and significant amounts of other easily recycled materials such as paper, cardboard, cans and glass remain in residual waste. It is clear that if all residents recycled as much as they could within the existing waste services the recycling rate would be in excess of 70%. The gap between current performance and potential performance indicates that more could be done to encourage and facilitate behaviour change.



Figure 1 - Results of the 2019 residual waste composition analysis

As an interim strategy, our new objectives will deliver improvements in performance using the existing services prior to any major policy changes taking place at a national level as outlined earlier. Therefore, the GRWP will;

- Work in partnership to continuously improve waste management services within Gloucestershire.
- Consider and share plans for the development of future services with each other ahead of service changes, and broaden this engagement to include the local planning authorities
- Identify opportunities to collaborate with community organisations across Gloucestershire and develop relationships which help achieve our vision.
- Help the residents of Gloucestershire to live more sustainably by providing more information and advice that help reduce both carbon emissions and waste levels, harmonising messages and engagement methods across the county where possible.
- Continue to prioritise high impact waste, such as plastics and food, in our engagement campaigns.
- Engage with government, supply chains and other industry bodies in order to stay abreast of, and influence, continual improvement in all aspects of waste management policy.
- Regularly benchmark our performance against comparable authorities, and develop annual action plans which reflect strategic priorities to increase performance.

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## **Maximising Resource Value**

Maximising the value of materials collected within the limitations of the collection system is important in ensuring the efficient delivery of services and minimising the whole life environmental impact of materials. High levels of resource value can be gained by driving down residual waste and increasing the levels of waste prevention, reuse and recycling. Significant improvements in this respect since the previous strategy was adopted in 2008, detailing performance improvements in the objectives of 'Reduction First', 'Segregation at Source' and 'Closing the Resource Loop'.

Despite these improvements we believe that more can be done to reduce waste by employing a mix of ongoing behaviour change activities and further service development. We recognise that many of the best performing authorities have adopted measures such as smaller residual waste containers or less frequent (eg 3-weekly) residual waste collections, both of which serve to limit the amount of residual waste disposal capacity available to residents and demonstrate a clear link between residual waste bin size and the amount of residual waste collected. It is recognised that investment in vehicles and other collection infrastructure is made for up to 7 years at a time (the typical life of vehicles) and therefore such investments should be made with future potential changes in mind.

Further examples to address this challenge could include;

- The addition of further separate materials collections for recycling, such as soft plastics (eg plastic films and bags), where viable. However, collection at the kerbside might not always be possible due to high cost and end market restrictions.
- The continued encouragement of higher levels of participation in waste reduction, reuse and recycling by residents using behaviour change engagement techniques. A particular challenge in this respect is increasing the amount of food waste captured for recycling, as currently more than half of the available food waste remains in the residual waste stream.
- Emphasising the separation of recyclable materials by householders as our strategic approach to extracting the maximum amount of recycling from the residual waste stream.
- Maintaining a focus on materials quality and adapting services to respond to changing market requirements. In addition, the development of a more circular economy may require certain target materials and items to be managed in different ways.

Maximising the resource potential of the remaining residual waste remains a long-term commitment through the avoidance of landfill and continued use of the Energy from Waste facility.

We recognise that future changes to national waste policy and the growth of the circular economy will continue to drive quality standards, and our revised strategy must ensure that we respond to this and adapt as necessary. Different methods of waste collection can impact material quality in different ways (for example, higher reject rates are common with co-mingled recycling collections) and this should be considered alongside affordability and practicability.

In response to the challenge of maximising resource value, the GRWP will;

- Treat all waste as a resource and ensure that it is managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy (prioritising waste prevention) to maximise environmental, economic and social benefits.
- Continue to develop waste services that reduce residual waste per household. This includes the provision of smaller residual waste bins on a rolling replacement basis.
- Partner with organisations in order to further circular economy principles and objectives, and support the development of a local resource sector.
- Develop waste collection services which balance obtaining the highest quality of materials and value for money service delivery, maximising the upcycling of items wherever possible.
- Seek to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from our waste management services and contribute to the county's net zero commitment.

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### **Service Investment & Value for Money**

Effective service development and delivery which provides both value for money and high levels of performance has been at the centre of GRWPs strategy for many years. During this time services have responded to a number of challenges in terms of adapting to market pressures, delivering continual improvement and operating under ever tighter financial constraints. It is recognised that these pressures will continue to exist, and potential new pressures arising from changes to national policy and service funding may emerge. The GRWP will continue to work closely together in order to maintain a strong collective position, and in particular will;

- Ensure waste management services are efficient, considering the overall service cost to Gloucestershire taxpayers.

- Continue to invest in waste management infrastructure to ensure that services can deliver continual improvement.
  - Ensure a sufficient number of well located transfer and treatment facilities in order to minimise waste transportation impacts.
  - Provide leadership and maintain close working relationships with the wider public sector, sharing intelligence and best practice in order to widen the scope of achievable benefits.
  - Continue to seek external funding opportunities to support our key priority of sustainable waste management.
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### **Adaptation to the Future**

The GRWP recognise that significant challenges lay ahead in terms of increasing environmental pressures, and each partner authority is committed to taking action on reducing carbon emissions in response to the Climate Emergency that we face. Future waste management services will be developed and delivered with this consideration at the centre of decision making, and an emphasis on carbon reduction will be maintained.

The national policy context, within which waste services are delivered, will continue to adapt to this pressure, and a number of changes are being considered which in turn will require further adaptation by the GRWP.

The government is currently developing new national policies, which are likely to see producers taking responsibility for the costs associated with the collection, recycling, treatment and disposal of certain materials, in particular food and beverage packaging. Consideration is being given to the introduction of 'Extended Producer Responsibility' (ensuring responsibility for collection costs sits with the producer) and a 'Deposit Return Scheme' for drinks containers. Whilst Extended Producer Responsibility will ensure that full collection and recycling costs will no longer be borne by the authorities, it may result in a demand for increased materials quality which in turn may influence the methods of collection. The Deposit Return Scheme is likely to result in the removal of some materials from kerbside waste streams. Both of these policies have the potential to change the way that waste is collected and handled in Gloucestershire, and it is prudent to ensure that a revised strategy is adaptable to be able to accommodate

change once the effects of these policies are better understood in the years ahead. Therefore, the GRWP will;

- Recognise that further service changes may be needed to meet future challenges and a changing policy environment. To this end we will regularly review our strategy and priorities, with a first full review of this interim strategy in 2026.
- Actively respond to legislative and policy developments and will set appropriate targets with the ambition of strengthening our position in terms of overall waste reduction and recycling performance.
- Keep abreast of advances in digital technology, alternative fuels, waste processing and treatment to improve efficiency and reduce the environmental impact of services.

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### **Performance Improvement**

The GRWP will develop annual action plans to ensure that continual improvement in performance can be achieved. These action plans will detail the steps to be taken by each partner authority, both individually and collectively, which will contribute to an overall improvement in a number of key areas. As a minimum, our key performance measures will be;

- Recycling rate. The recycling rate (which also includes reuse, composting and anaerobic digestion) has steadily climbed over a number of years although has not yet reached the original strategy target of 60%. We will maintain a target of 60% recycling, but recognise that achievement of this will require further step changes in service delivery. In the meantime, the annual action plan will aim to deliver incremental improvement towards this target, with an interim target of 55% by 2026.
  - Residual waste per household. This has been reduced significantly in recent years and, excluding 2020/21 when the effects of lockdown and home working skewed the tonnage data, continues on a downwards trend of between 10kg and 20kg per household per year. Residual waste targets will therefore be set, reducing 10kg per household per year in line with this trend.
  - Carbon emissions. Each partner authority monitors the carbon emissions associated with its activities and we will continue to do this. We will also develop a robust mechanism whereby carbon emissions are targeted for reduction and are embedded as a core aspect in decision making, for example in contract procurements or in operational delivery.
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