

# News Release

**For Immediate Release**

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## **COUNCIL DISCUSSES IMPROVEMENTS TO RECYCLING AND WASTE COLLECTIONS**

Councillors meet next week to discuss a range of ideas for improving Bexley's recycling and waste collections, which take account of feedback about the service from local people.

Bexley has achieved the highest recycling rate in London for the past 13 years, saving a huge amount in incineration costs, as well as avoiding landfill and environmental taxes. Some of the options could take the borough's recycling rate up to nearly 60%, because analysis has shown that around half the material in refuse bins could be recycled.

At next week's meeting of the Council's Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee (16 October), Councillors will discuss a range of ideas designed to increase by 5,000 tonnes a year the amount of material – particularly plastic – that local people recycle and significantly reduce collection costs. A final decision on the proposals will be made by the Council's Cabinet in February.

Serco, the Council's contractor, currently completes more than 23 million waste and recycling collections for the Council a year. The annual cost of this and other street services, including street cleansing, is nearly £12m.

"Bexley has been the number one Borough in London for recycling for 13 years and the changes we made a decade ago helped catapult us to being the first borough to recycle over 50% of all waste collected, a rate we have maintained ever since," said Cllr Peter Craske, Cabinet Member for Places.

"Not only has that been good for the environment, but it has meant Bexley taxpayers have not had to pay £11m in landfill taxes that otherwise would have been due. It is because residents have got behind our work to recycle more that we have been so successful, and that's why we want residents to get involved in shaping the service for the next decade.

"What do you think we should do? Why should we do it? Let us know before we make final decisions in February."

The options which Councillors will be discussing next week include –

- Offering residents a choice of wheelie bin sizes, rather than recycling boxes, where people have the space to store them.
- Moving to a 1-2-3 collection cycle: weekly collections of food waste, two-weekly collections of garden waste, fortnightly or three-weekly collections of recycling and fortnightly or three-weekly collections of residual waste for incineration.
- Introducing additional collections for residents who need to dispose of large quantities of nappies or incontinence pads.
- Introducing a longer four-day working week (Tuesday to Friday) to make more efficient use of staff and vehicles and eliminate the disruption caused by bank holidays from 2021/22.
- Bringing the collection service and other street services back 'in house', transferring the service to a company owned by the Council, extending the current Serco contract or re-tendering.

None of the options under consideration affect people living in flats.

If they are agreed by the Council's Cabinet, changes to collection arrangements could take place next summer.

Next week's meeting takes place at the Civic Offices Bexleyheath and is open to the public. You can watch the meeting live online or afterwards at <https://bexley.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>. The final part of the meeting may be held in private because it will include the discussion of commercially sensitive financial information.

**'ENDS'**

The street services contract covers a range of services –

- Refuse collection
- Kerbside recycling collections
- Street cleaning
- Gully cleaning
- Depot management
- Winter maintenance
- Weed clearance

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Attachments

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