WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**Director of Place Delegated Decision**
Subject	**Waste Fleet Purchase – Electric Food Waste Collection Vehicles**
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Lidia Arciszewska – Executive Member for Environment Email: lidia.arciszewska@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officers	Phil Martin, Director of Place Email: phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk Madhu Richards, Director of Finance (151) Email: Madhu.Richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Report author	Si Pocock-Cluley, Environmental Services and Waste Transformation Lead Email: si.pocock-cluley@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	1. To note the update on the status of the waste fleet 2. To procure up to 4 food waste fleet vehicles
Annexes	Annex A – Waste Fleet Purchase Sustainability Impact Assessment Tool
Recommendation(s)	That the Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Executive Member for Finance and the Director of Finance, procures up to 4 food waste vehicles
Corporate priorities	• Putting Residents First • A Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
Key Decision	YES - Require a budget expenditure of over £150,000
Exempt	NO

Consultees/ Consultation	• Cabinet Members for Climate, Environment, and Finance • Waste Contract Manager • Climate Change and Nature Recovery Manager • Section 151 Officer • Head of Finance • Finance Business Partner responsible for waste • Ubico Head of Fleet Operations

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 In October 2024 the Executive agreed to purchase 3 fully electric supervisor vehicles and 1 standard fuel ultra-narrow access vehicle. It also sought approval to delegate authority for the purchase or lease of up to 2 full size HGV's and up to 4 food waste vehicles, including necessary infrastructure, and for the cost not to exceed £2.8m (including a procurement contingency and estimated cost of borrowing).

1.2 The 3 electric supervisor vehicles and narrow access vehicle were purchased in February 2025. The installation of electric charging points for the supervisor vans were made at Downs Road in February 2025. The installation of the charging points allows WODC the opportunity to explore the purchase of further electric waste vehicles.

1.3 This report seeks to update the Executive on the status of the existing waste fleet and to authorise the Director of Place, in agreement with the Executive Members for Environment and Finance, and the Director of Finance, to procure 4 electric food waste vehicles.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 For the initial 3 to 5 years of a waste vehicle's life, the cost of repairs and maintenance is comparatively low. As vehicles age, they require additional repairs and planned preventative maintenance, this increases the costs associated with operation of each vehicle. Older vehicles also break down more frequently because of mechanical failure, this not only impacts on revenue budget but also frontline service delivery performance leading to containers being missed and collection rounds not being completed.

2.2 The current fleet comprises of a mixture of both hired and Council owned vehicles, with circa 50% of front-line waste vehicles currently being hired. Vehicles that are Council-owned include a number that are nearing or are exceeding end-of-life, leading to increased maintenance costs and reduced reliability. Some vehicles last longer than the seven years depending on their use and care throughout their lifetime. The majority of the fleet are standard fuelled vehicles. Replacement of ageing vehicles is needed to maintain service levels, optimise costs, reduce emissions, and support climate goals.

2.3 A modern waste vehicle replacement programme must account for three competing factors: operational, environmental, and financial. Vehicles must be operationally robust to allow them to perform a demanding waste service to a high level with preferably minimal repair, breakdown and refuelling requirements. Carbon emissions from vehicles should be minimised to achieve carbon neutrality as a council by 2030. Vehicles should also be affordable, not only to purchase but also to operate.

3. CURRENT FLEET

3.1 The waste service has thirty-seven frontline collection vehicles with just under a third of these approaching the end of their life as shown in the table below: The table shows that the food waste service has the largest requirement in the number of vehicles requiring replacement and is therefore the service most at risk.

3.2 *Table 1: WODC – Fleet approaching end of life*

Service	No of Vehicles	Vehicle Size	Average Age	Average Mileage
Food Waste	5	Small HGV	8 years	105,000
Refuse	2	Large HGV	8 years	99,800
Recycling	1	Large HGV	8 years	76,000
Trade Waste	1	Large HGV	8 years	91,000
Street Cleaning	2	Sweeper	9.5 years	100,000
	11			

3.3 Without reliable replacements, the vehicles, and therefore the food waste service, will become unstable and result in service disruption and additional costs relating to repairs and maintenance. The service is a weekly council provided service, having an unreliable vehicle fleet could lead to reputational damage and have a significant impact on residents.

3.4 A trial of an e-HGV was held in May 2024 which revealed that the technology had achieved a level where it could adequately perform standard frontline collections comparable with standard fuel vehicles. Performance of the eHGV included being deployed on WODC's most challenging collection day and completing the rounds with a 30% charge remaining. Collections were completed by the trial vehicle across the trial week and performed well on each collection day.

3.5 Prior to the decision paper in October 2024 which agreed a budget envelope of £3.089m, a Member/Officer Steering Group met in July 2024 and determined that the following vehicles are due for renewal.

3.5.1 4 x Food waste vehicles 7.5te and retain one of the existing fleet as a spare.

3.5.2 1 x 7.5te vehicle with bin lift for ultra narrow access collections.

3.5.3 2 x 26te vehicles used across both refuse and garden waste collections.

3.5.4 3 x electric supervisor vans.

3.5.5 The following table shows the anticipated cost of the replacement at that time.

3.6 *Table 2: October 2024 Budget envelope*

Item Description	No fo Vehicles	Purchase Cost	Total Cost
7.5te Ultra Narrow Collection Standard Fuel Vehicle	1	£133,300	£133,300
Supervisor Van Electric	3	£41,300	£123,900
			£257,200
Large HGV (26te)	2	TBC	£2,787,000
Up to 4 food waste vehicles	4	TBC	
Electric charging infrastructure		£45,000	£45,000
			£2,832,000
Budget Envelope			**£3,089,200**

3.7 The ultra-narrow and supervisor vans were purchased in February and March 2025 and charging infrastructure was also installed at Downs Road depot. The remaining unspent funding totalling £2.2m was slipped into the 2025/26 capital programme.

3.8 Food waste vehicles were identified as a priority to be replaced. It is proposed that the vehicles are purchased, rather than hired, at an estimated cost, ranging between £600,000 and £1.32m depending on the fuel type of the vehicle.

3.9 Current lead times for both standard fuel and electric vehicles is up to18 months, meaning that the vehicles are unlikely to be operational until Spring / Summer 2027

3.10 It is advised at the current time to delay the purchase of large e-HGV's until 2nd generation electric vehicles are available, potentially 2026, to take advantage of increased reliability and efficiency that the new technology will bring.

4. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The Wider Fleet: There is an active review of the whole of the WODC fleet currently underway, funding for the mechanical sweepers has already been allocated (subject to a further decision) and the wider review is planned to be completed in time to be included with the budget setting process for 2026-27.

4.2 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is on the horizon and, should it run to Central Governments current timetable, the outcome of the Oxfordshire proposals will be known before the vehicles are delivered but after they have been ordered. As waste is currently a two-tier system within Oxfordshire, the change to a unitary will be significant and could lead to changes in the services offer, which will have a knock-on impact on the fleet requirement.

4.3 These potential changes, in conjunction with Partnership Working addressed below, will have a significant impact on the demand placed upon the waste service in a relatively short time frame. The type and number of vehicles purchased as part of this decision should ensure that the service can continue to be operated and be able to flex as a result of the anticipated changes.

4.4 In July 2025 the Waste and Environmental Services Programme (WESP) completed a business case that identifies significant opportunities for working in partnership, between Oxfordshire County Council and all Oxfordshire districts, over the next 10 years.

4.5 If approved, WESP will deliver waste and environmental services in a co-ordinated and integrated way across the county to deliver improvements in operational performance; in environmental sustainability and biodiversity; and substantial savings. The proposals will work in tandem with Local Government Reorganisation, whichever model is chosen.

4.6 The fleet requirement forms a significant part of the business case and will deliver waste services across the county to up to circa 320,000 properties. This represents an estimated potential value of up to £60m in vehicles, the majority of which are standard fuel, and a variety of ages.

4.7 Vehicle procurements by any partner authority should be considerate of the principals of the business case to ensure that the service is future-proof and vehicles procured by individual Councils do not become obsolete if different service models are chosen.

4.8 The introduction of Simpler Recycling Legislation states that by the 31st of March 2026 all local authorities in England are to collect food separately, and on a weekly basis. This mitigates the risk of procured vehicles becoming obsolete if LGR or WESP dictates a different service model.

5. DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO PROCURE

5.1 In October 2024 the Executive was asked to approve the delegation of authority for the purchase or lease of up to 2 full size HGV's and up to 4 food waste vehicles, including necessary infrastructure, and for the cost not to exceed £2.8m (including a procurement contingency and estimated cost of borrowing).

5.2 The Food waste collection service has already been identified as the service most at risk of service failure due to ageing, unreliable vehicles.

5.3 The table below shows the indicative capital cost of purchasing one Food waste collection vehicle and the associated revenue costs with operating each fuel type.

5.4 *Table 3: Anticipated Costs*

Cost Category	Option 2: Diesel	Option 3: Electric
Purchase price	£ 140,000.00	£ 330,000.00
Residual value*	£ 7,500.00	£ 10,000.00
Revenue Costs – 7 Year Life Span		
Borrowing Costs	£ 49,000.00	£ 119,000.00
Fuel	£ 40,290.25	£ 24,500.00
Annual Maintenance	£ 168,000.00	£ 87,500.00
Total Ownership Costs	**£ 389,790.25**	**£ 551,000.00**

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 Option One: Do Nothing:

6.1.1 Current food waste fleet could remain in service and not be replaced, avoiding the investment cost. This would avoid the immediate financial investment and avoids a procurement process.

6.1.2 The fleet would continue to age, leading to a higher risk of breakdown which could result in a reduction in service levels. Whilst the investment cost is avoided, it is likely that there would be a resulting revenue budget pressure as the fleet continue to incur material repair and maintenance costs.

6.1.3 To do nothing delays further the transition towards becoming a carbon-neutral authority.

6.1.4 This is not an optimal option due to the age and the condition of the fleet which would likely require the additional hire of replacement vehicles in the event of failure.

6.2 Option Two: Replace with standard (diesel) fuelled vehicles

6.2.1 The investment required for this type of vehicle is significantly less than electric counterparts.

6.2.2 New vehicles would deliver reductions in emissions in comparison to the current vehicles and perhaps offer the best financial option.

6.2.3 The vehicles would remain familiar to crew and maintenance teams.

6.2.4 This option gives WODC flexibility, minimising the chances of disparity with the wider transformational objectives (WESP).

6.2.5 Whilst it does not deliver the maximum carbon benefits, it could be used as a method of transition to enable WODC to make the step towards becoming carbon neutral until such time that the investment cost has reduced as the technology improves with 2nd generation electric vehicles becoming operational.

6.2.6 This option would allow for a proportion of the budget envelope to be retained in order to be used once the current fleet review has been completed or in the event of a failure of another vehicle within the fleet without incurring further borrowing costs.

6.2.7 Whilst this option allows WODC to maintain flexibility for an uncertain future, aligns with ideology of other Oxfordshire districts and is the most financially beneficial option, it does not meet strategic climate objectives.

6.3 Option Three: Replace with electric vehicles.

6.3.1 The trial of the e-HGV waste vehicle demonstrated that these are operationally reliable given the length of rounds and the weight collected. These vehicles have zero tailpipe emissions and are planned to be charged using at The Council's depot in Witney, thereby supporting climate targets.

6.3.2 Procuring electric food waste vehicles would mean that the vehicles would be the larger 12te version, rather than the standard 7.5te principally as a 7.5te electric version is not available. The larger electric food waste vehicles have additional capacity and can accommodate larger rounds without needing to tip as frequently, this adds additional resilience to the waste service to accommodate housing growth and potentially increased rates of food waste recycling.

6.3.3 Electric vehicles wear tyres quicker than standard fuel vehicles due to increased weight as a result of the battery, however electric vehicles generally benefit from lower maintenance costs as they have less mechanical components. Electric vehicles can be more expensive to insure so there may be a net increase in revenue costs.

6.3.4 There is a good level of confidence in the performance and longevity of batteries used in the proposed electric vehicles, this is based on available evidence from local authorities that are already using these vehicles. However, as the vehicles are first generation and there is not 7 years of evidence of good battery life in equivalent vehicles, it is important

to record the risk that batteries may not last the full 7 years, but often manufacturers will offer a guarantee to mitigate this.

6.3.5 This option is the most expensive (see table 4 below), with electric vehicles requiring the largest capital investment of all three options but does offer greater flexibility as a result of the increased capacity.

6.3.6 Other Oxfordshire authorities have decided not to pursue large electric waste vehicles or the necessary charging infrastructure at this current time. This option may lead to disparity with future transformational and fleet objectives.

6.3.7 This option delivers core replacement whilst supporting climate goals which are strategic aims of WODC.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 **Option One**: Do nothing, does not provide a solution.

7.2 **Option Two**: Replace with standard (diesel) fuelled vehicles, provides the most cost-effective option as purchase prices of vehicles are lower than their electric counterparts. The use of newer vehicles will also help WODC transition to a greener fleet by reducing emissions and providing time for newer technology to become available. However, this option does not meet The Council's strategic climate targets.

7.3 **Option Three**: Replace with electric vehicles, provides the highest cost option as purchase prices of electric vehicles are higher than standard counterparts. This option does generate the largest environmental benefit and fully aligns with the strategic objective of becoming carbon-neutral by 2030.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Following the decision taken in October 2024, which approved a capital budget of £3.09m to be spent on replacement vehicles, £2.2m remains available to be spent on replacing up to 4 food waste vehicles and 2 HGV's.

8.2 The table below shows the anticipated capital costs and funding associated with each option identified within Section 6;

8.3 *Table 4 Anticipated Capital Cost of Options Two and Three*

Option	Option 2 Standard Fuel replacement	Option 3 Electric Replacement
4 Vehicles	£560,000	£1,320,000
10 % Procurement Contingency	£56,000	£132,000
Anticipated Capital Cost	£616,000	£1,452,000
Funding Available	£2,221,226	£2,221,226
Variance	£1,605,226	£769,226

8.4 Option 2, purchasing standard fuel vehicles, is £836,000 cheaper than Option 3.

8.5 Because of the lengthy lead times, should a vehicle fail, it is likely that a replacement would have to be hired in the short term until such time delivery of the new vehicle is taken. The table below anticipates the additional revenue costs that could arise.

8.6 Table 5 Indicative Hire Costs

Weekly Hire Rate	No of Vehicles	Vehicle Size	Annual Hire Cost	18 month hire cost
£ 1,250	2	Large HGV	£ 130,000	£ 173,333
£ 900	4	Small HGV	£ 187,200	£ 249,600
		Anticipated Hire Costs	**£ 317,200**	**£ 422,933**

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Procurement of the vehicles will be undertaken by Ubico on the Council's behalf following a standard procurement process.

9.2 Framework T&C's will be followed to ensure procurement compliance.

9.3 Ubico will ensure that the procurement of new vehicles will not breach their Operators Licence.

10. RISK ASSESSMENT

10.1 The risks identified with each of the options are included within Section 6 above.

10.2 The financial risks identified are included within Section 8 above.

10.3 Since the prioritisation exercise that identified that food waste vehicles were reaching the end of their useful life, an assessment of the remainder of the fleet is underway in partnership with WODC's waste contractor, Ubico. The initial findings of this exercise have identified that there are further vehicles that present a significant risk to service delivery as they are becoming more unreliable and are incurring increasing maintenance and repair costs. The findings of this review will be presented in a future separate decision paper.

11. EQUALITIES IMPACT

11.1 Not applicable

12. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The Sustainability impact tool accompanies the report as Annexe A

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:

- Annexe A – Sustainability Impact Assessment Tool

13.2 These documents will be available for inspection online at www.westoxon.gov.uk or by contacting democratic services democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting.

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