

Report on WODC Recycling Measurement and Stream Performance

This report details the findings and performance data following the Committee's inquiry into how recycling is measured, calculated, and communicated within the district.

- 1. What steps could be taken to improve communication with the service users regarding recycling. There was a useful pdf document on the Council website, which could be presented differently.**
 - a. While the comprehensive instructional document exists on the Council website, alternative formats are being considered to improve user engagement. Feedback and suggestions are welcomed.
- 2. Despite high performance in national benchmarking, local recycling rates have remained static. As this was the case could improvements be investigated?**
 - a. To address this, the Oxfordshire WES Programme is investigating improvements centred on circular economy principles, focusing on preventing waste at the source and maximising reuse. Performance is also expected to be influenced by external nationwide factors such as Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) and Deposit Return Schemes (DRS).
- 3. It would be useful if measurements could be separated for garden and general waste in order to get a truer picture of performance trends.**
 - a. Total municipal waste has seen a reduction of 5.19%, falling to 34,150.61 tonnes. This was primarily driven by a 4.63% decrease in household waste and a 14.12% drop in non-household waste.
 - b. Waste Management Methods Summary:
 - i. Recovery: 43.69% (largest stream by tonnage, primarily processed at Ardley ERF).
 - ii. Composted: 32.21%.
 - iii. Recycled: 23.73%.
 - iv. Landfilled: 0.37%
 - v. The combined recycling, composting, and reuse rate for this period was 55.94%, representing a decline from the 58.03% recorded in the previous year.
 - c. Detailed Recycling Stream Analysis: Individual material streams exhibited high volatility during the 2025-26 period.
 - i. Paper and Cardboard: Paper saw exceptional growth of 135.22%, while card increased by 15.99%.
 - ii. Plastics: Mixed plastics and HDPE grew by 24.71% and 55.98% respectively, though PET declined by 27.26%.

- iii. Glass and Metals: Mixed glass experienced a sharp decline of 38.34%. Steel and aluminium cans also saw significant drops, while "Other Scrap Metal" grew by over 586%.
- iv. Specialised Streams: Composite food and beverage cartons increased by 282.09%. Conversely, small domestic WEEE (electricals) fell by 100%.

4. With the falling garden waste rate had there been a noticeable increase in use of the local tip?

- a. Total composting tonnage declined by 13.14%. This was largely attributed to a 17.03% reduction in green garden waste, a trend driven by a dry summer rather than a shift to other disposal methods like the local tip.

5. What was the verification process for plastic recycling.

- a. The process involves a multi-layered system to ensure material meets re-processor specifications:
 - i. Pre-sort: Manual removal of non-recyclables and contaminants.
 - ii. Mechanical Separation: Using trommel screens and ballistic separators to divide items by size and shape.
 - iii. Optical Sorting: Utilizing near-infrared (NIR) spectroscopy to identify and verify specific resin types like PET and HDPE.
 - iv. Manual Inspection: A final human quality check to remove incorrectly sorted items.
 - v. Quality Assurance: Systematic sampling and testing of bales to meet Environmental Permitting Regulations.

6. The Committee discussed the merits of a separate Task and Finish Group for this area of Waste. It was noted that such work could be included in an expanded remit for the existing Waste Transformation Task and Finish Group. The Committee expressed a preference for expansion of the existing remit of the current Group."

- a. The Environmental Services & Waste team will provide information to whichever forum is preferred.