

Government Response to the second consultation – Consistency in household and business recycling in England. Implications for Stroud District Council

Introduction

The long-awaited government announcement on Consistency, now Simpler Recycling, highlighted that councils will retain the freedom to decide how to collect recycling and to set local garden waste fees. Broadly the wider response is welcomed, allowing SDC to continue to collect waste and recycling in the current manner. The legislation will though, compel some change to operations in the future.

Lots of detail remains outstanding including the funding model for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). However, the significant announcements alongside associated dates are summarised below.

Collection of Dry Recyclable Waste Streams by 31st March 2026:

SDC already fully meet the requirements to collect the recyclable materials defined. An exemption is being proposed to allow dry recyclables to be collected together. This essentially permits SDC to continue twin-streaming, allowing the re-procurement of our aged recycling fleet immediately. Something we had been holding off, pending this statement.

Collection of Recyclable Plastic Film by 31st March 2027:

This was anticipated. SDC did volunteer to take part in the government funded FlexCollect trials, but a lack of space to separate material at our Gossington Depot thwarted participation. The government will support local authorities to prepare, but any funding detail is still to be confirmed.

We're likely to consider two options to meet the future requirements:

- 1) Include flexibles in the dry recycling mix (green wheelie bin) – this will be governed by both cost and the ability of Material Recovery Facility (MRF) technology, to separate it from the other materials.
- 2) The second option was touted for the FlexCollect trial. Similar to option 1, the green wheelie bin would be used, but utilising a plastic 'recovery' sack for all flexibles/film. This would allow easier separation at the MRF, but comes with the obvious logistical challenge of distributing sacks and the slightly unpalatable use of single use plastic bags.

Collection of Food Waste by 31st March 2026:

SDC already fully meet the requirements. No transitional funding for food waste collection will be available retrospectively. Government are still considering the use of caddy liners, so some relatively small change may still be required.

Collection of Garden Waste by 31st March 2026:

Waste collection authorities will be mandated to collect garden waste upon instruction from residents. A fee can be charged, reflecting current SDC practice.

SDC will need to consider broadening collections to all residents, including those currently excluded because that they can't be served by a large RCV. Further statutory guidance will assist our decision making.

Should we move forward on this basis, we will further explore the use of paper sacks, where smaller vehicles are required. Whether a case can be made for new burdens funding given this context is unclear, but it seems unlikely. Instead, with no fee cap to be introduced, SDC will have the ability to ensure fees cover the garden waste service costs.

Residual Waste Collection Frequency

The government will further consult on a statutory requirement for councils to collect residual waste every fortnight.

Whilst this doesn't have any immediate impact, it does limit the potential for future kerbside collection change. For example SDC would be unable to leverage any cost reduction from less frequent residual collections, to invest in enhanced recycling collections.