

## Waste Management Team Annual Report, 2024-25

## Foreword to the Waste Management Annual Team Report *(by Cllr Emma Morley)*

Welcome to our annual review of the work of our Waste Management Team.

Every day, in any weather, our household waste and recycling crews and street cleansing crews are out on the streets of the borough, serving local residents, businesses and visitors, and working hard to keep Gravesham clean and free from litter and fly tipping.

It can be a thankless task.

However, we are fortunate that our teams are all working directly for this Council - we do not award any of our work to sub-contractors - meaning we have excellent working relationships with them, and we are able to respond swiftly and with flexibility to any issues that do arise.

A service of this size, covering the area it does, is bound to attract some complaints, but I am happy to say we receive just as many, if not more, compliments, and often hear of our crews going out of their way to support the more vulnerable members of our community. It is something I am proud of and thank them for.

I would also like to thank our more than 700 Street Champions, who give their time freely to support our crews by litter-picking and reporting any issues in their own local area. Without them, the borough would see far more litter on its streets. Their support is invaluable.

The past year has seen the establishment and growth of our ground-breaking small electricals recycling scheme.

From small beginnings, this has grown rapidly and at last count 38,400 items equating to 34.1 tonnes of material have been collected and recycled. Thank you to all who make use of it.

And working with other teams from across the Council and alongside partners such as Kent Police, we have also delivered on our *Cleaner, Safer, Streets* initiative, aiming to make our urban areas more attractive places to spend time.

There is never a quiet day for this service, as this report highlights.

## Our Teams

### Waste Management

- **Waste and Recycling Team** - Responsible for collecting domestic refuse and recycling, food waste, garden waste and clinical waste.
- **Street Cleansing Team** - Responsible for litter picking, litter bin emptying, road sweeping and fly-tipping removal.

## Our Purpose

The Waste Management Team is responsible for delivering the Corporate Plan commitments below:

### Commitments

#OneBorough: a safe, clean and attractive living environment enhanced by a sustainable and increasingly energised local economy.

- **Cleaner environment:** create a greener Gravesham by encouraging household recycling and actively addressing contaminated land and noise, flood and oil pollution.
- **Attractive borough:** boost local civic pride through a comprehensive programme of street cleansing and environmental enhancements, underpinned by active enforcement of environmental crime.

### Performance Indicators

PI 6	% of household waste recycled
PI 7	Volume of residual waste per household (kg)
PI 8	% of cleanliness reports completed within 5 working days

## Our Key Priorities

- To provide an effective and efficient refuse and recycling service
- To deliver effective and efficient chargeable services including commercial waste and garden waste services
- To provide an effective and efficient cleansing service

## Completed Projects 2024-25

Officers have delivered several projects and service improvements during the financial year 2024-25, outlined below.

### Kerbside Glass Recycling

As part of 'Simpler Recycling,' the government will require local authorities to collect glass for recycling at the kerbside from all households (including flats) by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

The service was launched ahead of schedule in July 2024, alongside a comprehensive communications plan to make residents aware of the addition of glass collections to the kerbside recycling service.

Year-on-year, there has been a **5.2% increase** in glass collected for recycling in Gravesham with an **93.1% increase** in glass collected at the kerbside compared to prior to the service, when residents mistakenly put glass into their recycling bins or sacks.

Future work will include reviewing the ongoing viability of the glass bring-banks, as we now collect just 42.5% of the glass recycled in Gravesham via glass bring-banks compared to 68.6% in 2023-24.



## Commercial Waste Recycling



'Simpler Recycling' also required Gravesham Borough Council to offer a full recycling service to our commercial waste customers by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

Previously, our customers opted-in to receive paper & cardboard recycling collections. In February 2025 we introduced a commingled dry mixed recycling collection of paper, cardboard, plastics, glass and metal.

Currently, we have **20.2%** of our customers who receive a dry mixed recycling collection, up from 16.0% in January 2025.

Under the new regulations, separate food waste collections will also be required. A new separate food waste collection service is currently being launched to our commercial waste customers, meaning we can ensure that all businesses who use the Council's commercial waste service as meeting their legal obligations.

Looking ahead, we will promote our commercial waste services amongst Gravesham businesses and will re-assess our pricing structure to ensure that businesses are incentivised to engage with our full recycling service.

## "Recycle Your Electricals" Project

Work began in December 2022 to seek grant funding for enhanced small electrical recycling opportunities within the borough with grant funding of £22,418 awarded for our successful bid by Material Focus, the not-for-profit organisation leading the "Recycle Your Electricals" campaign.

The project joined other projects around the country, making it easier for 10 million UK residents to recycle their electricals. The Council is one of only two local authorities in Kent to provide permanent small electrical bring-banks.

The collection points mean that almost all residents can now easily recycle their small electricals within a one-mile radius of their homes, without the need to book a visit the Pepperhill Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC).

The small electricals recycling bank project was supported by a year-long awareness-raising campaign to highlight the growing issue of e-waste and the ways that such electricals can be recycled or re-used.

In the first 12-months of the campaign, **27,400 items** weighing in at **24.9 tonnes** were recycled via the bring-banks. Total small electricals recycled via Pepperhill HWRC and Gravesham BC's bring-banks increased by 29.7% during the project.

Our communications covering our small electricals project reached **92,000 social media accounts**; generated more than 1,000 likes; 166 shares; 6,500 views; 100 comments, and; **8,650 weblink 'clicks'** in total across our corporate social media platforms.

We are now working with the Gravesham Repair Café to signpost their service users to our recycling facility when items cannot be repaired, while simultaneously signposting users of the small electrical recycling bring-banks to use the Gravesham Repair Café services.

The small electricals recycling campaign has been nominated for three awards in 2025-26:

- LGC Awards 2025 (Environmental Services Category)
- Unlock Net Zero Awards 2025 (Engagement Campaign of the Year Category)
- Unlock Net Zero Awards 2025 (Project Innovation of the Year - Large-Scale Retrofit Category)



## HVO Fuel

The Council's Climate Strategy set a target of being operationally net zero by 2030.

Most of the Council's vehicle fleet has been running on diesel fuel, with the whole fleet of HGV vehicles being at the Euro 6 level. Euro 6 is a European Union directive that sets limits on the amount of pollutants that can be released from a vehicle's exhaust. The standards are intended to reduce harmful emissions such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide, particulate matter, and hydrocarbons. It is currently the industry standard for diesel powered vehicles. For awareness, the HGV's do around 3-5 miles per gallon, which is significantly less than the average diesel car (around 42mpg).

On average, the Council's current fleet uses about 320,000 litres of diesel per year and accounted for 22.4% of the authority's total greenhouse gas emissions 2023-24.



Officers prepared a successful business case to support the transition from diesel fuel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel as part of reducing the fleet's carbon emissions and the long-term plan for the Council's van and freighter vehicle fleet.

This transition was phased, with a 20/80 blended mix of fuels used initially to allow the workshop to monitor any unforeseen problems with the transition. From mid-March 2025, 100% HVO has been used to fuel our vehicle fleet.

The use of HVO fuel can reduce carbon emissions associated with the fleet by 90%. Based on initial estimates the move to HVO fuel could reduce the fleets emissions from 22.4% of the Council's emissions to an estimated **2.3%** (based on last year's outturn). This will be monitored regularly through the Council's climate reporting mechanism.

## Chewing Gum Task Force (Year 3)

After a successful bid by officers, Gravesham Borough Council was awarded £27,000 to remove the chewing gum that blights the streets in Gravesend town centre.



The Council was one of 54 across the country to have successfully applied to the Chewing Gum Task Force, now in its fourth year, for funds to clean gum off pavements and prevent it from being littered again.

Established by and run by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, the Chewing Gum Task Force Grant Scheme is open to Councils across the UK who wish to clean up gum in their local areas and invest in long-term behaviour change to prevent gum from being dropped in the first place. The Task Force is funded by major gum manufacturers including Mars Wrigley and Perfetti Van Melle, with an investment of up to £10 million spread over five years.

New cleansing equipment was purchased for the purpose of removing a piece of gum from paving in 3-5 seconds and bespoke communications assets provided by Behaviour Change can be seen below have been deployed across Gravesend Town Centre.



## Ongoing Projects

Officers have also embarked on delivering several other projects and service improvements commenced in the previous financial year to continue to be delivered and developed in the current financial year.

### Flats Recycling and Food Waste



Recycling and weekly food waste collections for flats will continue to be expanded in the coming year, providing a natural transition to the legal obligation for the Council to collect recycling and food waste from all flats by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, arising from the Environment Act 2021 and 'Simpler Recycling' reforms.

Currently, **63.8%** of communal blocks have dry mixed recycling and **18.3%** have food waste collections.

A project is underway in conjunction with the Council's Housing Team to begin to deliver recycling and food waste to Gravesham BC owned blocks without recycling. Concurrently, managing agents for private blocks of flats in the borough have been contacted regarding the new requirements, inviting them to engage with us to audit bin store areas, procure bins, and prepare letter, leaflet and bin sticker packages to engage residents.

### Domestic Collection Round Re-Routing

In the past year, the Waste Management Team have re-designed and optimised the domestic waste collection routes by adding FleetRoute to our Bartec Collective waste management system.

By adding route optimisation to our existing Collective system, the team has been able to further improve the reliability and efficiency of services delivered to meet the growing demand on waste collection services in the borough. The new optimisation functions have been used to successfully create efficient collection routes for our domestic waste operations.



Vehicle speeds, participation rates, assisted collections and single / double-sided collection decisions will always be up-to-date so no matter how fast the service changes, FleetRoute will help the team to continually model the best collection routes will be updated and refined to incorporate new housing developments as they are built and become occupied.

The new collection rounds will be implemented later this year and will involve:

- Rescheduling the entire refuse and recycling service - This change will lead to many residents having their collection day changed but will make the service more efficient and effective for now, and for the future. The aim is to schedule the service so collections happen in areas which will reduce mileage and driving downtime.
- Moving away from co-collecting residual/recycling and food on pod vehicles - The service has started to use separate vehicles for each waste stream, and this will continue to be phased in between now and September 2025.

The above implementation will be supported by a comprehensive resident engagement campaign to ensure borough-wide awareness of the collection changes.

### Recycling Contamination Reduction Campaign

Recycling contamination is a huge national issue, which can cause lorry loads of recycling to be rejected which is costly to taxpayers, harmful to the environment, and wastes the efforts of neighbouring properties. Recycling contamination peaked at 21% objectionable material contained within the recycling collected in Gravesham in Quarter 4 of 2022-23.

Having embarked on a campaign of crew training, stickering & rejecting contaminated recycling bins alongside a consistent education campaign including social media posts, a video, letters, leaflets and officer visits in recent years, we are continuing to improve recycling participation and minimise recycling contamination.



Encouragingly, the tonnage of recycling rejected due to contamination **decreased by 66.1%** in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24 because of the targeted communications campaign facilitated by our digital systems and consistent messaging to residents.

### Excess Waste and Waste Minimisation Project



The Council continues to proactively minimise residual waste and increase recycling by providing as many recycling services and opportunities as possible, and by ensuring residents are kept informed about the services available.

We embarked on a campaign of crew training, bin tagging, social media posts and automated letters to residents presenting additional refuse sacks which resulted in a 93.6% reduction in instances of excess waste sacks reported by crews and an average **reduction of 43.2 kilograms** of refuse per household between 2021-22 and 2024-25, a **reduction of 8.9%**.

### Community Engagement

In 2024-25, Officers were invited to speak at six venues, including schools, Scout Groups and community meetings, engaging with 409 residents and students about waste & recycling and litter. The attendees were very engaged with the subject matter and Officers were asked many questions about waste and recycling, particularly regarding what happens to it once it has been collected from households.

Officers also attended the Riverside Festival in July 2024 to promote home composting and electricals recycling.



### Street Champions Initiative

Our Street Champions scheme grew to **685 active volunteers** across the borough who pledged to 'adopt' **403** streets, parks and alleyways. The Street Champions do more than litter picking - they act as our eyes and ears; reporting fly-tipping, graffiti and other problems to us. Some volunteers even suggest locations for new litter bins and educational signage.

In 2024-25, our Street Champions collected **4,368** sacks of litter (**364** per month) and went on **2,252** litter picks (**188** per month).

Since the launch of the initiative, in 2021-22, Street Champions have collected **15,762** sacks of litter and have been on **7,911** litter picks.

This is a phenomenal achievement and demonstrates a fantastic commitment from residents to keep their local environment free from litter.

Further promotion of the work done by Street Champions to improve the local environment in collaboration with the Council is planned.



### 'Cleaner, Safer Streets' Campaign

*'Together - Creating Cleaner, Safer Streets'* is a campaign led by Gravesham Council, working together with the community and other agencies to:

- Galvanise Gravesham's civic pride
- Create 1,000 Street Champions - including residents and businesses across the borough
- Develop a programme of out-reach and engagement to raise awareness
- Support 'Days of Action' throughout 2024/25
- Highlight bad behaviours to promote positive change
- Increase awareness of the Council's services, projects and initiatives
- Grow our commercial waste customer base



This campaign has run alongside the Council's everyday activity of street cleaning, community safety, environmental controls, housing services and waste management.

The Council has been working together with the community, groups, businesses and stakeholders to counteract unfounded negative perceptions of the town and borough and highlight Gravesham - as a great place to live, work, visit and invest.

In the first nine-months of the campaign, **285** sacks of litter were collected on "Days of Action" and **74** fly-tipped items were identified and removed. The number of Street Champions has increased by **100** during the campaign so far.

Signage has been produced and will be put up across the borough at shopping parades, in Gravesend Town Centre and outside schools in the coming months to encourage pride in the borough and stewardship of the local environment.



## Watch This Space - Projects for 2025-26

Officers have several projects and service improvements planned for the upcoming financial year, some of which are outlined below.

### Street Cleansing Round Re-Routing



In the coming financial year, the Waste Management Team will seek to re-design and optimise our street cleansing schedules so that the routes reflect the new waste collection & recycling rounds.

By utilising FleetRoute alongside our Bartec Collective waste management system, we can modify the street cleansing schedules so that street sweeping, and litter picking can be undertaken in areas to reflect the new domestic waste collection rounds.

By adding route optimisation to our existing Collective system, the team will be able to further improve the reliability and efficiency of our street cleansing services.

### Commercial Clinical Waste Service

When we brought our domestic clinical waste service in-house in February 2024, we identified an opportunity to expand our service to offer collections to commercial customers, such as care homes, GP surgeries, medical practices and funeral homes.

The digital automation processes to deliver such a service commercially are already in place and so we will seek to conduct market research to assess the viability of expanding our additional commercial service to generate income to help further the Council's financial position.



## Complaints and Compliments

We really value the feedback we receive from residents. It's great to know what you think we do well, but also when we get things wrong so that we can look at how we can improve our services based on your experience. We know there will always be things that don't go to plan, and we welcome complaints as a learning opportunity.

Throughout 2024-25 we received **51** valid official complaints about our Waste Management Unit. To put that into context, we carry out **almost 4.3 million refuse & recycling collections per year**. Whilst we are sorry that we haven't always got things right first time; every complaint allows us to listen to residents; explain why we have made a particular decision, and; put things right but also understand how we can do things better next time.

Thank you to those who contacted us to tell us that they were unhappy with the service they had received, as it has helped us to continuously improve the service. Of these 51 valid complaints, all were resolved at Stage One of our complaints process. This compares to 62 valid complaints in 2023-24.



There were also several valuable lessons learned, and service improvements made from the complaints we received. For example, we have introduced improved crew training on the Bartec Collective in-cab system and have reviewed the assisted waste collection process in response to several complaints received from residents.

Compliments highlight areas of good practice and acknowledge the hard work and commitment of our staff. During the same period, we received **53** compliments.

For example, one compliment stated that the resident observed a member of our Street Cleansing Team working in the Saddington Street area '*...cleaning up leaves on his hands and knees on a very cold day*' and they '*wanted to pass on that he deserved recognition that he is doing a good job.*'

On a more personal level, one compliment read that, '*My son is almost two and every Wednesday for the past 4 months, he has rushed to the window whenever he hears the 'bin men' coming. He climbs up to watch the big truck and the men loading the rubbish into it and waves. Without fail, the men always make time to wave and smile at him, and it makes his day every time. I would just like to praise them for being so friendly and making a toddler's week every time.*'

Thank you to all residents who took the time to contact us to formally compliment a staff member or service.



## Appendix 1: Our Duties

The service carries out several statutory functions, on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council.

Statutory Duty	
Legal duty on local authorities to keep relevant highways and land clear of litter and refuse.	Environment Protection Act 1990, Part IV, Section 89
Meeting requirements of the Waste Framework Directive - household recycling target of 50%; duty to provide separate collection of paper, glass, metal and plastic by 2015; required to produce waste management plans.	Household Waste Recycling Act 2003
To arrange for the collection of household and commercial waste in its area.	Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 45
<p>Recyclable household waste must be collected separately from other household waste, for recycling or composting ('recyclable household waste' being defined in the amended EPA 1990 to reference specific recyclable waste streams).</p> <p>The Secretary of State ("SoS") will have the power to add further recyclable waste streams.</p> <p>Recyclable household waste must be collected as individual streams unless the exceptions in the new Section 45A(6) EPA 1990 apply. To rely on these exceptions, a WCA must provide a written assessment stating it considers that separate collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would not be technically or economically practicable; or</li> <li>• Has no significant environmental benefit</li> </ul> <p>In any case, dry recyclable waste streams must never be mixed with food or garden waste streams.</p> <p>Food waste collection must take place at least once a week.</p>	Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 45
For waste disposal authorities to arrange for the disposal of controlled waste collected by waste collection authorities.	Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 51

To keep land and highways clear of litter.	Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 89
Duty on local authorities to empty and maintain litter bins and to consult from time to time amongst themselves and with voluntary bodies on taking measures to abate litter.	Litter Act 1983

## Appendix 2: Key Data & Statistics for 2024-25

	Financial Year	% of Household Waste Recycled			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
PI 6	2024-25	43.8%	42.7%	42.4%	41.6%
	2023-24	41.4%	40.5%	39.8%	40.0%
PI 8 (2019-23)	2022-23	44.1%	42.5%	42.4%	40.4%
	2021-22	44.3%	44.8%	43.3%	42.4%
	2020-21	45.7%	45.3%	44.5%	43.6%
	2019-20	44.3%	44.2%	43.0%	42.6%
	2018-19	45.8%	43.2%	42.0%	42.2%
	2017-18	37.4%	41.2%	41.5%	40.7%
	2016-17	35.3%	35.4%	35.0%	34.6%
	2015-16	35.4%	35.1%	35.0%	34.5%
	2014-15	26.0%	32.6%	34.1%	34.3%

	Financial Year	Volume of Residual Waste per Household (Kg)			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
PI 7	2024-25	118.0	230.2	339.6	444.2
	2023-24	123.2	239.9	359.1	475.5
PI 9 (2019-23)	2022-23	120.7	237.6	348.3	481.6
	2021-22	125.1	250.4	374.5	487.9
	2020-21	125.1	240.0	353.0	477.0
	2019-20	108.0	212.7	320.0	427.6
	2018-19	108.3	213.4	322.8	431.6
	2017-18	119.0	219.4	320.2	428.3
	2016-17	130.2	257.2	380.6	510.2
	2015-16	125.6	246.9	367.6	494.6
	2014-15	150.0	261.5	378.2	499.0

PI 8	% of Cleanliness Reports Completed Within Five Working Days			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2024-25	90.0%	67.0%	95.7%	98.0%
2023-24	N/A	N/A	N/A	84.1%