Surrey Environment Partnership
YOUR COUNCILS WORKING TOGETHER

Creating a greener, cleaner Surrey

SURREY ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP REVIEW
APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020

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What is the Surrey Environment Partnership?

The Surrey Environment Partnership (SEP) consists of the county's 11 district and borough councils and the county council. It was originally formed in 2009 as the Surrey Waste Partnership aiming to overcome the challenges of two-tier service delivery and manage Surrey's waste in the most efficient, effective, economical and sustainable way possible.

In April 2019, the partnership name was changed to reflect a growing remit and desire to tackle wider environmental issues in Surrey.

What are we trying to achieve?

The partnership is currently working towards the aims of three strategies which have been developed over the past 10 years:

Increase recycling and reduce the amount of waste produced, the amount of waste sent to landfill and the cost of **waste management**.

Reduce the amount of **fly-tipping** in Surrey.

Reduce the use of **single-use plastics** (SUP) through our roles as employers, service providers and as advocates across the county.

To deliver SEP's joint strategies and achieve its challenging aims, action is required both at the individual partner level and collectively via countywide, centrally funded initiatives.

This report reviews the programme of countywide initiatives that were coordinated and funded by SEP from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. This activity was developed in consultation with officers and members from all partner authorities.

The report also includes details of work on climate change which was added to the programme during the year. Additionally the report outlines SEP's initial response to the coronavirus pandemic. Whilst this was not part of the original work programme for 2019-20 and is still ongoing, the pandemic started during the year under review and the response is an excellent illustration of the value of working in partnership.

Our response to coronavirus

The impact of coronavirus on the UK and the rest of the world has been unprecedented. Every aspect of daily life has been affected including the waste and recycling that is produced and how it is collected and disposed of. This needed an unprecedented response and the Surrey Environment Partnership proved to be the ideal vehicle to ensure the county's services continued to operate and manage huge increases in waste volumes.

- Compared to a 2020 pre-lockdown baseline, an additional 12,686 tonnes of waste and recycling was collected from 23 March to the end of May, 17% more than we would have expected to collect during that period.

- Core services have been maintained throughout this period.

The following sections outline the work that has enabled this to be achieved, much of which will continue for the duration of the pandemic.

Contingency planning

Being an established, well-functioning partnership with an officer team already working on its behalf, meant that SEP was in a good position to respond quickly to the emerging situation. A number of staff in the Joint Waste Solutions (JWS) team were immediately diverted to coronavirus response work including contingency planning.

A dedicated coronavirus email group was established so officers across the 12 partnership authorities could communicate, share intelligence and support each other on a daily basis. This was followed by JWS facilitating weekly online meetings where contingency planning could be discussed in more detail.

Specific actions and outcomes included:

- A service tracker spreadsheet showing the status of all services across the county that is updated and circulated weekly.
- Lobbying to ensure waste staff working on collection and disposal operations were included on key workers lists.
- Monitoring and disseminating advice from the Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum and the Health and Safety Executive on how to apply social distancing measures when carrying out waste collections.
- Feedback to Defra and the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee with regard to contingency planning, service priorities, levels of service and sickness rates.
- Redeployment of staff from Surrey's waste disposal contractor Suez, to help support Epsom and Ewell's garden waste collections, and to help clear waste from Reigate and Banstead's bring sites whilst the Community Recycling Centres (CRCs) were closed.
- Discussion and planning before the reopening of the CRCs to ensure sufficient traffic management would be in place to minimise disruption to collection service vehicles.
- Risk assessments and contingency planning for the potential impact of the test, track and trace system on collection crews and depots.

Communications

Communications was a critical requirement and the JWS team has undertaken another significant programme of coronavirus related communications work for the partnership including creating two new campaigns.

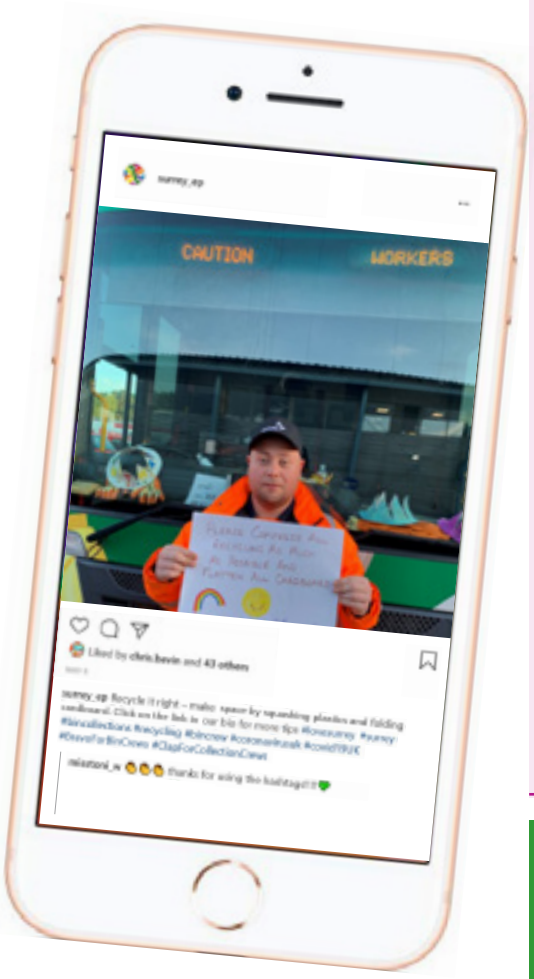
The first campaign was developed in mid-March when public health guidance was issued to advise residents how to deal with their waste if self-isolating.

When the work from home guidance was issued and it was clear waste volumes were going to increase, a second campaign was developed to highlight how residents could help to take pressure off waste and recycling collection services. This was further developed and messages expanded as schools and CRCs closed and the full lockdown came into place.

The campaign was later refreshed and updated to help residents to engage with the increasing number of messages. This consolidated the messages into six ways that residents can help.

Activity included:

- Campaign messages shared countywide through SEP's website and social media channels, magazine advertising and targeted digital advertising on websites, Youtube, Spotify, Google search results and Gmail.
- Media releases issued and radio interviews arranged with BBC Surrey and Brooklands Radio.
- Toolkits for the campaigns created and shared with all partners. These included copy for use on websites and in newsletters, social media posts, artwork, images and films. The toolkits continue to be updated regularly with new content and the latest tonnage figures.



Additional communications and engagement work included:

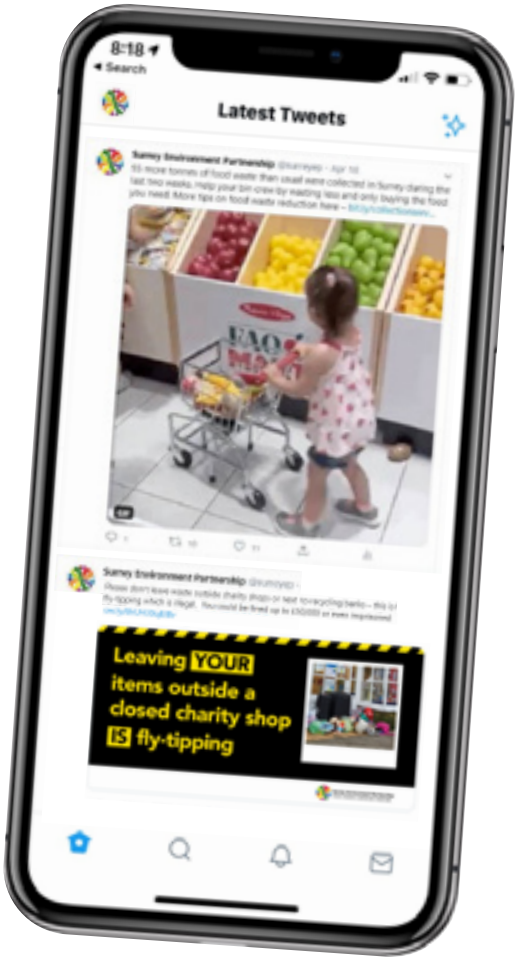
- The Surrey Recycles search tool and app updated to reflect any service changes including the closure and partial reopening of the CRC network.
- Two special coronavirus issues of the Environment Matters newsletter produced and distributed to all members in SEP's partner authorities. The aim was to ensure members were aware of how SEP was responding to the pandemic and ask them to help share the messages with residents.
- A half-price sale of compost bins during the late May bank holiday to encourage more residents to start composting their garden waste at home.
- The JWS team representing the partnership on the Multi-agency Information Group (MIG) which coordinates countywide communications during a major incident.

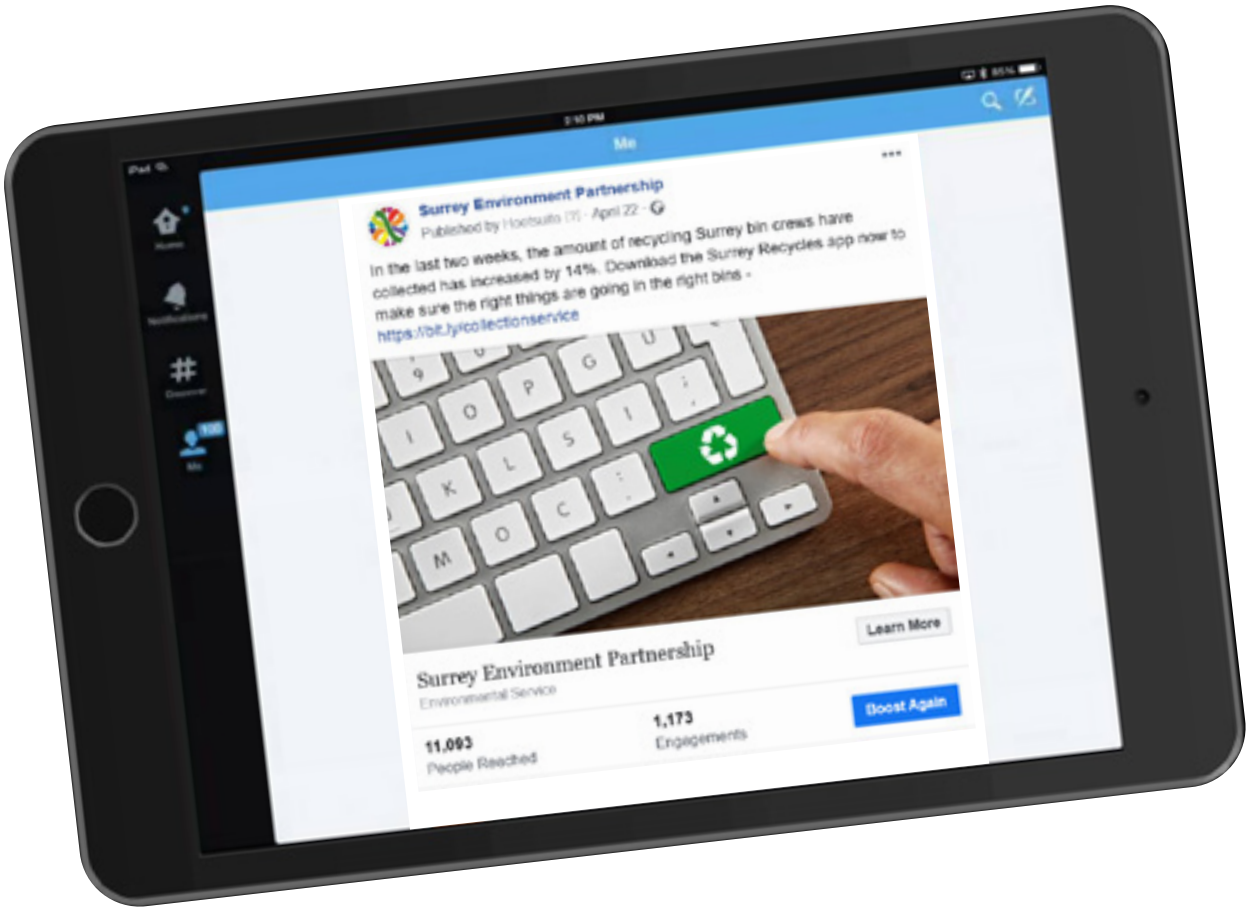
It was clear that waste volumes were going to increase so a campaign was developed to highlight how residents could help.

Results to date

From mid-March to end of May:

- Posts on SEP's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels were seen 865,000 times.
- There were 27,500 shares, retweets, likes, comments and replies to posts.
- Our films were viewed 413,000 times on YouTube and social media.
- Pages on the SEP website were viewed 166,420 times, a 180% increase from the same period in 2019.
- There were 78,095 new visitors to the SEP website.
- Digital adverts were see 3.6m times.
- There were 50,589 searches on the Surrey Recycles search tool and app.





Remember To Always
Wash Your Hands After
Touching Your Bin...
We Collect Almost
2000 A Day!
#SurreyEp

Performance

It quickly became apparent that we needed to know the impact that the lockdown was having on waste and recycling volumes. With many people working at home or furloughed and businesses and schools closed, waste was now being diverted to household collections.

To address this, the JWS team started the production of weekly performance reports to show how waste and recycling tonnage was changing.

The reports show a rolling two-week period comparing the increase in tonnages to an average two-week period before lockdown.

The table below shows the total amount of additional material that was collected from 23 March to the end of May, compared to a pre-lockdown baseline.

	Increase (tonnes)	Increase (percentage)
Dry mixed recycling	4,031	19%
Garden waste	3,520	26%
Food waste	750	10%
Residual waste	4,384	13%
Total waste and recycling	12,686	17%

Garden waste:

up by

26%

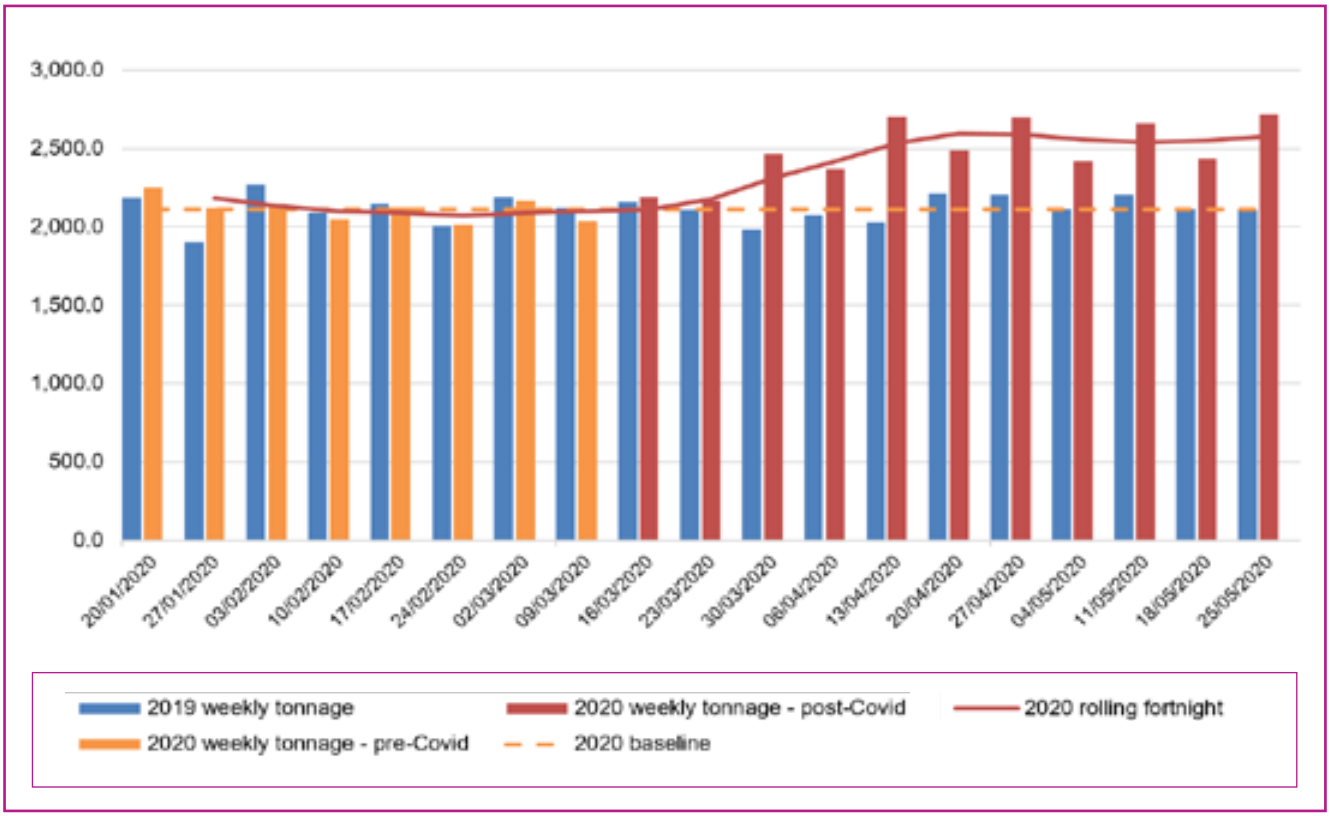
This unprecedented pandemic and move to lockdown living has led to some rapid changes in how waste and recycling is produced in homes.

The closure of workplaces and schools has shifted commercial waste into the household waste system and people have adjusted to a lifestyle based at home.

The chart below shows that the amount of dry mixed recycling collected went up by almost a fifth, likely driven by the increase in packaging from online shopping as well as food packaging and bottles from eating and drinking at home.

The data has been analysed weekly and will continue to guide us going forward as we start to see whether the behaviours and ways of life adopted during lockdown continue in the long term.

Dry mixed recycling



Baseline tonnage is the average weekly tonnage for the weeks when there was a collection over the eight-week period from Monday 20 January to Friday 13 March.

Activity and achievements

Managing Surrey's waste

When the partnership was established, Surrey authorities' collective recycling rate was ranked as the 13th highest of England's 31 two-tier authorities (45.7%) according to statistics published by Defra. According to the latest statistics, published in December 2019, Surrey was ranked joint fourth highest of England's 31 two-tier authorities for recycling in 2018-19, with a recycling rate of 55.3%.

Although this was a fall of one place in the national rankings since the previous year, the recycling rate increased in 2018-19 by 0.5 percentage points. The Defra publication also indicated that the amount of waste collected per person has continued to fall for the fifth successive year, and that Surrey is on track to meet its target to be in the top quartile of English authorities for waste collected per person by 2020. During the year, 10.8% of Surrey's waste went to landfill.

This annual Defra report shows us how waste and recycling in Surrey compares with the rest of the country and covers the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. However, more recent figures covering the year to September 2019 reveal that Surrey's recycling rate is now at around 56.3%. These figures also show that Surrey councils managed around 507,000 tonnes of waste and recycling, including around 285,000 tonnes of recycling. Surrey residents recycled close to 39,500 tonnes of food waste, up from around 38,500 tonnes in the previous year. The proportion of Surrey's waste being sent to landfill is now lower, at around 6.6%, with over 35% of Surrey's household waste now being sent to energy recovery facilities.

In recent years there have been some significant challenges nationally with the markets for the UK's dry mixed recycling, particularly those in the far east, and this continued to be the case this year. This has had an impact in Surrey, and it has been a key factor in determining the work we need to do to improve the quality as well as the quantity of the recycling collected across the partnership.

Surrey recycling:

2019

285,000

tonnes

Reducing waste at its source

The best way to manage waste is to prevent it occurring in the first place. Three major partnership initiatives delivered this year were designed to help residents avoid generating waste which then needs to be collected and disposed of.

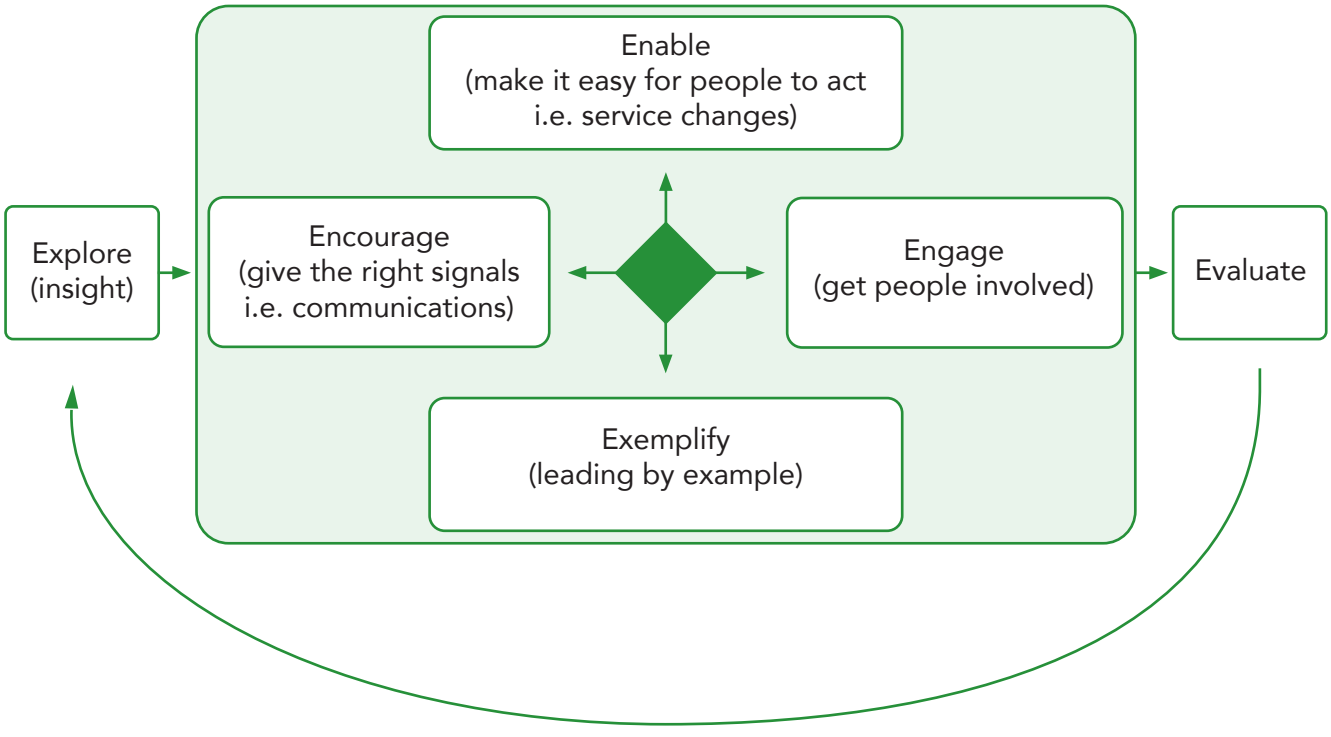
For food waste reduction this involved a behaviour change campaign to persuade residents to buy and waste less food as well as a scheme that offers a discount on food waste digesters. A similar scheme for compost bins is also available and was promoted during the year and through a garden waste campaign which also aimed to remind existing composters to keep composting. The third initiative encourages new and expectant parents to try using real nappies instead of disposables.

The best way to manage waste is to prevent it occurring in the first place.

Each SEP campaign is planned using the 6Es model of behaviour change which takes into account the different ways to influence behaviour – enabling, encouraging, engaging and exemplifying. It also includes an 'explore' stage to gather insight to inform the actions to be taken and an 'evaluate' stage to measure success and help shape future plans.

The type of evaluation is determined by the campaign spend. For higher budget campaigns independent research is commissioned which gives us an insight into how residents responded to the campaign and if it impacted their behaviour. Smaller budget campaigns are predominantly delivered through digital channels so the evaluation assesses how residents interacted with the content.

The 6Es model of behaviour change takes into account the different ways to influence behaviour.



Insight gathered for the food waste reduction campaign led us to tie in with the hot topic of climate change and aimed to encourage Surrey residents to waste less food and live more sustainably. We used simple messages that:

- Highlighted the cost-savings of wasting less food.
- Raised awareness that wasting less food is better for the environment.
- Showed it's easy to waste less – signposting residents to useful information and apps on SEP's website.

A fun, creative design personified types of food that are typically wasted and encouraged residents to 'save food, money and the planet'.

In addition to the campaign, a SEP scheme offered residents the opportunity to buy a food waste digester at a discounted price.

Highlights from the evaluation included:

- Page views of SEP's website increased by 82%.
- Facebook posts were seen 84,368 times and generated 25,527 video views.
- Digital adverts through websites and email apps generated almost 25,000 visits to SEP's website.
- There were 3,683 searches related to food waste on the Surrey Recycles app or the online search tool during the campaign period.

Unlike compost bins, any kind of food waste can go into a digester and be turned into compost. As well as providing residents with a free supply of compost this saves taxpayer money by diverting food waste from the collection and disposal system.

Sales of food waste digesters increased threefold this year with 86 sold to Surrey residents through the discount scheme. These are significantly more expensive than compost bins, but communicating these dual benefits is starting to increase their popularity.

Encouraging composting at home

SEP subsidises the cost of a range of compost bins in different sizes and colours for residents while also providing Surrey schools with a free compost bin per school.

The compost bin scheme has been running for several years so many residents and schools already have already taken advantage of the offer. But continuing to promote the scheme during the gardening season ensures we both encourage new composters and remind existing bin owners to continue composting. In addition, a dedicated home composting behaviour change campaign ran from early March to mid-April 2020.

The target audience for the campaign was all Surrey residents who produce garden waste, with a focus on women aged 55 plus, as research indicated they were most likely to be regular gardeners. A new creative approach was designed to specifically appeal to this audience.

As a result of this activity Surrey residents bought 708 subsidised compost bins during 2019-20 and 12 compost bins were provided to schools, a threefold increase on last year.

Highlights from the campaign evaluation included:

- During March, 240 compost bins were also sold, a 73% increase compared to the same period in 2019.
- 35,651 pageviews of SEP's website garden pages, an 11% increase on the previous year's campaign.
- Campaign videos across all SEP digital channels including YouTube were viewed 60,760 times.

Getting real about nappies

It's estimated that each baby will use over 4,000 nappies from birth to potty and research from the Environment Agency has shown that weekly rubbish for families with a baby could be halved by using cloth nappies. To encourage Surrey parents to do this we run a cloth nappy trial kit scheme. The scheme allows them to borrow a free kit, which can help them make an informed choice about using cloth nappies and which types are best for them and their baby.

We currently have a network of 14 cloth nappy trial kit hosts based in ten areas across the county. Between them they host 22 cloth nappy kits.

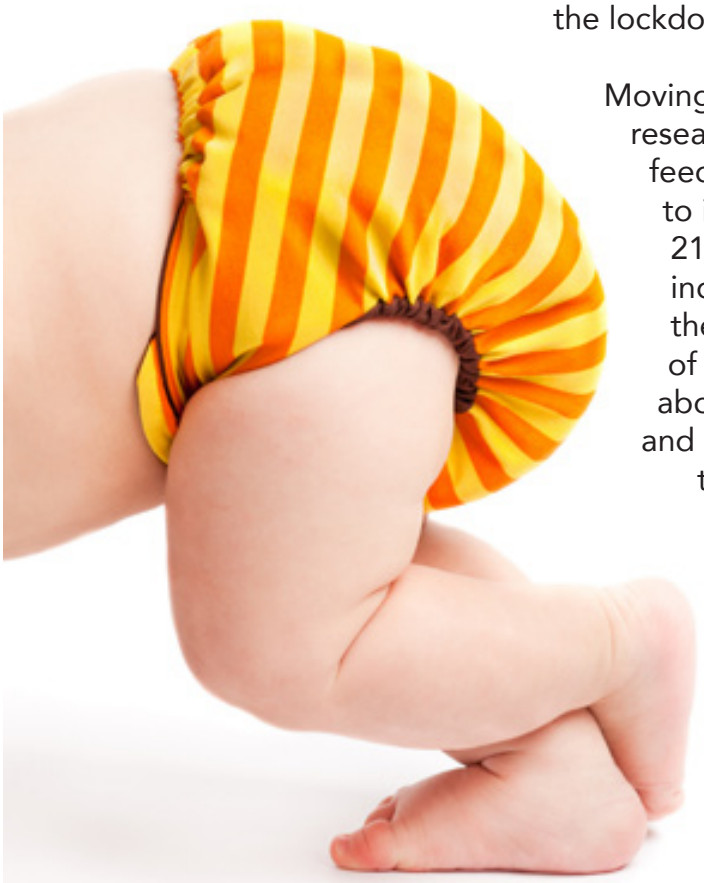
During the 2019-20 programme:

- New volunteer trial kit hosts were recruited and set up in Weybridge, Camberley, Dorking and Guildford.
- More than 100 Surrey residents borrowed a kit.
- Feedback from families showed that most had a positive experience borrowing a kit.
- 73% said they continued to use cloth nappies following the trial (27% all of the time; 47% some of the time).
- The main reasons for not using/not using all the time were the cost, not having a full set yet, and the amount of washing/drying required.

On 23 March, due to the coronavirus pandemic, we decided to temporarily suspend the scheme until further notice and when the lockdown is fully lifted.

Moving forward, resident research and anecdotal feedback gathered to inform our 2020-21 programme indicated that there are still a lot of misconceptions about real nappies and attitudes need to change before many more prospective parents will consider using them.

Based on these findings and the time required to manage the hosting scheme, it was agreed that rather than try to expand the scheme, the focus for 2020-21 would shift to educating residents about the benefits of cloth nappies and myth-busting to encourage more people to consider using real nappies. While the scheme is suspended the messaging will encourage people to buy their own kits rather than borrowing a trial kit.



Nudging residents to recycle more

The majority of Surrey residents do recycle to some extent, but to be successful at reaching our recycling targets we need them to separate all their waste that can be recycled, rather than continuing to put some of it in their rubbish bin.

For 2019-20 it was agreed to deliver countywide recycling campaigns focusing on materials that composition analyses have indicated will give the greatest return if capture is increased – food waste, textiles and dry mixed recycling (DMR).

The 6Es model of behaviour change outlined in the earlier waste reduction section is also used to develop each recycling campaign.

The majority of residents do recycle but we need them to separate all their waste that can be recycled rather than putting some of it in the rubbish bin.

Food waste recycling

Some good progress has been made on the amount of food waste that is being captured for recycling over the past few years. But there is still a significant amount going into rubbish bins instead of food caddies, so it's an important material to continue to focus on.

The 2019-20 food waste recycling campaign was a build on the campaigns that were delivered in the previous two years.

The first of these highlighted the amount of money that could be saved by residents recycling all their food waste. The follow-up campaign highlighted success to date, congratulated residents on saving £200,000 and encouraged them to do more. Tonnages increased further as a result of this campaign, so for 2019-20 we continued the theme highlighting an annual saving of £310,000.

Highlights from the evaluation included:

- 86% of residents now use the food waste collection service with 87% of this group using it every week.
- The number of residents who use the caddy because it saves the council money has overtaken the number who use it because it helps the environment.
- Most people were aware of the campaign via radio advertising followed by print advertising, outdoor advertising and online advertising.
- The campaign motivated over 40% of residents to put more food in their caddy.
- Facebook and Twitter posts were seen 66,690 times, generating 4,736 engagements (likes, comments, shares, retweets).

86%

of residents now use the food waste collection service

Clothes and home textiles

In 2019-20 the clothes and home textiles campaign was split into two phases running in spring and autumn. These are times when residents are most likely to be changing their summer and winter wardrobes and undertaking a spring clean or clear out of textiles in their homes.

Both phases of the campaign highlighted that clothes and home textiles can be given a new life when recycled; either by being worn again or used for insulation or stuffing. The campaign encouraged residents to recycle using their kerbside collection service, where available, or at a local clothes bank or Community Recycling Centre.

Highlights from the first phase included:

- At 53%, prompted awareness of the campaign was higher than any previous clothes and textiles campaign.
- Outdoor advertising and social media were the most effective channels with magazine and radio advertising proving less useful.
- The campaign webpage was viewed 17,644 times, almost a quarter more than the previous year's campaign.
- A video advert was viewed 31,958 times on YouTube.

31,958
views of the campaign video

17,644
views of campaign webpage

Phase two of the campaign was low cost and mainly delivered through digital channels. To further increase the campaign's persuasiveness, updated messaging focused on the motivation for recycling; seasonal items of clothing and textiles that could be recycled; and detail of what happens to unusable clothing and home textiles when they are recycled.

Both phases of the campaign highlighted that clothes and home textiles can be given a new life when recycled.

Highlights from phase two included:

- 12,824 webpage views during the campaign period.
- The most engaged users came to the campaign webpage via social media, and SEP partner websites.
- Facebook and Twitter posts reached 54,659 residents and generated 1,808 engagements (likes, comments, shares, retweets).

54,659
residents reached through Facebook and Twitter

Dry mixed recycling

For 2019-20 the DMR campaign again focused on the festive period, but following feedback from recycling facilities about glitter and foil contamination it started in mid-November to try and influence purchasing decisions.

The first part of the campaign encouraged residents to choose recyclable alternatives to glitter and foil cards and wrapping paper. It then reminded them to recycle festive paper and card like delivery boxes and envelopes and later moved to highlighting which wrapping paper and cards can and can't be recycled.

Residents were directed to the Surrey Recycles search tool and app to check how to dispose of any of their festive items. The campaign also encouraged people to reduce their food waste and provided leftover recipes and tips.

A new campaign creative featured a green Santa Claus and the core message was to 'Go green like Santa'.

Highlights from the evaluation showed:

- The campaign webpage was viewed 5,103 times, an increase of 54% from the previous year. Overall views of SEP's website also increased by 36%.
- There were 4,830 searches relating to festive recycling on the app or the online search tool during the campaign period, an increase of 74%.
- Multiple campaign videos increased campaign engagement and were viewed 21,762 times across channels including Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.
- Adverts on websites viewed by Surrey residents were seen 267,653 times and generated 73% more link clicks than the previous year, while Google search adverts were seen 32,133 times and generated 13% more link clicks.

Clearing up confusion

Contamination of recycling bins continues to be an issue in Surrey. This happens when a bin contains items that can't be recycled and can result in it not being emptied or a truck load being rejected which is costly and impacts recycling rates.

Two partnership projects are designed to help residents understand what should go into each of their bins. These run alongside localised communication undertaken by each partner authority and where appropriate direct engagement to address repeated issues.

Service guides

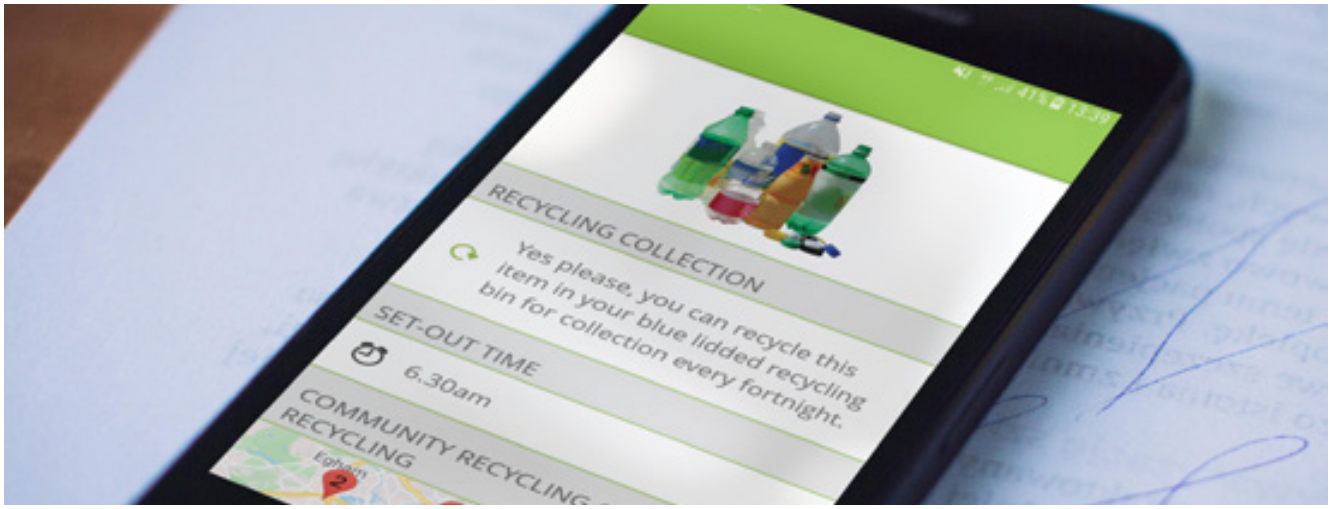
An annual service guide is produced and distributed for each district and borough with the option to also include a collection calendar. This is based on a consistent template and both print and distribution are procured in bulk, significantly reducing the time and cost of each authority producing their own guide.

Previous research with residents has shown that the guide has very high awareness with 79% saying they had found out something new from it.

In 2019-20:

- The template was updated to improve the design and readability following feedback from the previous year.
- The template was adapted for each area to reflect any local differences in the service.
- A total of 486,322 guides were printed, including extras for use with new properties.
- A total of 471,806 were distributed using a complex process to ensure a delivery rate of 99 – 100%.

Recycling search tool and app



The Surrey Recycles online search tool and app allows Surrey residents to put in their postcode and search for an item to find out how to recycle or dispose of it. The tool is embedded on most authorities' websites and on SEP's website.

Usage of the search tool and app continued to increase during 2019-20 with more searches than any previous year.

- 263,975 searches took place, nearly 50,000 more than the previous year.
- The phone app was downloaded 2,195 times, up from 1,803 in 2018-19.
- In total, there have been 652,240 searches and 9,269 downloads of the app since it was launched.

Over the year, details of what happens to items when they are recycled and information on other recycling services (such as Terracycle) that residents can use for items their local authority doesn't recycle, were added to the search results.

Many new items were also added to the tool and work is underway to simplify the results residents receive and to make available versions of the app in several minority languages.

The search tool has also proved a useful way for residents to find out about waste and recycling services during the coronavirus pandemic. Results are updated quickly so residents can find out the current status of local collection services and Community Recycling Centres.

Improving recycling at flats

Increasing recycling rates at blocks of flats is an ongoing challenge for local authorities. Difficulties include a lack of ownership of recycling due to shared bins; limited space in bin stores for signage; and the extra effort needed for residents to take their waste to bin stores.

To tackle this the partnership funded a highly successful two-year project to improve flats recycling for 6,759 properties. Full details of the trial were included in the 2018-19 review and due to the impressive outcomes, it was agreed the project would continue with SEP match-funding the cost with each participating authority.

The aim is to reach all blocks of flats and houses of multiple occupancy.

In 2019-20 work was carried out in Reigate and Banstead and in Spelthorne which aimed to expand dry mixed recycling (DMR) and food waste services and reduce contamination.

Results in Reigate and Banstead

- Trialled and developed bespoke paper and recycling bins to help reduce contamination. Very positive feedback from the crews and significant improvement in recycling quality.
- Average bin weights for food, DMR and paper increased at over 70% of sites.
- Predicted additional 11.22 tonnes of paper, food and DMR from sites monitored pre- and post-intervention.
- Decrease in number of heavily contaminated bins from 32% to 22% for DMR, and 9% to 5% for paper bins.

The partnership funded a highly successful two-year project in 2018-19 to improve flats recycling.

Due to the impressive outcomes, it was agreed that the project would continue.

Bin weights:

Food, DMR and paper

70%

increase

Success in Spelthorne

- A decrease in the number of heavily contaminated bins from 32% to 18%. This could potentially result in an extra 59 tonnes of food waste and 27 tonnes of DMR captured annually.
- Expanded DMR collections, which could potentially lead to an extra 9 tonnes a year.
- A predicted total annual increase of 95 tonnes from the project.
- To interact with residents living in flats, events at a local train station and a shopping centre were trialled and an activity for children to decorate food caddies at a library was held. As a result, 400 local people were spoken to.

Before and after work at Grandera House, Sunbury-on-Thames

Stats on flats

466
estates

5,706
households

2,922
bin inspections

829
bins labelled

5,435
recycling bags delivered

Harnessing the power of pestering

Educating school children about waste reduction and recycling is an investment in the future as it helps to prepare them for when they are responsible for the waste generated in their homes. It can also be of benefit now as children are encouraged to take messages and actions back home to their families.

SEP's online schools' engagement programme is run by Wastebuster and provides primary schools with a range of downloadable resources that can be used by teachers to educate and engage their pupils in waste reduction and recycling. The period covered by this annual review crosses two academic years.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS RECYCLE IT RIGHT CHALLENGE

For the 2018-19 academic year it was agreed to fund additional resources to carry out greater engagement with schools to promote the service. The aim was to increase use of the service by primary schools and expand the service to independent schools.

Final figures for the 2018-19 academic year showed that Wastebuster achieved its KPIs relating to the core programme:

- 197 state primary schools accessed the online portal (up from 177 in 2017-18).
- 2,860 resources were downloaded (up from 2,048 in 2017-18).
- 43 independent schools accessed the portal and downloaded 444 resources.

For the 2019-20 academic year, Wastebuster was tasked with achieving stretched KPIs and several new elements were added to the contract including:

- A new challenge for children and families that would help them understand the key items that cause contamination in recycling.
- Online training webinars for teachers and interactive assemblies for schools.
- Free use of resources related to water, energy and carbon from The Pod schools programme, which Wastebuster now manages.

During November and December 2019, the JWS team also commissioned independent research into engagement in waste reduction and recycling by primary schools, their use of resources and their attitudes to Wastebuster.

Results showed that interest from schools varies widely but that it is seen to be a growing priority and will continue to be so. Wastebuster was well known by Surrey schools and perceptions were very positive. The research also provided insight into areas that needed improvement, which were built into the work plan for 2019-20.

An interim report up to the end of March 2020 indicates that Wastebuster is on track to meet many of its KPIs, despite the challenges being created by the coronavirus pandemic.

Digital channel development

A new SEP website and social media channels were created and launched to coincide with the updated partnership name on 1 April 2019. These new communications channels enable SEP to share campaign messages and information with residents and directly engage with them. It also allows partner authorities to share content and direct residents to the SEP website for further information.

A range of activities were undertaken in 2019-20 to ensure the development and growth of the new channels.

Website

- SEP's website had 207,236 pageviews, which was an increase of 23% compared to the previous Recycle for Surrey website in 2018-19.
- There were 96,019 new visitors to the site.
- A toolkit containing social media posts and images to promote the new SEP digital channels was created and shared with partner authorities.
- Partners updated their websites with the new website link and 8,994 visitors came to SEP via a partner website – 10% of the total website users.

Top three most visited pages:

1. Clothes and home textiles
2. Home composting
3. Surrey Recycles search tool

New site visitors:

96,019

In June 2019, an accessibility audit was conducted across SEP's website to ensure the site is compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.0 standard.

Social media

On Facebook, Instagram and Twitter we interact daily with Surrey residents. We share regular and relevant content in various formats, including articles, quizzes, photos, videos, gifs and campaign artwork.

As with the website, partner authorities were asked to share our content and we have also built relationships with local bloggers and businesses who continue to share our messages. We engage with residents through comments, direct messages and by using interactive posts where they are asked to share their top tips or participate in campaigns.

During 2019-20:

- SEP's new Facebook page gained 3,084 followers and the posts were seen 1,825,300 times.
- There were 66,429 engagements on Facebook (likes, shares, comments, link clicks, video views), with an average of 5,535 engagements each month.
- Through the new SEP Instagram channel we shared 373 unique posts that helped us to gain 1,463 followers.
- The Recycle for Surrey Twitter account was rebranded as SEP and its following increased by 45% to 1,846 followers with a reach of 684,476.

As well as regular engagement, SEP invested in paid page promotions on all social media channels to help grow the audience. These promotions were location targeted and aimed to reach Surrey residents aged 18 and above.

Data driven interventions

Engaging with residents to change their behaviours on waste and recycling can be done most effectively when we know which specific households or areas have the potential to improve. Engagement activity can then be focused on those residents rather than more widely.

A scoping study identified a range of potential interventions in 2019 and partners were asked which projects they would be able to participate in on a trial basis. The aim is to trial and evaluate different interventions which, if successful, can be rolled out in other areas.

The work was put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic but prior to that the following progress was made:

Food waste

- Food waste data was analysed in detail for a number of authorities and revealed some variation in tonnage captured by round.
- However, anecdotal information indicated that this might not always be because of lack of participation. For example, some rounds have more single person households.
- It was then identified that exception data recorded through the in-cab system could be a more reliable indicator of participation. This data occurs when a crew member records that a household has not presented its bin for collection.
- So, interventions and messages will be trialed according to the data available in different areas. Some will use broader messages to target households in low performing rounds and others will use exception data for messages such as 'We've noticed you are not using your food caddy' and 'We've noticed you're not using your food caddy every week'.

Garden waste

Data analysis on garden waste was also undertaken to identify residents who don't currently have a collection service subscription and live the furthest away from a recycling centre. The intervention message for these residents would highlight the convenience of signing up for the service.

However, the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in a significant increase in garden waste subscriptions. As a result, data will need to be reexamined when the project is ready to be taken off hold to ensure the collection services have sufficient capacity.

Contamination

- Work on contamination interventions has started in the joint contract authorities (Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Surrey Heath and Woking).
- We have identified where improvements to the quality and availability of data would be required to use for targeted work.
- This includes the use of in-cab technology to record bins which can't be emptied because of contamination. It also includes the sampling data received from materials recycling facilities.
- An assessment of the causes of contamination across the process flow (from households disposing of waste to it being processed) was undertaken and issues seen on the ground have highlighted that there are mitigations that can be put in place with the current information we have.
- A package of process improvements to reduce dry mixed recycling contamination in street level and flats properties is being devised to trial in Woking, including:
  - > *Ongoing crew training.*
  - > *Infrastructure improvements at flats.*
  - > *Resident communication when contamination is identified.*
  - > *Efficient contract monitoring.*

Improving data capture

The availability of accurate and timely data continues to be critical to effectively manage our programme of work and identify our key priorities as we deliver Surrey's waste strategy.

Since 2018, work has been ongoing to procure a new waste data system to replace the system which had been in place since 2014. A budget of £180,000 was approved for the 4-year period from 2018-19 to 2021-22, to cover system development and annual operational costs.

The new system has now gone live and been rolled out to all partner authorities. System developments have resulted in a number of improvements including the system design and ease of use. Users are also able to produce bespoke reports in line with their own requirements. User training is still underway and is due to be completed for all authorities by the end of May 2020.

One particular area of focus now is around how the system can be used to simplify the process of preparing statutory returns for the Government each quarter. This is currently being trialled, and we plan to use the system for some authorities' submissions, which are due in June 2020.

The system will provide a single source of accurate and timely tonnage data for the partnership.

It should then be possible for other authorities to replicate this approach, which would both improve the consistency of reporting to the Government and save officer time across the partnership.

It is still our intention that the system will provide a single source of accurate and timely tonnage data for the partnership.

We are continuing to make further improvements to our current monthly reporting processes, particularly to reduce officer time spent on data validation. This should then allow users access to even more timely, accurate data.

Responding to national change

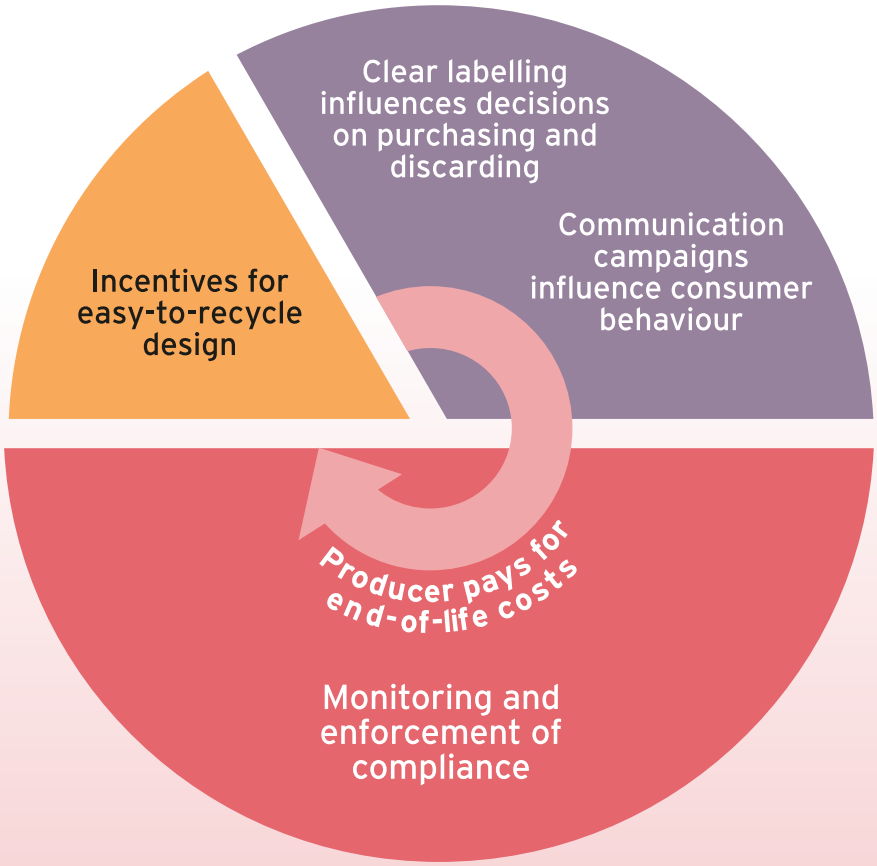
In December 2018, the Government published its Resources and Waste Strategy for England. The strategy sets out how the Government proposes to 'preserve material resources by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy in England'.

The proposals could have a significant impact on the way local government is funded to manage waste, the types and quantities of materials collected, and the methods used to collect waste. The specific proposals include:

- Making packaging producers responsible for paying for the full costs of managing their waste.
- Introducing a deposit return scheme for drinks containers to encourage recycling rates and reduce litter.
- Introducing a producer tax on plastic packaging, encouraging the use of 30% recycled content in packaging products.
- Implementing standardised household waste collections, including a consistent set of core materials for recycling.

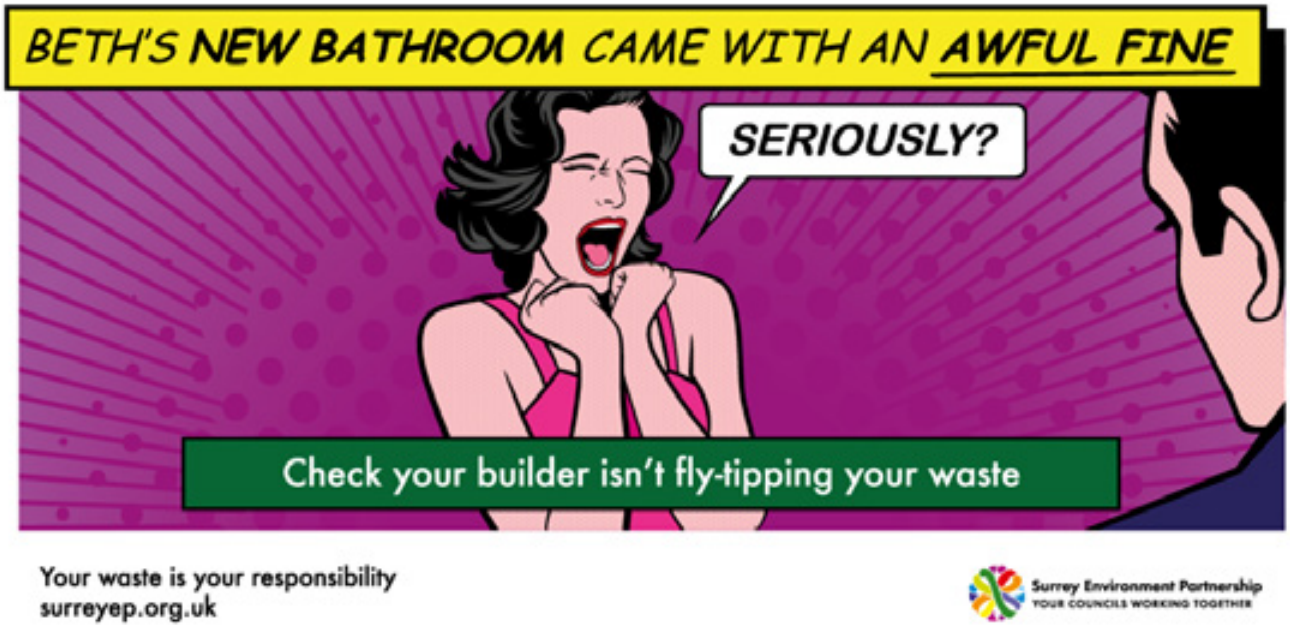
SEP responded to consultations on these proposals in May 2019 and was generally supportive of the aims of the strategy which are designed to have a positive impact on the environment. The Government's response to the consultations was then fully analysed by SEP and recommendations made on the next steps, which were approved at the Members Group on 25 September 2019.

A consultation task group was set up early this year in preparation for responding to the second round of consultations. A draft SEP response to the second consultation on plastic packaging tax has been prepared and will be submitted ahead of the deadline on 20 August 2020. The second consultations on the other proposals are now expected to take place later in the year.



Reducing fly-tipping

Fly-tipping is the illegal deposit of waste on land or in water. Local authorities and landowners are responsible for clearing it up and it is punishable by a fine of up to £50,000 or 12 months imprisonment if convicted in a Magistrates' Court. If convicted in a Crown Court, it can be punishable by an unlimited fine and up to 5 years imprisonment. Other penalties include fixed penalty notices between £150-400 and seizure of a vehicle and/or its contents.



Surrey's fly-tipping strategy includes three aims:

- Stimulate a change in behaviour amongst residents, businesses and landowners that helps reduce the amount of fly-tipping in Surrey.
- Jointly agree the most efficient process for reporting, collection and disposal of illegally dumped waste on public land.
- Work together to maximise investigation and enforcement resources to ensure we use these in the most cost-effective way.

In April 2019, a new Fly-Tipping Reduction Manager was appointed on an 18-month contract and the strategy's action plan was refreshed to ensure key deliverables would be met during that period.

Changing behaviours

To achieve the first aim of the strategy, Surrey-wide campaigns on fly-tipping are undertaken. As with recycling campaigns they are evaluated to assess their impact and inform planning for the next campaign. The evaluation of the 2018-19 campaign showed that awareness of the campaign was similar to the previous year. As the same creative approach had been used for three years this suggested that a new look and feel was required to achieve greater impact.

The evaluation also showed that while the campaign succeeded in increasing residents' understanding that they are responsible for their own waste this was still relatively low at 51%. The 2019-20 campaign therefore used a new and impactful creative that focused on this 'duty of care' message.

The target audience for the campaign was residents of Surrey and neighbouring London boroughs. Potential fly-tippers were also targeted with a different creative execution designed to appeal to the typical fly-tipper demographic.

Campaign evaluation highlights included:

- 61% of residents said the campaign increased their understanding of their responsibilities when they are disposing of household and construction waste, an increase of 10 percentage points and up from 39% when the first campaign was run in 2016.
- 66% of residents felt the campaign told them lots of or some new things, an increase of 19 percentage points.
- Residents were asked to rate the campaign for how impactful, appealing, relevant, informative, clear, believable and persuasive it was. The score for every factor increased to its highest level yet for any fly-tipping campaign.
- 44% of residents said they liked the campaign, an increase of 20 percentage points compared to last year's campaign.
- Outdoor poster advertising and online advertising offered the greatest return on investment when comparing cost versus awareness.

Tackling fly-tipping together

The efficiency and enforcement elements of the strategy have been delivered through a range of activities.

Defining and recording data

- An agreed definition for both enforcement and data capture purposes has been adopted across Surrey. In time this will ensure a more accurate picture of the amount of fly-tipping occurring in Surrey to be developed and allow for targeted intervention and enforcement.
- A report and recommendation for improving the recording of fly-tipping incidents will be published in June 2020.
- If agreed a potential digital solution will be available for Surrey councils to trial free of charge until the end of 2020.

Enforcement group

- The network of enforcement officers tackling fly-tipping across Surrey was revitalised, introducing the Environment Agency and Surrey Police Anti-Social Behaviour and Rural Crime Teams to the network to further strengthen the partnerships already in place locally.
- Quarterly meetings have taken place to facilitate growth of the network, share best practice, discuss ongoing challenges and understand how SEP can support Surrey councils to tackle fly-tipping.
- Joint enforcement activities took place during Anti-Social Behaviour Week (July 2019) and Rural Crime Week (Oct 2019).
- The Fly-tipping Reduction Manager also joined the Surrey Harm Reduction Group ensuring that the SEP Fly-tipping Strategy features as a linked strategy in the Surrey Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Harm Reduction Strategy.

Training

- SEP has sponsored two training and networking days which resulted in almost 80 officers receiving training to strengthen the knowledge and investigation skills of the frontline enforcement teams.
- These days were also attended by colleagues from the Environment Agency and Surrey Police to ensure officers further develop a growing network to tackle fly-tipping across Surrey.
- SEP also sponsored training for Legal Officers across Surrey to explore the tools and powers available in relation to dealing with fly-tipping as anti-social behaviour as well as environmental crime.
- Unfortunately, attendance at this event was impacted by the start of the coronavirus pandemic. However, training packs were provided to those who couldn't attend and the feedback from those who did attend was positive.

Intelligence sharing

- E-Cins, an intelligence sharing portal that was introduced across Surrey for anti-social behaviour, is now being actively used by fly-tipping enforcement officers to tackle fly-tipping.
- All frontline officers have been trained and have access to the system.
- The system is also accessed by Surrey Police and the Environment Agency.
- Within the system a digital network has been created to ensure fly-tipping related intelligence can be shared swiftly across Surrey and beyond.
- In addition, a best practice section of the system allows enforcement officers to seek and share guidance with each other to encourage a consistent enforcement approach.

Reducing single-use plastics

In line with national policy, the reduction of single-use plastics (SUP) has become a priority for many local authorities across the UK and elsewhere.

In response Surrey County Council, working closely with representatives from the partnership, led the development of a single-use plastics strategy for Surrey. In January 2019, SEP members agreed:

1. That the SUP strategy and action plan would be formally adopted by each partner authority and published on each authorities' website.

2. All authorities would fully engage in the implementation of the strategy including eliminating SUP across their own estates and operations and taking an active part in joint work-streams to deliver county-wide objectives.

3. SEP would take ownership of the SUP strategy implementation by governing and monitoring the overall progress.

The strategy includes a five-year action plan to deliver the following objectives:

Theme	Objective
1. Getting our house in order	End the sale and provision of SUP products in order to phase out their use across our own estates and operations (where there is a clear case for it and alternatives exist).
2. Working with our suppliers and contractors	Ensure that our procurement policies and procedures require all of our suppliers to reduce and work towards zero avoidable SUP use (when applicable) in their service provision including at any events that take place. Support greater awareness and action from our suppliers and contractors in finding sustainable SUP replacements wherever appropriate and encourage higher recycling rates across our estates.
3. Raising awareness across Surrey	Share best practice, raise awareness and support our staff, members, partners, communities, schools, businesses, hospitals and beyond towards making their own locations avoidable plastic-free zones.
4. Supporting Surrey to take action	With the support of our partner authorities, innovate and encourage people in Surrey to reduce their SUP use, with a particular focus on busy public locations, and other areas where local authorities have control or influence.

SEP would take ownership of the single-use plastics (SUP) strategy implementation by governing and monitoring the overall progress.

2019-20 highlights

Highlights of SEP's work on single-use plastics over the past year include:

- 10 Surrey authorities have formally adopted the strategy or pledged their commitment.
- The SUP task group has met quarterly to share ideas.
- The partnership funded the installation of two water fountains in Leatherhead and Guildford which were publicised to local residents by the relevant authorities.
- Work to encourage businesses to participate in the national refill scheme resulted in 541 refill stations being available across Surrey by the end of March 2020.
- Messages encouraging residents to make use of the refill scheme were shared across SEP's digital channels.
- The task group has shared good practice with Surrey Heartlands Sustainability Network by presenting the approach, findings and actions of the waste audit carried out in Surrey County Council offices. The progress on work carried out on 'keeping our house in order' in some of the district and borough offices were also shared.

Individual authority improvements

A range of improvements have also been made by individual partners.

These vary by authority, but include:

- Premise audits to identify where SUP reductions could be made.
- An updated procurement policy which references SUP reduction for new suppliers and contractors.
- A SUP staff awareness day.
- A 'zero waste box' initiative to showcase alternatives to SUP items.
- Business engagement.

Activities authorities stopped doing include:

- Supplying plastic cups except in the reception area to mitigate health and safety risks.
- Ordering plastic milk portions.
- Providing plastic bottled drinks.
- Ordering drinks vending cups and lids.
- Providing plastic cups.
- Providing single use coffee cups in the canteen.

Activities that authorities started doing include:

- Providing reusable water bottles to staff.
- Encouraging staff to bring their own reusable bottles.
- Using jugs and glasses for large events.
- Replacing soap dispensers with a plastic insert refill in office toilets with reusable ones.

Climate change

Climate change was not part of SEP's original programme for 2019-20 but it became an issue of increasing concern and discussion for partners.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a report in October 2018 warning against an increase in temperature of over 1.5ºC. Then in May 2019 the Government declared a climate change emergency, aiming to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Many SEP partners followed suit and also declared climate emergencies.

As a result, in July 2019 members agreed to the development of a workstream to collaboratively address climate change.

In May 2019 the Government declared a climate change emergency, aiming to reach net zero emissions by 2020.

Progress to date

A policy baselining exercise was undertaken to determine the current work being carried out in each authority and their future priorities and targets.

A SEP workshop was held in November 2019 to support a collective understanding of the international and national climate change agenda and to consider what we need to do to achieve net zero carbon. The workshop successfully identified a series of actions that Surrey authorities need to work together on in the short term and a series of longer term priorities.

Following the workshop, SEP brought together experts from across the county to share knowledge and exchange ideas through a series of meetings and working groups. This supported the development of a shared strategic framework for addressing climate change, which is currently being considered by Surrey authorities.

What's next for the Surrey Environment Partnership?

As mentioned earlier in this review the Government's new National Resources and Waste Strategy means that significant changes to how waste is managed are expected. It is essential that the partnership continues to engage and respond to the Government over the coming year, whilst also preparing for implementation of the changes and ensuring SEP is as robust as possible.

As part of this we are aiming to increase the transparency and accountability of the partnership's work and budget by all partners signing up to a new Inter-Authority Agreement. This will enable the Members Group to be formalised as a committee which will meet in public and be open to resident scrutiny.

This unprecedented situation has already provided a clear illustration of the value of working in partnership.

Being an already established, well-functioning partnership will help with our response to the forthcoming changes as it has in our response to the coronavirus pandemic. This unprecedented situation has already provided a clear illustration of the value of working in partnership and it will continue to be an important area of focus and work for as long as the pandemic continues.

As a result, there will be changes to the 2020-21 SEP work programme that was originally agreed by the Members Group. A significant amount of officer time has already been diverted to the coronavirus response and it has not been possible for some work to progress because of social distancing measures or the low likelihood of resident engagement. Some of the initiatives within the work programme have therefore been put on hold, delayed or are being modified.

It is not yet known how long the impacts of the pandemic will be felt, but it is likely that some form of social distancing measures will be in place for some time. The SEP work programme will be kept under constant review and any activity that is on hold will be resumed as soon as it is appropriate to do so.

Surrey Environment Partnership
YOUR COUNCILS WORKING TOGETHER