

Annual review

SURREY ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP
APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021





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Foreword



Councillor Neil Dallen,

Chairman, Surrey Environment Partnership



When the Surrey Environment Partnership's (SEP) work programme for 2020-21 was planned in early 2020, we had no idea that the year ahead of us would be very different to anything we had experienced before.

The coronavirus pandemic disrupted every aspect of our lives including having a significant impact on household recycling and waste volumes. Schools and other venues closed, workers were furloughed or asked to work from home, and the waste normally created and disposed of elsewhere was put into household bins.

SEP was well placed to rise to the challenges this created. Members of the officer team that works on SEP's behalf were able to rapidly switch from the planned work programme to a pandemic response. That helped partners continue to deliver key frontline services and ensured residents were kept up to date about what to do with their waste and how they could help their collection crews. You can read more about this work in the Activity and achievements section, starting on page 18.

You'll also see that despite the ongoing impacts of the pandemic it was eventually possible to resume work on some of the paused activities. As a result, work has been undertaken to influence the development of the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy and to improve our data and intelligence capability.

Other projects helped to improve recycling at flats and to reduce the contamination of dry mixed recycling across all properties. This is key work as when the wrong items are put into a recycling bin it can lead to a whole truckload not being recycled. The Surrey Recycles search tool and app is an excellent way for residents to check how to recycle or dispose of an item where they live. You can read more about that on page 44.

Communications to residents remains an important element of SEP's work programme. Residents are

encouraged to reduce, reuse, and recycle as much of their waste as possible through a variety of channels. Digital media has of course become increasingly important, but evaluation of the printed recycling guides we produce each year shows they are also well used and liked by residents.

We also published the first 'What happened to Surrey's waste' report covering the 2019-20 period. This provides detailed information about where Surrey's recycling goes including the fact that 85.8% of it stayed in the UK.

Performance statistics for 2020-21 are included in this review and in keeping with most of England they showed an increase in household waste per person. This was more significant in Surrey as employment data suggests that our residents are twice as likely to be employed in the type of roles that

were required to work from home. Our recycling rate decreased from 56.0% to 55.1% in 2020-21, but Surrey maintained its position as the third highest recycler, well above the England average of 42.3%.

That is great news and demonstrates the effectiveness of SEP and the willingness of Surrey residents to participate in recycling. However, we still have a considerable way to go to achieve the Government's current target of 65% by 2035. Towards the end of this review, you can read about the priorities and objectives for the work that is underway in the current programme to help us move towards that.

Following that you'll find full contact details for SEP, so please do feel free to get in touch if you have any questions.



Background

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.

Our aims

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.

The countywide initiatives are developed and delivered on behalf of SEP by the Joint Waste Solutions (JWS) team, which also manages a joint waste collection contract on behalf of four Surrey authorities.

This report reviews the programme of countywide initiatives that were coordinated and funded by SEP from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. This activity was developed in consultation with officers and members from all partner authorities.

The report has been published some months after the completion of the programme to enable the performance statistics for the year under review to be included. These are collated and published by Defra after the end of each reporting year.

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.

Performance summary

When the partnership was established, Surrey authorities' collective recycling rate was ranked as the 13th highest of England's 30 two-tier authority areas (45.7%) according to statistics published by Defra.

In the latest statistics, published in December 2021 and seen in the Figure 1 chart below, Surrey was ranked third highest for recycling in 2020-21, with a recycling rate of 55.1%. This was a decrease from 56.0% the previous year, but the ranking remained the same.

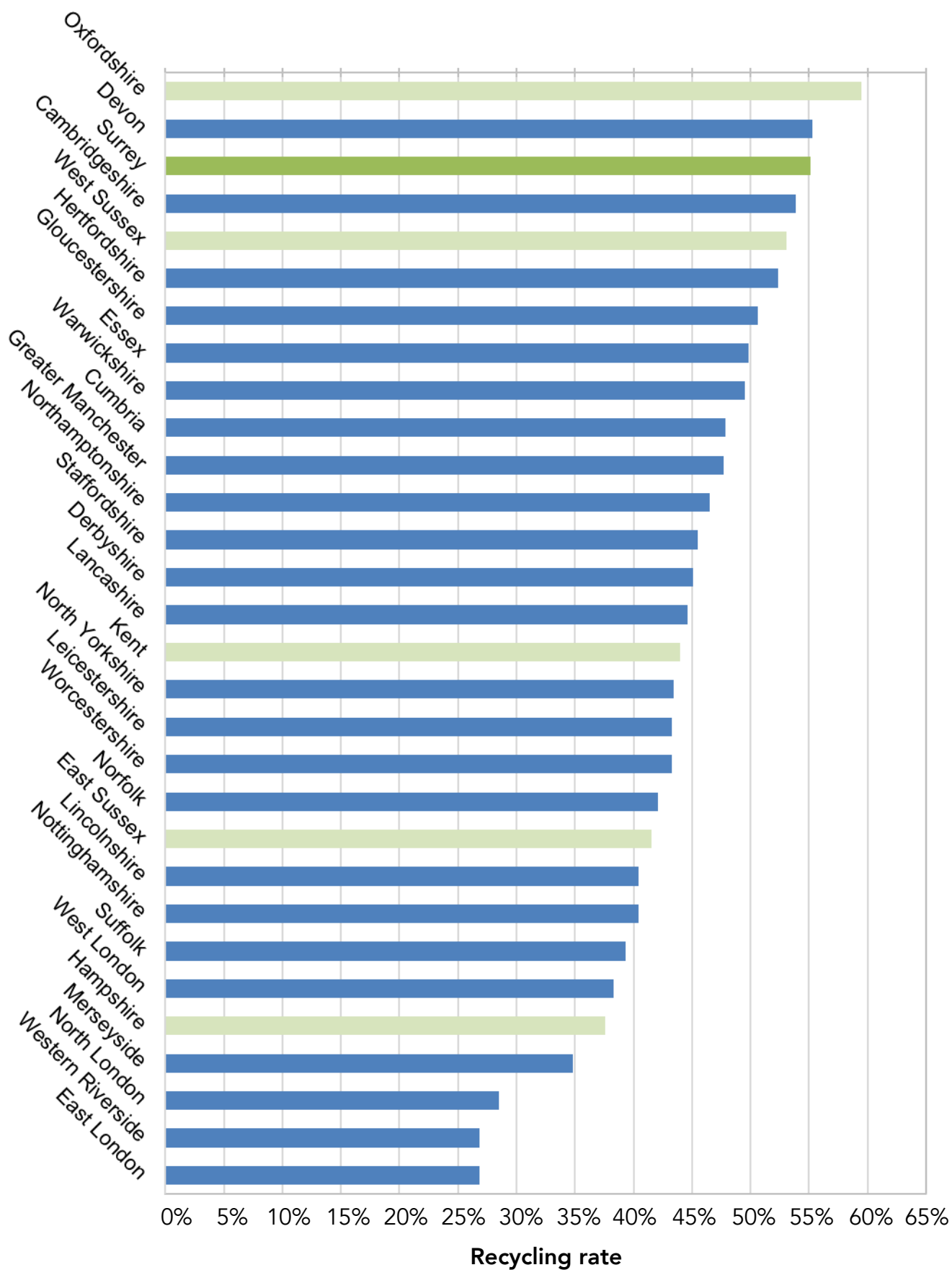


Figure 1: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling, or composting, 2020-21

As can be seen in Figure 2, Surrey has ranked in the top five since 2014-15, consistently ranking closely to Oxfordshire, Devon and Cambridgeshire. In 2020-21 Devon and Cambridgeshire also had a decrease in recycling rate of 1.3 and 1.5 percentage points respectively. Oxfordshire has ranked top throughout this period and after dipping in 2017-18 is recovering towards the peak recycling rate of 60.5%, achieving 59.5% in 2020-21.

Surrey has consistently performed above the England average of 42.3%, the gap increased slightly in 2020-21 with Surrey now 12.8 percentage points above the average, as the England average dropped by 1.5 percentage points. The England average has plateaued over the period, remaining between 43.0% and 43.7% during the period 2011-12 and 2019-20, before dropping below 43% for the first time since 2010-11.

A recent report by SUEZ has suggested that large cities such as Birmingham and Liverpool are suppressing the UK average. It is likely that London authorities have a similar impact, as they struggle to introduce high-performing services such as food waste, and restricting capacity.

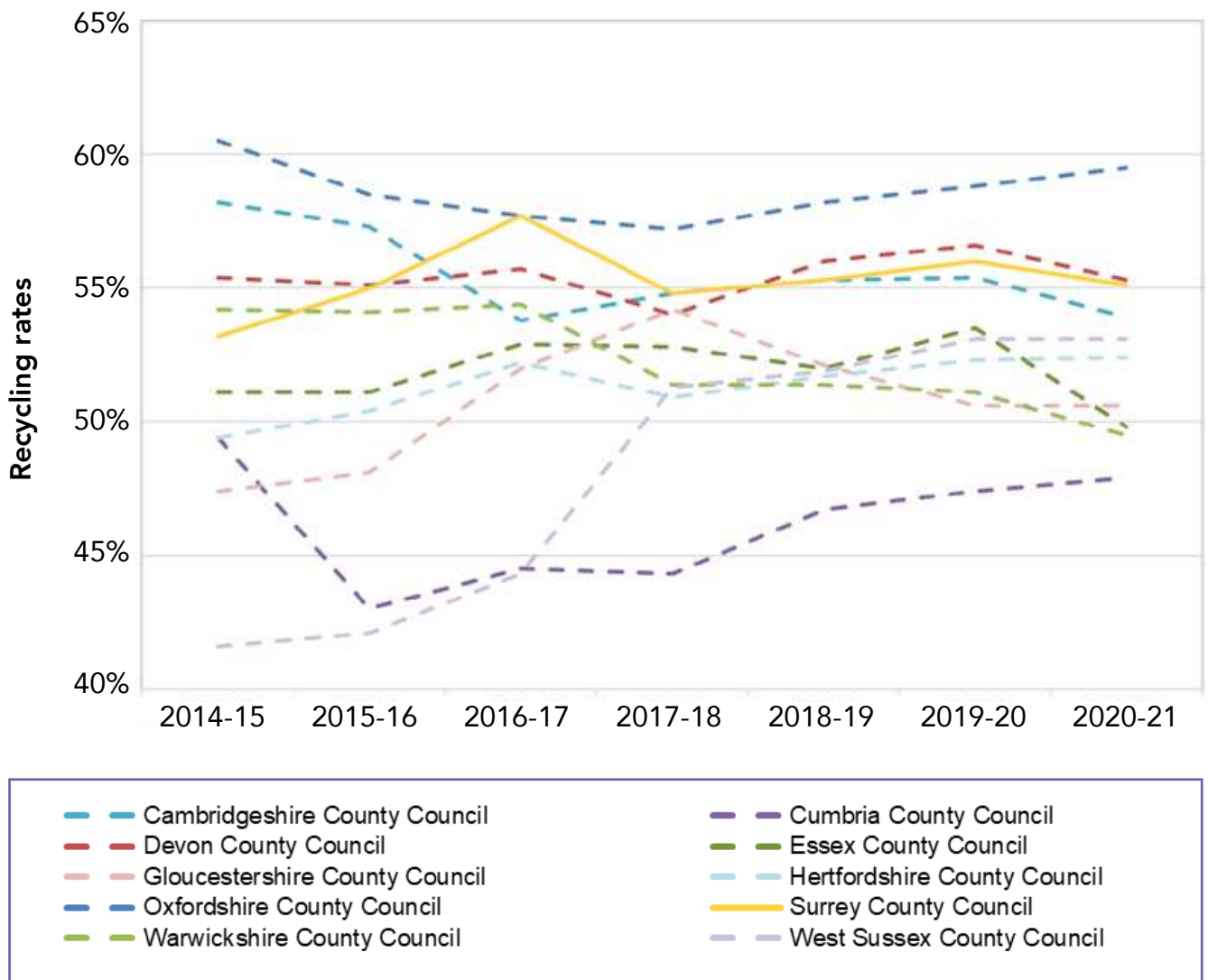


Figure 2: Recycling rates – top 10, 2014-15 – 2020-21

Household waste collected

The Defra report also indicated that the amount of waste collected per person increased by 24.2kg (5.4%) per person in 2020-21 and Surrey's ranking dropped from 11th to 17th (Figure 3). Waste tonnage increases were seen across England in 2020-21 due to the coronavirus pandemic as people were furloughed or required to work from home and schools and hospitality venues were closed.

These impacts are likely to have been particularly significant in Surrey given its demographic profile. For example, Surrey residents are twice as likely to be employed as a manager, director, or senior officer (office-based roles) than in an elementary occupation, so a higher proportion would have likely been working at home.

As seen in Figure 4 all Surrey's district and borough councils collected more household waste per person in 2020-21 than any previous years shown. Each individual district and borough collects less kgs per person than Surrey overall as Community Recycling Centre tonnages collected by Surrey County Council are also included within reported Surrey performance.

Surrey's district and borough councils collected more household waste per person in 2020-21 than any previous years shown.



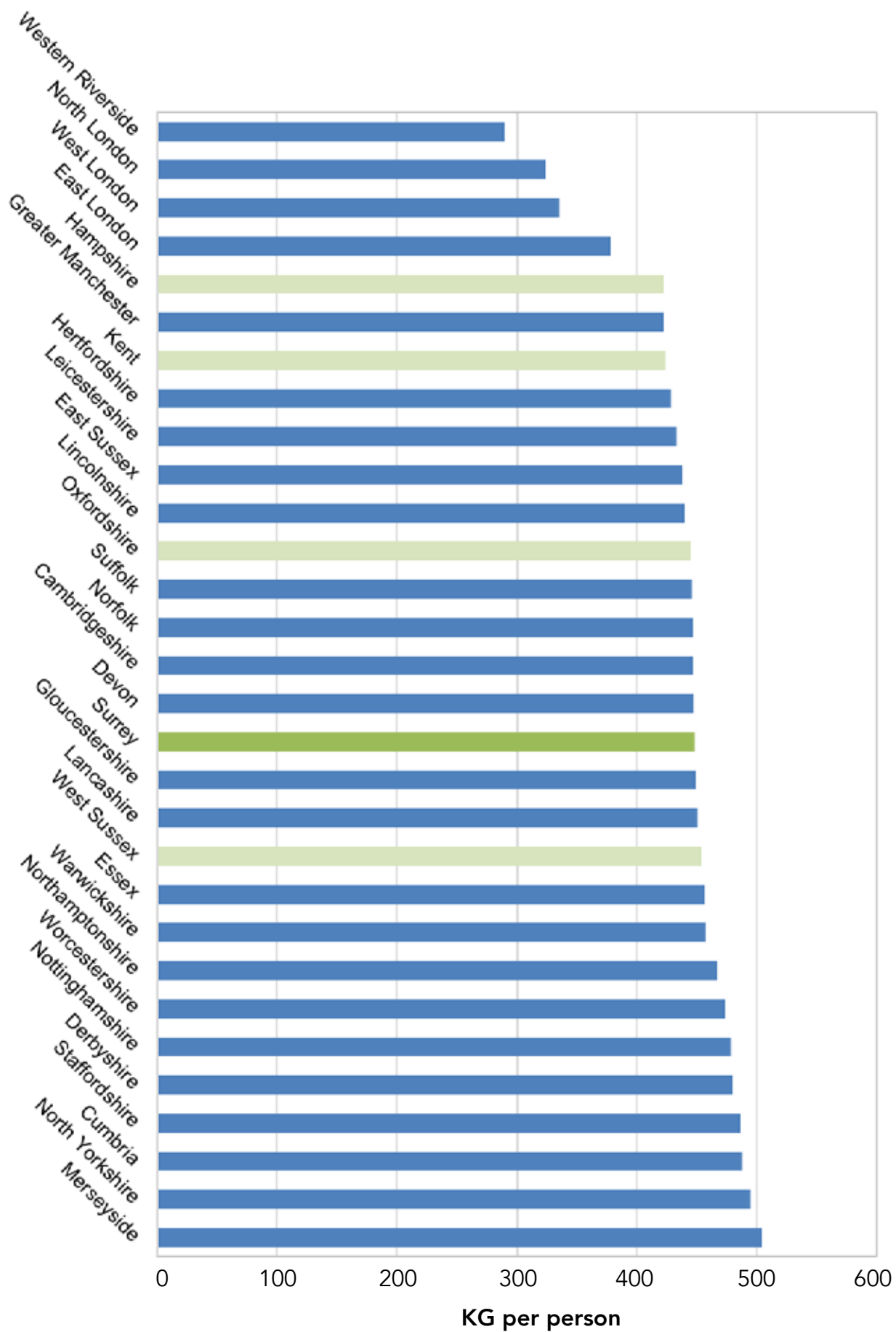


Figure 3: Collected household waste per person, 2020-21

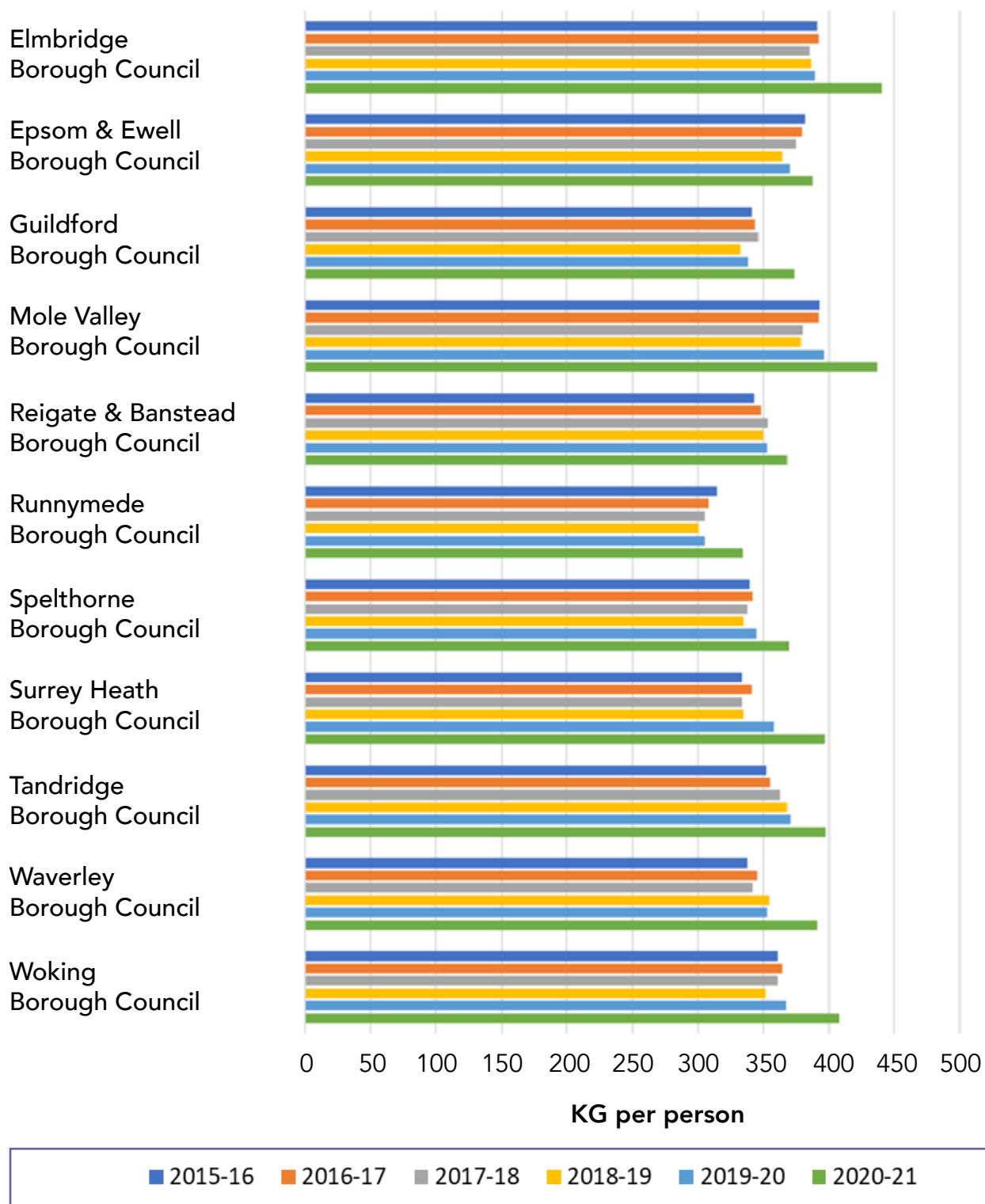


Figure 4: Collected household waste per person – District and Boroughs 2015-16 – 2020-21

Waste to landfill

Defra’s 2020-21 statistics also showed that Surrey is sending less waste to landfill. This decreased from 6.4% to 3.8%, with Surrey’s ranking amongst England’s two-tier authorities moving up from 17th to joint 14th.

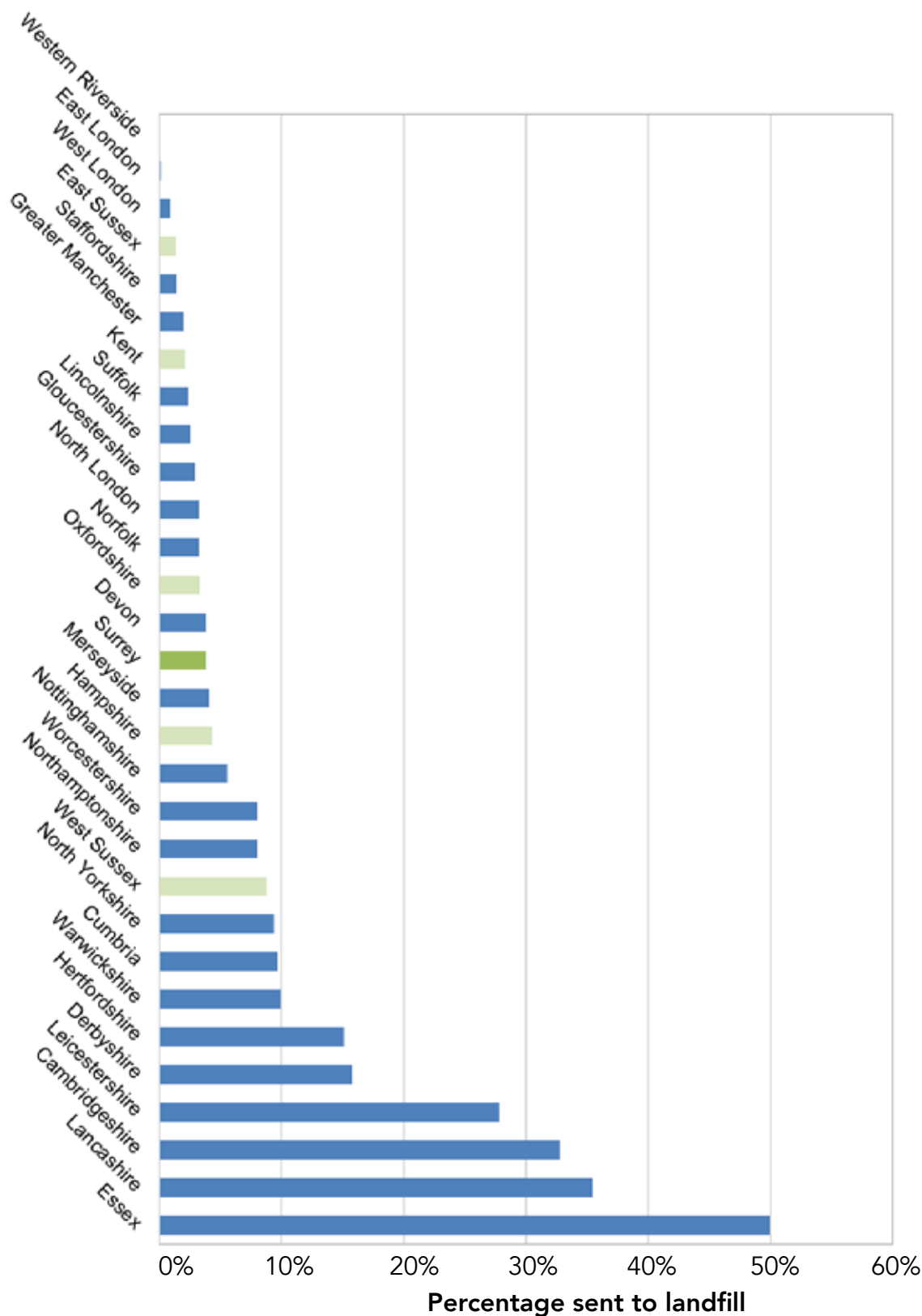


Figure 5: Percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill, 2020-21

In 2020-21 Surrey achieved its lowest percentage of municipal waste to landfill over the last 10 years reducing by 28.6 percentage points (32.4% to 3.8%), shown in Figure 6.

The ability to avoid sending waste to landfill relies significantly on capacity of other treatment facilities, such as Energy from Waste (EfW).

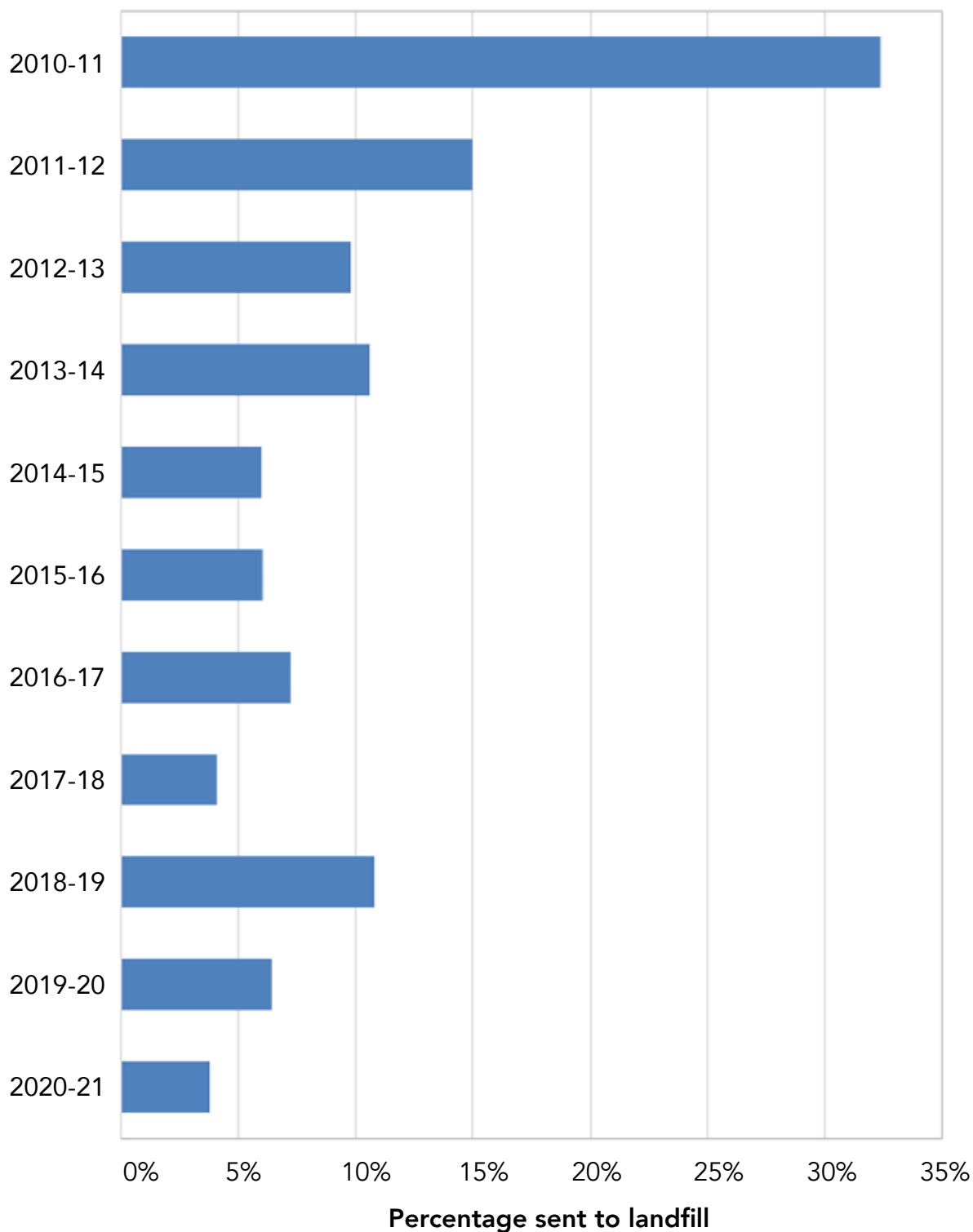


Figure 6: Percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill – Surrey, 2010-11 – 2020-21

Our approach for 2020-21

The 2020-21 programme was designed to achieve the aims of SEP's three joint strategies, which focus on waste management, fly-tipping and the reduction of single-use plastics.

It was developed by evaluating the effectiveness of current activity, analysing recent performance data, researching best practice and carrying out research into resident behaviours, attitudes and motivators. This helped to identify the projects that were likely to have the greatest impact, add the most value and ensure a balanced programme.

It was agreed there were three areas where SEP initiatives could have an impact in 2020-21:

1. **Ourselfes:** making sure that each partner authority has its own house in order and that SEP governance and processes are set up in the best way to achieve our aims.
2. **Our services:** improvements to services and how we work with contractors and partners.
3. **Our community:** communicating and engaging with Surrey residents to influence their behaviour.

All of the activities included in the next section were designed to contribute to one or more of these three areas.



Activity and achievements 2020-21

Managing Surrey's waste

When the 2020-21 work programme was agreed in February 2020 the coronavirus pandemic was only just starting to emerge and the impact it would have on our lives and work was not known. Before the programme started in April, the pandemic's impact had become apparent. Significant resource was diverted to the waste management response and much of the planned programme was put on hold.

As the year progressed it was possible to start work on some of the agreed activities, but others were removed from the programme or reshaped due to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic.



Responding 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 recycling and waste that is produced by households. This needed an exceptional response and SEP proved to be the ideal vehicle to ensure the county's services continued to operate and manage huge increases in waste volumes.

- From the start of the first lockdown on 23 March 2020 to the end of March 2021 an additional 49,707 tonnes of recycling and waste was collected, an increase of 12.2% over normal tonnages.
- Core services were maintained throughout the year.

The following sections outline the work that enabled this to be achieved.

Contingency planning

Being an established, well-functioning partnership with an officer team already working on its behalf, SEP was in a good position to respond quickly to the emerging situation. Several staff in the JWS team were immediately diverted to the coronavirus response including contingency planning.

From March 2020
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Contingency planning work included:

- Regular contact between officers from all 12 authorities to share knowledge, support each other and discuss contingency planning. This was via virtual meetings and a dedicated email group.
- Lobbying to ensure staff working on collection and disposal operations were included in key worker lists.
- A review of the SEP work programme to identify activities that should not continue, either due to safety concerns, or because it was more appropriate to delay them. This enabled the identification of members of JWS staff that could be diverted to coronavirus contingency planning activities and ensure that resource was dedicated to delivering functions that were of most benefit.
- Maintaining links with Surrey Resilience Forum and ensuring its members were updated on the pandemic's impact on recycling and waste services.

Delivering services

Key to the pandemic response was ensuring that services continued to be delivered in Surrey and that crews could operate safely. Work in this area included:

- Waste data was collated regularly to understand the impact that increased home working and lockdowns were having on the amount of recycling and waste being collected.
- A service tracker spreadsheet showing the status of all services across the county was updated and circulated weekly.
- Advice from industry organisations and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on how to apply social distancing measures when carrying out recycling and waste collections was carefully monitored and quickly shared with all SEP partners.
- Feedback about contingency planning, service priorities, levels of service and sickness rates was provided to Defra and the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC).



- Staff from Surrey's waste disposal contractor, Suez, were redeployed to help with collections and emptying local recycling banks while the Community Recycling Centres (CRCs) were closed.
- Discussion and planning before the reopening of the CRCs ensured sufficient traffic management was in place to minimise disruption to collection service vehicles.



All core services in Surrey (food waste, dry mixed recycling and residual waste) remained up and running throughout the height of the pandemic.

- Contingency planning and risk assessments were undertaken to review the potential impact of the test, track and trace system on collection crews and depots.
- While some authorities experienced temporary disruption to the collection of a small number of materials such as garden waste and textiles, all core services in Surrey, food waste, dry mixed recycling (DMR) and residual waste, remained up and running throughout the height of the pandemic.
- Surrey authorities fared very well when compared with the national picture, where during the first wave of the pandemic, up to 20% of recycling and waste services, and over 50% of garden waste collections in England experienced disruption.
- The HSE inspected the measures in place at two CRCs. Both sites passed the inspections and feedback from HSE was positive.

Communications



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



Communications was a critical requirement of the pandemic response and the JWS team undertook a significant programme of coronavirus-related communications work for the partnership. This included the rapid creation of two new campaigns:

- The first campaign was developed when public health guidance was issued to advise residents on 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 recycling and waste collection services and crews.



- This was further developed, and messages expanded as schools and CRCs closed and the full lockdown came into place.

- Activity included sharing campaign messages countywide through SEP's website and social media channels, magazine advertising and targeted digital advertising on websites, YouTube, Spotify, Google search and Gmail. Media releases were issued, radio interviews arranged, and campaign toolkits were created and shared with all partners.

Communications was a critical requirement of the pandemic response and the JWS team undertook a significant programme of coronavirus-related communications work.

Additional communications and engagement activity included:

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

The coronavirus communications work was well received by residents and there was some very good engagement.

There were over

96,000

new visitors to the
SEP website

Evaluation highlights

- Posts on SEP's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels were seen nearly 4.6 million times.
- There were almost a quarter of a million shares, retweets, likes, comments and replies to posts.
- Pages on the SEP website were viewed 783,997 times, a 278% increase from the same period in 2019-20.
- There were over 96,000 new visitors to the SEP website.
- Digital adverts were seen 16.2 million times.
- Videos were viewed over 680,000 times.
- There were 268,454 searches on the Surrey Recycles search tool and app.

Influencing national strategy

The UK Government's National Resources and Waste Strategy for England was published in December 2018 and signalled that there will be significant changes to how waste is managed and funded over the coming years.



It has been essential for SEP to engage, respond and seek to influence the Government on its proposals, while also preparing for implementation of the potential changes.

The key measures being proposed that impact local authorities are:

- Invoking the 'polluter pays' principle by extending producer responsibility for packaging.
- The introduction of a deposit return scheme (DRS) for cans and bottles.
- A consistent set of materials mandated for collection from households for recycling.

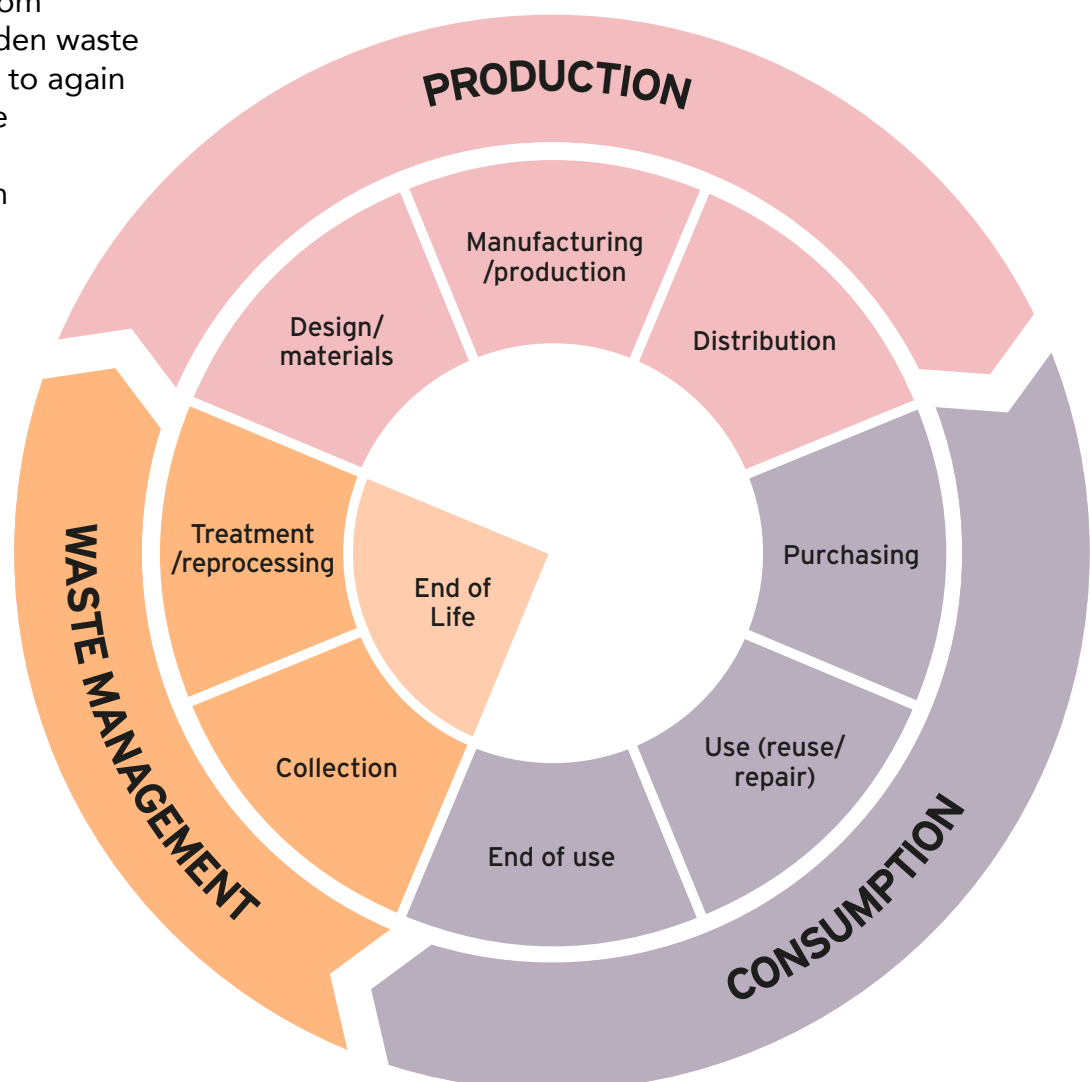
The second round of consultations on these measures were expected to be launched in 2020 but were delayed significantly, partly due to the coronavirus pandemic. The consultations were eventually launched in

March and May 2021, so the work undertaken to review, analyse and respond to these will be captured in SEP's 2021-22 annual review.

It has been essential for SEP to engage, respond and seek to influence the Government on its proposals.

However, the JWS team completed several activities during 2020-21 including:

- Responded on behalf of SEP to the HM Treasury technical consultation on the plastic packaging tax, confirming that we are supportive of its introduction.
- Fed into Defra workshops on the core set of recycling materials to be collected at kerbside, and the statutory and non-statutory consistency guidance.
- Responded to a call for evidence from LARAC on garden waste collection data to again help inform the second-round consultation on consistency of collections.
- Responded to the signatory consultation on extending Courtauld 2025 to 2030 on behalf of SEP, stating that we support its revised targets, and that we will continue to play our part in helping to reduce food waste and work towards eliminating food waste to landfill by 2030.
- Formed a task group of officers from across the partnership, to develop SEP's response to the second-round consultations ahead of the deadlines.



Building our data and intelligence

Waste data management system

The new waste data system, which was procured in 2019-20, is now fully operational and this has allowed for a number of improvements in the timeliness and accuracy of reporting.

Some Surrey authorities are now using the system to help prepare their statutory returns to the Government each quarter. It is expected that other authorities will, in time, follow the same approach, which will lead to greater consistency of reporting to the Government while reducing officer time required for this work.

Work in 2020-21 primarily focused on ensuring that the system is acting as the single source of accurate and timely tonnage data for the partnership. Work has been undertaken to provide greater automation

of the data flow from the weighbridges, where recycling and waste tonnages are recorded, into the waste data system.

This involves collaboration between the partnership authorities and Suez, Surrey County Council's (SCC) waste disposal contractor, to reduce the scope for human error at the weighbridge. By ensuring that all vehicles are appropriately registered on both systems, and then having the details of what material has been collected and from where clearly displayed in each vehicle the weighbridge operators can more easily identify and record the details we need.

Additionally, a new quarterly performance report has been developed this year and is now being published on the SEP website.

Composition analysis

Understanding the composition of waste in Surrey is a key tool in assessing the effectiveness of work that has taken place to reduce waste and increase recycling and to help us decide where to target future work.

A composition analysis to take samples from recycling and rubbish bins was due to take place in 2020 but had to be rescheduled to 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. However, it was possible to undertake the tender process for the work and MEL Waste Insights was selected as the preferred bidder. Sampling of recycling and rubbish bins took place in June and July 2021 and details of the analysis and how the information is being used will be included in the next annual review.

Work has been undertaken to provide greater automation of the data flow from the weighbridges, where recycling and waste tonnages are recorded.

Improving our audience insight

While we have used insight to identify the best audience to target for communications campaigns in the past, we felt this could be further improved by developing a more detailed audience segmentation. Behaviour change is complex. Motivators and barriers can vary across different audiences and mean different messages and approaches are required. The more we understand about this the better we can engage with our residents.

So, in 2020-21 we created four audience segments to help target our communications more effectively. To do this, we used existing research that had been commissioned with Surrey residents together with data from external organisations such as WRAP, Keep Britain Tidy and Mail Metro Media.

Each segment has been split depending on their interest, engagement and ability in relation to recycling and includes information about various factors that are most likely to occur within the group:

- Socio-demographics.
- Which communications channels they are most likely to use.
- Which types of messaging are most likely to encourage behaviour change within the segment.

- What type of adverts they are most likely to respond to.
- What their behaviours and attitudes related to recycling, contamination, the environment, food waste recycling and waste reduction are likely to be.

These new segments are now being used for the communications and engagement work in the 2021-22 programme.

Which communications channels are most like to be used?



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 recycling to bin stores.

To tackle this, SEP funded a highly successful two-year project from 2017-2019 to improve flats recycling for 6,759 properties within blocks of flats. As a result, 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 (HMOs).

In 2020-21 this work comprised two projects:

- Interventions at flats and HMOs based on best practice, a project that started in 2019.
- Expansion of small electricals (WEEE) collections from flats in some areas of Surrey (courtesy of the WEEE fund award).

Due to coronavirus, work in Reigate, which had started in 2019 to reduce contamination and expand DMR and food waste collection services, was paused indefinitely while Reigate and Banstead Borough Council focused on maintaining essential collections at existing properties.



In Spelthorne, the JWS team completed phase three of the best practice interventions project:

- Delivering interventions to improve recycling at 891 households, taking the total for the project to 2,796.
- Introducing food waste collections to a further 617 households, taking the total to 2,084.
- Introducing DMR collections to a further 123 households, taking the total to 169.



Work also resumed at two sites in Woking where the introduction of DMR and food collection services had previously been planned. New bin stores were built at one site by the management company to help improve access to the bins for both crews and residents. Food and DMR services were introduced to around 80 households.

To further encourage residents to use a food waste caddy, a low-cost hook that can help store caddies where space is limited was developed.



Small-scale trials of the first version of the hook took place in October 2020 with residents feeding back suggestions for improvements. A second hook was then developed, which is undergoing further trials.

Due to additional budgetary pressures created by the pandemic, the ability for collection authorities to contribute match funding to progress more improvement works at flats became constrained. As a result, a new funding model was agreed, in which SCC would provide capital funds in addition to SEP funds to pay for work during the 2021-22 work programme and beyond.

Expansion of WEEE collections from flats



In December 2019, SEP was awarded grant funding of £18,611 from Materials Change to expand small electricals and battery collections to flats across Woking, Waverley, Spelthorne, Elmbridge, Mole Valley and Surrey Heath.

For operational reasons, the work couldn't be progressed in Elmbridge and Mole Valley, so Runnymede Borough Council was invited to participate instead.

So far, 80-litre, pink-lidded bins with small battery bins attached to the side of them have been delivered to flats in Waverley, Woking and Surrey Heath.

Results to date estimate that residents across the three boroughs have recycled up to 2.6 tonnes of small electricals and batteries. The project is due to be rolled out in Runnymede and Spelthorne during 2021-22.



2.6 tonnes

small electricals and batteries recycled

Contamination reduction

Tackling contamination of DMR is complex because it has many causes and there are several stages within the process where it could be addressed. As part of the 2020-21 programme, work took place to gain a detailed understanding of the current situation, processes and practices. This is essential to recommending further areas for development. Specific work took place in multiple areas.

Crew training and engagement

- Training and communications to enable crew members to identify contaminated bins and to explain the process to correctly 'lock out' a contaminated bin, i.e., not empty it, log it on the data system and notify the resident. This prevents contaminants from being emptied into the load and disrupts resident behaviour by leaving contaminated bins unemptied and providing them with information on what can and can't be recycled via a paper hanger attached to their bin. It also improves the data collected by in-cab systems.
- Training sessions were developed and trialled in Surrey Heath and Woking and focused on engaging with crews as Recycling Champions. Due to coronavirus the sessions were delayed until later in the year and delivered virtually crew by crew.
- To accompany the training, printed sheets were created for crews to use while they are on their rounds, bin hangers were updated and explanatory postcards were created for crews to give to any residents who questioned them on their rounds.
- Printed bulletins displayed in waste depots to continue engagement with crews are now being produced on a regular basis.
- Prior to the training, five loads were rejected in Surrey Heath in January 2021 due to contamination. This reduced to just one load in May 2021.





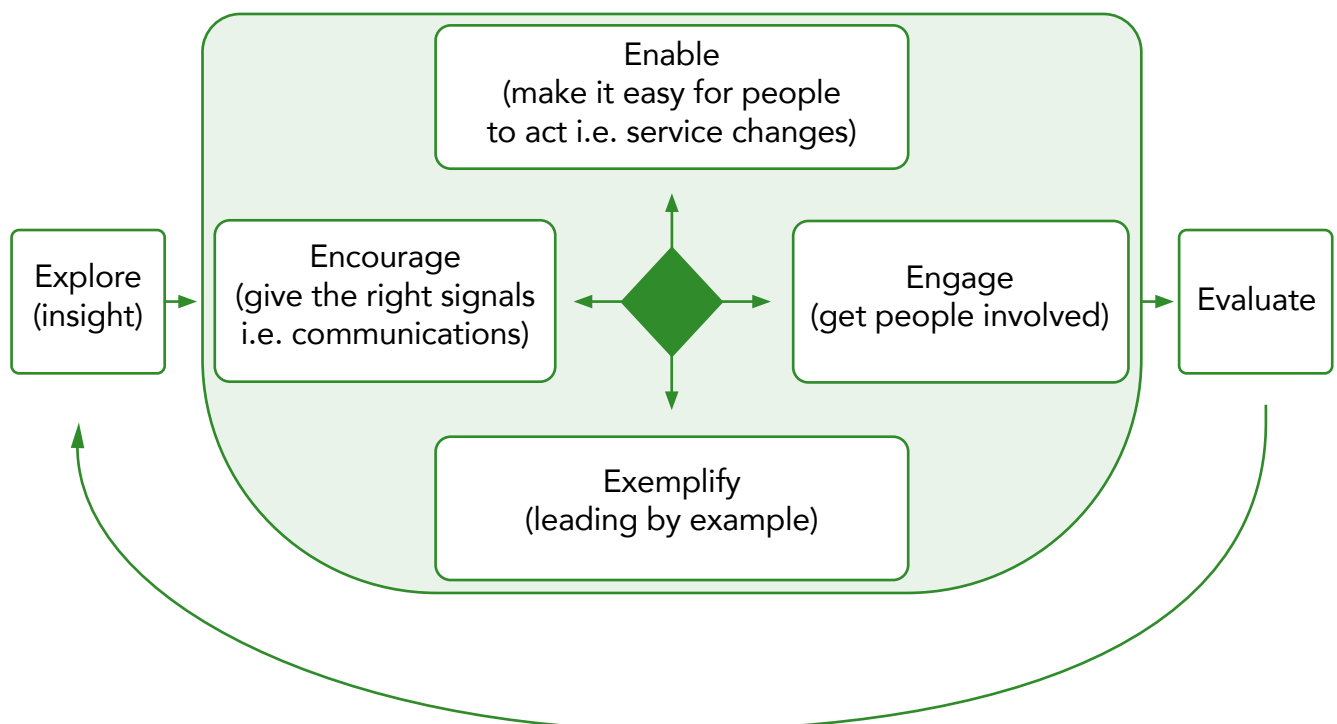
Contamination review

- A process review of the policies and practices in place across the partnership to manage contamination took place. This provided key findings and recommendations for future work, which is being taken forward in the 2021-22 programme of work.
- The review covered:
 - > Opportunities in the process to reduce contamination.
 - > Communicating with residents.
 - > Thresholds for rejecting contaminated bins.
 - > Crew engagement and training.
 - > Information flows between collection authorities, waste transfer stations and material recycling facilities.
 - > Data collection and processing.
 - > Communal properties.
- A new SEP contamination monthly project board has been formed to progress this work.



Watch Your Waste campaign

Each SEP communications campaign is developed 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 campaigns.



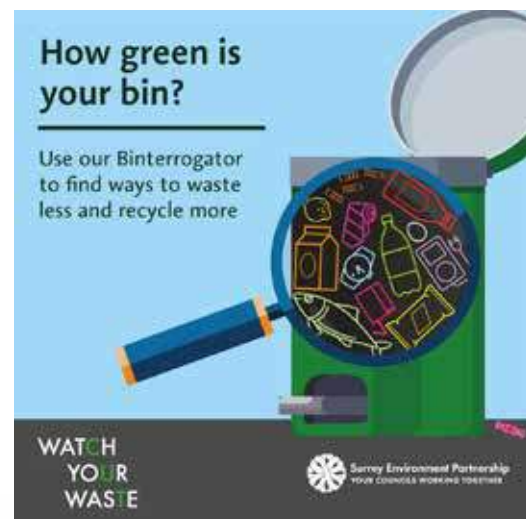
The type of evaluation is determined by the campaign spend. For higher budget campaigns independent research is commissioned, which gives us an insight into how residents responded to the campaign and if it impacted their behaviour. Smaller budget campaigns are predominantly delivered through digital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

Our planned campaign for 2020-21 aimed to capitalise on residents' interest in doing more to improve the environment and issue a strong call to action for residents to 'own their impact'. However, the coronavirus pandemic caused us to both delay the start of the campaign and rethink the theme. Asking residents to own their impact felt inappropriate while they were living under Government mandated restrictions.

Communications focused on specific topics at different times with the creative given a consistent look and feel and all materials badged under the 'Watch Your Waste' banner.

The campaign was renamed as Watch Your Waste and launched in September 2020 with messages that aligned and followed on from the coronavirus-specific campaign, which was created in response to the pandemic.

Communications focused on specific topics at different times with the creative given a consistent look and feel and all materials badged under the 'Watch Your Waste' banner. Digital channels and tactics used to reach residents included social media, advertising on websites visited by Surrey residents, Google search and Gmail, and films on YouTube. Offline tactics included media interviews, newspaper advertorials and radio advertising.



September

- The campaign started by encouraging residents to review the amount of waste they produce using a Binterrogator. The tool, which can be downloaded from the SEP website, can reduce waste by helping residents to monitor what they put in their rubbish bins over a given period and finding recyclable or reusable alternatives to items thrown away regularly.
- During the same month, we took part in Recycle Week, the annual campaign organised by WRAP to encourage the nation to recycle more.



October

- We encouraged residents to reduce waste by composting at home, highlighting the environmental benefits of composting and the discounted compost bins available to Surrey residents.
- During the same month, we also encouraged residents to increase recycling by using food caddies. Key messages focused on using food caddies to free up space in rubbish bins as residents were spending more time at home due to Government guidance and bins were fuller than usual.



November/ December

- Our communications centred around waste reduction and recycling during and just after the festive period.
- A particular focus was to reduce the amount of contamination from non-recyclable cards and paper, including encouraging residents to make sustainable choices when buying these items.



January/February

- The campaign again encouraged residents to reduce the amount of food waste they produce and recycle as much food waste as possible. Messaging gave tips on how to reduce and recycle food waste and highlighted the resources available to help.

March

- The food waste focus was extended to support and share messages about the first national Food Waste Action Week, which ran from 1-7 March.

Engaging residents in our messages was challenging but we nevertheless achieved some good results.

- Also in March residents were encouraged to reduce waste by composting at home and to recycle more by signing up to their local garden waste collection service. This phase of messaging came at a time when residents were feeling more optimistic as restrictions began to ease, so we used updated artwork featuring fun images of garden gnomes.

Through the campaign period the global pandemic continued, and messages related to it dominated all communications channels. Cutting through this noise to engage residents in our messages was challenging, but we nevertheless achieved some good results.

Evaluation highlights

- Almost 182,000 views of the SEP website campaign pages.
- Digital adverts on websites visited by residents were seen just under 6 million times and generated over 60,000 clicks to the SEP website.
- Posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were seen 890,000 times and resulted in almost 30,000 engagements (likes, comments, shares, link clicks).
- 20 posts on public Facebook groups reached a combined following of over 142,000 members.
- A campaign article on Surrey Live generated 1,200 page views, an article in the Surrey Advertiser reached 47,452 readers and a single blog post by a local blogger received 3,554 page views.
- Posts on the social network, NextDoor, were trialled for the first time and were seen by more than 148,000 residents.
- Campaign videos across all SEP digital channels were seen 428,618 times.

Posts on Facebook, Twitter and
Instagram were seen

890,000 times

Collection crew safety campaign

Collection crews can play a very important role in achieving SEP's aims, and it is important they feel supported. Feedback had indicated that many crew members were dealing with regular abuse from some residents, sometimes directed at them and sometimes at the vehicles they are driving.



So, it was agreed to run a campaign as part of the 2020-21 programme to highlight this issue and encourage residents to support their collection crews and show more consideration.

During the early months of the coronavirus pandemic, attitudes towards crews became more positive and we used our coronavirus messaging to encourage residents to recognise their crews as key workers and support them as they continued to do their job under challenging circumstances.

As restrictions eased in 2020 some of the earlier behaviours started to emerge again, so we ran a digital media campaign in November and December 2020.

The aim was to stimulate a change in attitude and behaviour among residents to help reduce verbal abuse of bin collection crews and the number of motorists who pass too close to bin collection vehicles in Surrey. The campaign was generally well received and saw some good engagement from residents.

Evaluation highlights

- Over 7,000 pageviews of the campaign webpage on the SEP website.
- Media coverage by BBC Radio Surrey.
- Digital adverts seen nearly 600,000 times.
- Significant amount of positive feedback from residents expressing support and appreciation for local collection crews.

Data driven interventions

While it is important to undertake countywide communication to remind and motivate people to recycle, we also need to specifically target residents who are not participating in recycling services or not using them on a regular basis.

To help inform this work, Eunomia was commissioned to review similar interventions undertaken in other parts of the UK. The plans to use the learnings from this report to progress trials were delayed by the pandemic, but a series of targeted interventions were able to be developed and trialled in the latter part of 2020-21.

Food waste



In Elmbridge and Woking, the interventions focused on food waste. Six data sets were created using in-cab reports that indicate whether a household has presented a food waste bin. Residents who had not regularly presented a food waste bin in a 12-week period were targeted in November 2020 using a range of different communications formats to test both methods and messages. This included a combination of postcards, letters, bin hangers and bin stickers, while the messages highlighted the environmental benefit of recycling food waste, the cost-saving benefit, or both.

Results showed that:

- Overall, after households received the communications, the in-cab reports showed that over a 12-week period 34.9% more food waste bins were put out for collection.
- The most effective communication method was a sticker attached to rubbish bins with a postcard featuring a motivating message on the cost-saving benefits of using food waste bins hand-delivered through doors. After households received this type of communications, the in-cab reports showed that over a 12-week period 102.9% more food waste bins were put out.



Further trials are now being carried out as part of the 2021-22 programme.

Garden waste

We worked with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, Spelthorne Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council to increase garden waste subscriptions. We compiled a list of all households likely to have gardens in each borough that were not currently signed up to their service and measured the distance they were from a CRC.

We then split those properties into groups depending on how far they lived from a CRC and pulled out the three groups of properties that were the furthest distance as logic suggested that they were more likely to sign up to the service.

We developed three communication types – a letter, a standard postcard and a leaf-shaped postcard – and sent some of each to households within each group. Communications either focused on the convenience or the environmental benefits of using the service.



Data to assess the outcomes of the interventions showed that the interventions were successful in prompting new sign-ups to garden waste services. Initial calculations indicated a good return on investment with the total number of new subscriptions covering the cost of the intervention plus 148% of additional income. The return on investment will continue to increase with every additional year the residents maintain their subscription. The new

subscriptions will also lead to an increase in garden waste tonnages collected by each council with some potentially diverted from residual waste and some from waste that was previously taken to a CRC.

The new subscriptions will lead to an increase in garden waste tonnages collected by each council.



Harnessing the power of pestering

Educating children about waste reduction and recycling can achieve two key benefits – preparing them for the future when they are responsible for the waste generated in their homes and taking messages back home to their families and encouraging them to act now. For SEP's 2020-21 programme it was agreed to continue to fund the Wastebuster online schools engagement programme in Surrey, which crossed two academic years.

2019-20

For the 2019-20 academic year, primary-aged schoolchildren at Surrey's state and independent schools benefited from their teachers' continued access to Wastebuster's online teaching resources. In addition, a new challenge was developed to help reduce contamination of recycling bins by promoting the Surrey Recycles search tool and app.

Performance against KPIs in 2019-20 was affected by the closure of schools in March 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic with schools largely unable to focus on anything other than the core subjects.

Results showed that:

- 196 state schools accessed the online portal (down from 197 during 2018-19), downloading 2,169 resources (up from 2,048 in 2018-19).
- 30 independent schools accessed the portal (down from 43 in 2018-19), downloading 339 resources (down from 360 in 2018-19).



2020-21

Following research into school activity relating to recycling and waste, we developed a new programme of work with Wastebuster for the 2020-21 academic year. The focus was to:

- Work with Wastebuster to improve how they communicate with schools and simplify the web portal to make it quicker and easier for teachers to engage with the content.
- Make it easier for children to take recycling and waste activities home to be completed with their families.
- Make it as easy as possible for both teachers and parents to complete activities with children if schools were closed due to coronavirus.

To achieve this, we worked closely with Wastebuster on the communications sent to schools and on their webpages, making sure they were in line with what the research indicated.



We also worked with them to develop a Kids Club website that parents could access to carry out activities at home and a badge book feature that encouraged schools and families to take part by incentivising them with digital badges and rewards.

Results showed that:

- 265 state schools accessed the online portal, downloading 5,187 resources
- 27 independent schools accessed the portal, downloading 509 resources.



Encouraging composting at home

The best thing that residents can do with garden and food waste is to compost it at home. So, during 2020-21, SEP continued to subsidise the cost of compost bins and hot composters to encourage Surrey residents to use them.

As well as offering a year-round discount, in 2020-21 we trialled two bank holiday weekend sales, one for compost bins and one for hot composters, which can compost all food waste, offering a bigger discount for a limited period.

During the first lockdown, we encouraged residents to compost as they couldn't visit a CRC and had more time at home. This resulted in greater interest and a higher sale of bins, which then increased substantially when we ran the first time-limited sale at the end of May.

**Compost ALL your food waste
with a hot composter**



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The sale at the end of May saw a ten-fold increase in sales over the same period the year before.



This saw a ten-fold increase in sales over the same period the year before. The hot composter sale over the August bank holiday followed and was also very successful. Almost the same number of hot composters sold in three days as in the whole of the previous year.

Using WRAP's methodology, we have estimated that the saving from tonnage diversion over five years will make back the cost of subsidising a compost bin plus a 200% saving. For a hot composter, the additional saving is over 400%.

Getting real about nappies

Research from the Environment Agency has shown that the weekly rubbish collected from parents with babies could be halved if they use cloth nappies. Additionally, contamination of recycling bins with disposable nappies is a significant and costly issue and one way to avoid this would be if more parents used cloth nappies instead of disposables.

To encourage Surrey residents to do this, a SEP trial kit scheme offered them the opportunity to try using real nappies before committing to buying them. The scheme was planned to continue in 2020-21, but had to be paused due to the coronavirus pandemic.

However, independent research just prior to the pandemic had revealed a significant number of people in Surrey had misconceptions about modern real nappies. So, it was agreed to focus on communications to try and change perceptions and encourage residents to consider real nappies if they were planning, expecting or had a new baby.

This was done through targeted digital advertising on social media and relevant websites, as well as through films featuring mums who use real nappies that aimed to bust myths and educate people. Despite the relatively small target audience, some good results were achieved.

Evaluation highlights

- During the campaign period, there were 8,600 pageviews of the SEP website campaign pages, with a longer than average time on page of 3 minutes 10 seconds.
- Campaign videos were seen almost 8,000 times.
- Facebook posts were seen more than 148,000 times and generated over 6,000 video views. There were also 6,200 engagements on the posts (likes, comments, shares, link clicks), which is a very high level of engagement.



Surrey Recycles search tool and app

The Surrey Recycles online search tool and app allows Surrey residents to find out how to recycle or dispose of items where they live. This helps to ensure that the right things go into the right bins to increase recycling and reduce contamination.

Residents simply enter their postcode and an item name to receive results that tell them the best thing to do with it. The app is available from the Apple and Google Play app stores while the online tool is embedded on most Surrey council websites and on SEP's website. It is also available in eight other languages as well as English.

During 2020-21, more than a quarter of a million searches took place and there were 3,352 downloads of the phone app, an increase of 53% on the previous year. This was the result of dedicated communications campaigns designed to promote the tool and highlight specific contaminants during the year.

Additionally, during 2020-21 further information was added to the search results including links to Terracycle recycling schemes, zero waste shops and relevant pages of the SEP website, such as leftover recipes.

We also switched to the new version of the app, which enabled us to add links to the new report, 'What happened to Surrey's waste, 2019-20'.

Campaign evaluation highlights

- 135,447 visits to the search tool webpage.
- More than 32,000 first time users of the tool.
- Digital ads seen over 10 million times.
- Almost 300,000 video views.



From launch in 2016 to the end of March 2021:

- The app had been downloaded over 12,431 times.
- Almost 864,318 searches had taken place through the app or online tool. That ensured that all those items were correctly recycled or disposed of.

Recycling guides

Over the past five years SEP's communications activity has shifted to being primarily digital. Most residents are online and as well as being cost effective, many channels enable us to target residents by postcode, demographics and interests.

However, not all residents are online and even for those that are, a printed communication can make a longer-term impact. Additionally, research from multiple sources indicates that multi-mode communication and engagement is critical, with varied use of digital and non-digital means.

So, as with previous years, the JWS team worked with each authority to develop localised printed guides to recycling and waste based on a consistent template to be distributed in their area. The guides communicate information about the local collection service, educate residents about what should go into each of their bins and some guides provide collection calendars for the following year.

As with the Surrey Recycles search tool this helps to ensure that the right things go into the right bins to increase recycling and reduce contamination.

Over 450,000 printed service guides were designed, printed and delivered to households in every area of Surrey in October and November 2020 and seven of the eleven guides included collection calendars for 2021. Following distribution, independent research with residents showed exceptionally high levels of recall and retention.

Over

450,000

guides were printed

Evaluation highlights

- 81% of residents recalled receiving the guide.
- 80% of those who received a calendar recalled receiving it.
- 70% of those said they had already read it.
- 78% of those who had already read their guide had kept it.
- The guides were highly rated for their clarity and the quality of their design.



What happened to Surrey's waste

In recent years there has been increased interest from the media and residents about what happens to recycling and waste. Previously, a document listing end destination outlets was published on the SEP website, but to increase transparency, address misconceptions and reassure residents about what happens to their recycling and waste, it was agreed to publish a new report in a format that is easier to understand and engage with.



This also enables us to highlight how much waste is disposed of that could have been recycled and encourage residents to recycle more. Research shows that a barrier to recycling is not knowing that your efforts make a difference.

As the data for each year is published by Defra around nine months after the end of each reporting year, the work in 2020-21 involved producing the report covering Surrey's waste from 2019-20.

The report includes:

- How much waste was collected overall, how much was recycled and how much was disposed of as rubbish.
- How much recycled material was processed in the UK and how much was sent abroad. This information was also broken down by material type.
- How much rubbish was sent to an energy from waste facility and how much was sent to landfill.
- How much rubbish was processed in the UK and how much was sent abroad.

'What happened to Surrey's waste, 2019-20' was published on the SEP website, alongside an infographic and interactive map. The information is shown at countywide level and broken down by district and borough areas.

85.8%

of recycling stayed
in the UK

Key facts:

- 501,797 tonnes collected
- 56.3% recycled
- 36.9% turned into energy
- 6.8% landfilled
- 85.8% of recycling stayed in the UK

Digital channel development

A new SEP website and SEP social media channels were created and launched to coincide with the updated brand name on 1 April 2019. These 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. During 2020-21 we continued to develop and grow all these SEP channels.

Website

- The SEP website had 741,791 pageviews, which was an increase of 158% compared to 2019-20.
- There were 392,994 new visitors to the site.
- 14,586 visitors came to the SEP website via a partner website – 4% of the total website users.

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, films, short animations (GIFs) and campaign artwork. We also have a SEP YouTube channel where residents can view our films, which are all produced in-house.

SEP's partner authorities are asked to share the 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.

Top 3 most visited pages

1. Surrey Recycles search tool
2. Food
3. Help your crew to help you

During 2020-21:

- SEP's Facebook page gained a further 1,900 followers and posts were seen 4,051,885 times.
- Engagements on Facebook (likes, shares, comments, link clicks, video views), increased four-fold to 260,417, with an average of 21,701 engagements each month.
- SEP's Instagram channel gained 962 new followers with posts seen 1,363,771 times which generated 12,415 engagements.
- SEP's Twitter account gained 303 followers with posts seen 1,148,700 times.
- There were 762,775 views of SEP films on YouTube, which were viewed for a total of 8,048 hours.

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 five 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 among 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.

Activity undertaken as part of the 2020-21 programme has focused on strengthening enforcement and changing behaviours through education.

If someone is taking your waste away, help **REDUCE FLY-TIPPING by checking they're registered **FIRST.****



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Strengthening enforcement

The Fly-tipping Enforcement Officers Group continued to meet regularly for partners to share intelligence, best practice and resources to reduce fly-tipping. Representatives from both Surrey Police and the Environment Agency attend the meetings as well as SEP partner authorities.

A pilot task force in Runnymede has been started in conjunction with Surrey Police to tackle fly-tipping activity that is recognised as Serious and Organised Crime. £10,000 of funding was secured from the Police and Crime Commissioner for this work.

A vehicle seizure training session for enforcement teams and partner agencies took place on 2 and 3 February 2021. The training had 30 officers in attendance and was very well received. Additionally, some budget was carried forward to 2021-22 to fund a partnership problem solving training session that was originally due to take place in 2020, and to help support the task force pilot.



Changing behaviours

The fly-tipping communications campaign in 2020-21 aimed to stimulate and sustain a change in attitude and behaviour among residents and businesses to help reduce fly-tipping in Surrey. The objectives were to educate residents and businesses about their responsibilities when disposing of waste and highlight the consequences of fly-tipping and convictions that have taken place.

Communications work was undertaken throughout the year to share social media content when partners had relevant news to share. However, communications activities increased during two main phases of the campaign when levels of fly-tipping are known to spike – in August and September 2020 and March 2021.

Phase one of the campaign used refreshed artwork from the 2019-20 campaign, which had evaluated well previously. Phase two of the campaign took place during March 2021 and used edited versions of the SCRAP artwork developed by Hertfordshire County Council.

Both phases used tactics including print, radio and digital advertising, alongside social media activity. Phase two also included an advertorial in the Surrey Advertiser newspaper and on the Surrey Live website.

Evaluation highlights

- More than 23,000 views of SEP's fly-tipping webpages.
- Digital adverts seen over 3.7 million times.
- Campaign films viewed over 32,000 times.
- Highest ever awareness of a fly-tipping campaign at 49% (up from 41% in 2019-20).
- 65% of residents said the campaign deters people from fly-tipping.
- 63% said it increased their understanding of their responsibilities when disposing of household and construction waste.

Residents engaged well with the messages and independent research commissioned after phase two showed some positive results.

Residents:

63%

better understood
their responsibilities

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 SCC, working closely with representatives from the partnership, led the development of a single-use plastics strategy for Surrey. The strategy includes a five-year action plan to deliver the following set of 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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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.



Progress in 2020-21

While some good overall progress has been made, delivery of this strategy has been very challenging, and there hasn't always been enough resource within local authorities to dedicate time to addressing this issue.

The coronavirus pandemic has also meant that certain disposable items, such as gloves, masks and wipes, are essential, and the use of some reusable receptacles (for example in coffee shops) has been discouraged.

During 2020-21, guidance on SUP reduction was gathered from Government and external organisations and best practice from local authorities was collated. A report on this review has been drafted and distributed to partners to help them deliver the 'getting our house in order' aims of the SUP strategy.

A number of national developments may have a positive impact on the amount of plastic waste generated in Surrey. This means that some of the actions in the joint strategy may become less relevant in the future.

National developments:

- A ban on plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds that came into effect on 1 October 2020.
- The 5p single-use carrier bag charge was extended to all retailers and increased to 10p from April 2021.
- Reform of the UK packaging producer responsibility system as part of the extended producer responsibility proposals in the new national waste strategy.
- The DRS proposed as part of the new national waste strategy may increase the recycling of SUP drinks containers.
- The introduction of a tax on plastic packaging that does not meet a minimum threshold of recycled content, which is due to come into effect from April 2022.

The 5p single-use carrier bag charge was extended to all retailers and increased to 10p from April 2021.



What's underway in 2021-22?

The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic continued to be felt as planning for the 2021-22 work programme got underway. These included local government budgets, which became even more squeezed than before the pandemic.

As a result, the funding for SEP was reduced for 2021-22 and the partnership's priorities and activities needed to be carefully considered to ensure maximum value for money.

After an extensive review of the latest performance data and the evidence base for all previous and potential activities, it was agreed that the priorities for the 2021-22 programme should be waste reduction, food waste recycling and reducing contamination of DMR.

- **Waste reduction** was selected as a priority because it sits at the top of the waste hierarchy. In other words, the best thing you can do to manage waste is to not produce it in the first place. As well as the environmental benefits, the reduction of waste should result in a reduction in collection and disposal costs.
- There is strong evidence that previous partnership activities have successfully increased **food waste recycling**, but composition analyses show that there is still a large amount of this material in residual waste bins.
- **Reducing contamination of DMR** was selected as a priority due to an upward trend in contamination levels and the impact on performance and costs for authorities.

Activities focused around these areas make up a significant part of the programme that is currently underway. There are also activities that will further support the priorities, help to manage the operation of the partnership, or help define the future waste strategy for Surrey.



All activities are designed to deliver against one of these seven objectives:

- Develop and deliver initiatives that support the three priority areas of waste reduction, food waste recycling and reducing contamination of DMR.
- Educate and encourage residents and their children to take action to reduce, reuse and recycle quality material.
- Develop a new joint waste strategy for Surrey.
- Support partner authorities to reduce fly-tipping across the county.
- Establish an intelligence platform that informs decision making, helps prioritise actions to reduce carbon emissions and improves residents' understanding of what happens to their recycling and waste.
- Ensure partners are kept informed and the reputation of SEP continues to be protected and developed.
- Manage the partnership effectively to ensure activities are delivered with appropriate governance and oversight, and crisis and issues are responded to rapidly.

Additionally, as mentioned earlier in this review, the Government's new Resources and Waste Strategy means that significant changes to how waste is managed are expected in the coming years. So it continues to be critical that the partnership engages, responds and seeks to influence Government policy while also preparing for the forthcoming changes.

The Government's new Resources and Waste Strategy means that significant changes to how waste is managed are expected in the coming years.



Keeping in touch

If you have any questions about this report or would like to know more about SEP's work and get regular tips and information about waste prevention, reuse and recycling.

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