

Recycling and waste collection review

Questions and Answers

27 May 2025

What's the timeline for any changes?

Councillors will consider the options to modernise our waste service at meetings in June and July 2025. A final decision will be taken at the Meeting of the Council on 22 July 2025. Councillors are being asked to consider moving to alternate weekly waste collections from 1 April 2026. At the same time, we would introduce weekly food waste collections.

Wheelie bins for general waste and recycling would be provided for free to residents in the summer of 2026. Home glass recycling collections would start once residents have their wheelie bin for recycling.

Why is the Council changing its waste collection services?

Recycling is the most cost-effective way to deal with waste. But right now, we face unprecedented levels of waste and low recycling rates.

We need to increase capacity to introduce the new kerbside food waste and glass collections to meet new Government requirements.

We therefore have to modernise our waste collection services so they are more cost and carbon-efficient, helping our residents to recycle more of their waste.

Before making any decisions, we wanted to hear the views of residents. In late 2024, and into this year, we ran the BIG Waste Conversation survey. Thousands of local residents took part.

Residents told us we should reduce the environmental impact of our collection services and provide more recycling options. They also supported the introduction of wheelie bins and glass and food waste collections.

View the survey results in full at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/bigwaste.

Why is the Council considering alternate weekly collections?

This method is used by most councils. Many residents who took part in our survey supported this change.

Alternate weekly collections – collecting waste one week and recycling the next – will allow us to put more resources into collecting a greater range of recycling items from the kerbside, providing residents with wheelie bins, and modernising our collection fleet.

We would also collect food waste separately every week.

Based on the experience of other councils, our recycling rates will increase as a result of these changes, improving our carbon footprint as a Council and saving residents money.

When will I get my wheelie bins?

The exact date is to be confirmed, but a phased rollout will begin in the summer 2026.

Will we provide different size waste bins to suit household needs?

If we introduce wheelie bins, we will consider offering households different size bins to suit their needs.

Where would I store my waste until I get my wheelie bin?

Please store your general waste (black sacks) and recycling (green bags) as you do now.

Can I use my current wheelie bin instead of the Council's wheelie bins?

If we introduce wheelie bins, we will provide most homes (except those who use communal waste bins) with two free bins – one for waste and another for recycling. This is because the bins need to be compatible with the mechanical lifting equipment on our collection trucks.

How will food waste collections work?

You will be provided with a 7-litre caddy, for use in the kitchen, and a 23-litre caddy for collections. The food waste, once collected, will be composted, helping to tackle climate change.

When is the Council proposing to collect food waste?

Food waste will be collected every week from April 2026, when we'd urge you to put any cooked and uncooked food in your new food waste caddy.

In the meantime, you should continue to put cooked and uncooked food waste into your general waste (black sacks).

When is the Council proposing to collect glass?

We're planning to collect glass in recycling wheelie bins from the summer of 2026. In the meantime, please continue to take your glass to one of the 40 glass recycling banks in the District.

You'd previously said you were planning to collect glass for recycling from 31 March 2026. What's changed?

The Government announced its new Simpler Recycling guidelines at the end of 2024. This means we should now collect most dry recycling in just one container, with the exception of card and paper, which is to be collected separately to reduce the risk of contamination from other waste.

At the end of 2024, the Government also announced its Local Government Reorganisation plans. Taking a possible merger into account, we will need to consider bringing our waste collection services into line with our nearby councils to reduce the risk of unnecessary future expenditure on collection containers.

We had previously considered giving residents a box for their glass. But we are now proposing to give households a wheelie bin for all of their dry recycling (except card and paper), reducing the number of containers-needed to store household waste and recycling. The green reusable recycling bags will be used to store card and paper only.

I live in a flat, will this affect me?

If you use communal recycling facilities close to your flat, nothing will change.

I use clear sacks for recycling. What will happen to me?

We are considering how we can move these residents to wheelie bins, but at this time, nothing has been decided. We will write to these households if anything changes.

Will the Council replace the reusable recycling sacks with a wheelie bin for recycling?

It is proposed that the green reusable recycling bags will be used to store card and paper separately to reduce the risk of contamination from other waste.

Will I have a new collection day?

Some days may change, but most residents' collection days will remain the same. We will write to all households before April 2026 to give advance warning when their alternate weekly waste collections will begin.

When will a final decision be made on the waste collection service?

Councillors will consider the proposed changes in June and July 2025 with a final decision taken at the meeting of the Council on 22 July 2025.