

## Oxfordshire Environment Partnership

### Oxfordshire's Resources and Waste Strategy 2018-2023

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## Summary

Oxfordshire's Resources and Waste strategy has been developed on behalf of all Oxfordshire local authorities through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership (OEP). It runs from 2018-2023 and focuses on Local Authority Collected Waste.

The next 25 years will see rapid change for Oxfordshire in population and housing growth. The types of waste and the way in which we collect and manage waste are expected to change over time as technology innovation transforms society and organisations. Attitudes towards global and local waste issues will evolve and manufacturers will adapt by seeking to make their products more sustainable.

OEP has agreed a strategy which is bold and ambitious. We want to continue to be amongst the very best in the country, helping economic and population growth while using our resources sustainably. We realise that some targets are aspirational and may be challenging to achieve, but we want to push for the change, working with Government, our contractors, manufactures, retailers and residents to make it as easy as possible to produce less waste and recycle more.

We aim to:

- Keep household waste growth to zero (per person per year)
- Increase the amount of household waste we recycle to 70% by 2030

- Send less than 3% of our household rubbish to landfill by 2020

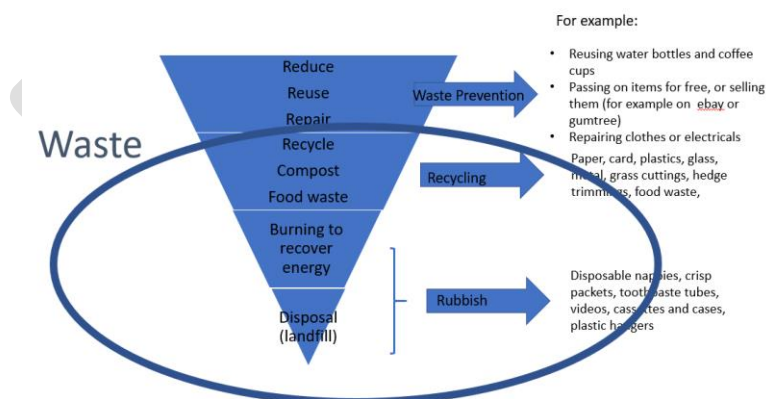
This strategy helps us all put in place some objectives, targets and practical measures to show how we will deliver our strategy. These will be further developed into a yearly action plan that will be available on our website.

## What is meant by waste?

Within this document we use several terms:

- Anaerobic Digestion (AD) – the process by which food waste is broken down to produce biogas for electricity and digestate, a fertiliser.
- Circular Economy - a concept which aims to keep resources in use for much longer, extracting the maximum value from them whilst in use, and ensuring that they can be recovered and recycled easily at the end of life.
- Commercial waste – waste generated by businesses who need to pay for collection and management
- Composting – the process by which garden waste is broken down to create a soil fertiliser
- Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) – where customers pay an upfront deposit on a product (such as a drinks bottle) which can be redeemed on return of the product.
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) – where producers are given significant responsibility (financial or physical) for the recycling or disposal of products at the end of their life
- Household waste – waste generated by householders, of which the cost of disposal or reprocessing is included within council tax payments
- InVessel Composting (IVC) – the enclosed process by which garden and food waste can be broken down to create a soil fertiliser. Temperature and air flow are monitored to ensure complete degradation
- Local Authority Collected Waste (LACW) - waste produced within Oxfordshire by householders, commercial waste collected by district councils, waste deposited at HWRCs, street sweepings, litter and fly tipped materials.
- Municipal solid waste (MSW)– Household waste, and waste from other sources, such as businesses, whose waste is similar in nature and composition to household waste (ie paper, card, plastic, glass, food waste etc) (MSW does not include liquid waste)
- Recycling –everything that needs reprocessing before it can be used again, for example glass, paper, card, plastics, food waste, garden waste, and metals
- Resources – a new way of looking at waste, not as something that we no longer need, but as resources for other processes.
- Rubbish – anything that cannot be recycled. In Oxfordshire this can be managed in one of two ways:

- Energy Recovery – Burnt to generate energy which is fed back in to the national grid
- Landfill – buried in the ground
- Single use - any disposable item which is designed to be used only once
- Waste – refers to everything that is thrown away, recyclables and rubbish
- Waste Collection Authority (WCA) - Responsible for collecting all household waste and arranging for the recyclables to be processed. Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.
- Waste Disposal Authority (WDA) – responsible for providing Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), and managing any rubbish collected. Oxfordshire County Council holds contracts for processing food waste, garden waste, hazardous waste, rubbish for energy recovery and landfill.
- Waste prevention – activity that minimises the amount thrown away, including
  - Reduction – Changing behaviour so waste isn't generated in the first place – for example buying loose fruit and veg rather than packaged,
  - Reuse – using an item straight away without any processing - for example refilling a water bottle, using a bag for life, or passing on items when you have finished with them.
  - Repair – mending items such as clothes or electricals so that they can continue to be used



## Introduction

Oxfordshire has made great improvements in waste reduction and recycling since its first joint strategy in 2007. The County is one of the best at recycling in England, recycling around 58% of household waste, exceeding the current English Government target of 50% by 2020. In addition, residents produce around 1 tonne of waste per household each year, one of the lowest in the country, but still equivalent in weight to a small family car.

The County, City and District Councils have worked together through OEP to improve kerbside collection services for residents, ensuring that all householders have access to a kerbside service that collects a wide range of materials.

We have developed comprehensive local infrastructure so that where possible, waste is managed within county:

- Reducing the distance that it travels; and
- Generating renewable energy that reduces our dependence on fossil fuels.

Waste is managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy; top priority is given to preventing waste, and when waste is created, it gives priority to preparing it for re-use, then recycling, then recovery and last of all disposal.

Our vision is for everyone in Oxfordshire, residents and businesses, to take ownership for the waste they generate. We want to work together to ensure items and materials are seen as a valuable resource to be used again, recycled for further manufacturing or sent for energy recovery.

As local authorities we will encourage and help residents and businesses to embrace the principles of waste as a resource and be part of our vision to think and act differently from now on.

We want to help residents to reduce the amount of waste that they produce and will develop a Waste Prevention Strategy identifying the key areas we will focus on. Activities may include:

- promotion of alternatives to single use plastics
- tips for careful shopping and meal planning
- supporting local 'libraries of things'
- publishing information about donating and purchasing second hand goods; and
- detail on how to repair rather than replace items;

We want to make it as easy as possible for residents to recycle, providing a comprehensive accessible service for a wide range of materials. We will ensure that we recover energy from non-recyclable materials, landfilling as little as possible.

## Why is waste important?

Reducing waste and increasing recycling benefits the environment; less raw materials are required, saving energy, emissions and protecting natural resources. On a local scale, waste is a universal service used, and paid for, by all residents. Around £42million/year is spent on collecting, managing and processing waste county wide. By increasing the amount we reuse and recycle we could reduce the amount spent on disposing of waste by millions of pounds which could then be spent on other council services. It is easy to 'get rid' of things that we

no longer want, but many things that are thrown away could be reused or repaired to be used again. As consumers and producers of waste we need to challenge our attitudes and change behaviours.

## National policy

The Government has set national recycling targets of 50% by 2020 for household waste, and 65% by 2035 for municipal solid waste in the Resources and Waste Strategy (December 18). The national strategy sets out Government plans to minimise waste, promote resource efficiency and protect the natural environment by managing waste safely. It addresses some well-known issues in the waste industry and embraces the circular economy approach of keeping products in use for as long as possible, and making it easier to reuse, repair, refurbish, or recycle them.

: it also embraces circular economy principals throughout and proposes:

- Renewed action on plastics including ensuring that producers pay the full costs of disposal for packaging that they place on the market, a tax on plastic packaging that contains less than 30% recycled plastic, the phasing out of single use unrecyclable packaging and bans on other items such as drinking straws
- Incentivised recycling through the introduction of deposit return schemes
- Standardising recycling collections from businesses and households, including ensuring that each household and business has a weekly separate food waste collection
- Improving working arrangements and performance between local authorities
- A focus on the quality of material collected for recycling to ensure it can be used in the manufacture of new products
- Develop the UK reprocessing industry to reduce the amount of recyclables sent abroad
- Increased producer responsibility - requiring manufacturers and producers to consider what will happen to their product at the end of its life at design stage
- A change on how performance is measured, possibly moving away from weight based targets that incentivise collection of heavier materials
- Mandatory food waste prevention targets for food businesses and ensuring that surplus food is redistributed to those who need it before it goes to waste

These proposals have the potential to fundamentally change how Local Authorities collect and manage waste. OEP councils will proactively engage with Government through industry bodies and consultations to ensure our voice is heard as the detail of these changes are established.

## The circular economy

The circular economy is a new way of thinking that is being increasingly adopted by Governments and organisations across the world. It aims to keep resources in use for much longer, extracting the maximum value from them whilst in use, and ensuring that they can be recovered and recycled easily at the end of life. (diagram)

The circular economy creates opportunities for growth and jobs, whilst also reducing waste, saving natural resources, protecting the UK from resource scarcity/security issues, and reducing the environmental impacts of our activities. By embedding circular economy principles into council activities (such as specifying recycled goods in our procurement strategies and ensuring that goods are reused and repaired where possible), and helping residents make changes in their lives (such as repairing broken items, donating and buying second hand) we can assist in the transition to the new model.

OEP welcomes national action and policy on the circular economy and waste reduction and recycling initiatives. Behaviour change on a large scale is needed to address the issues that we all face, and only by working together with manufactures, retailers and residents will we view waste as a resource and not as a problem.

### Pull out box?

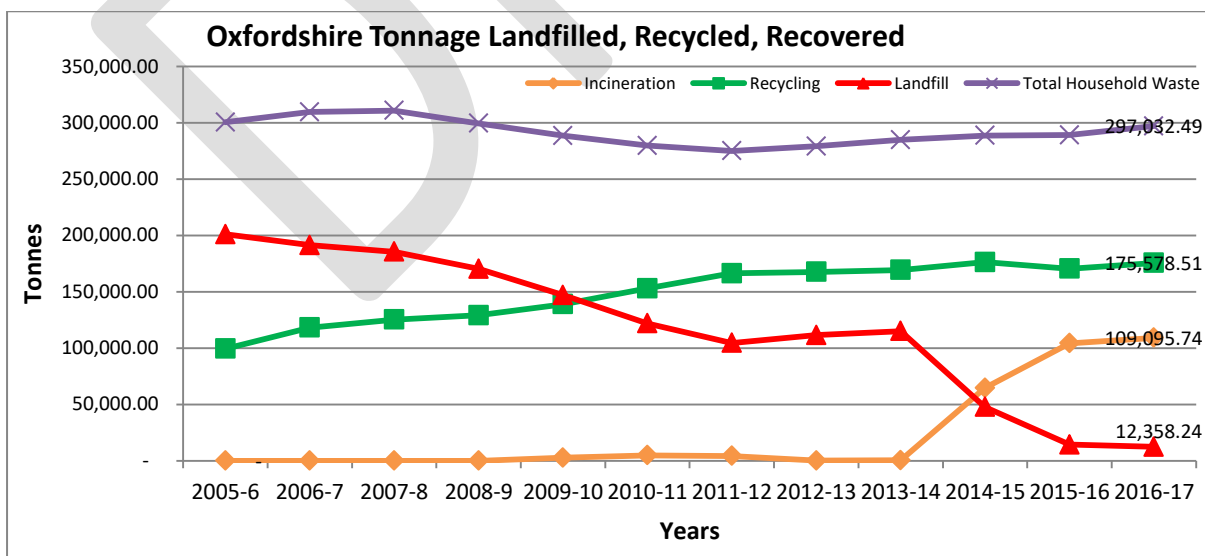
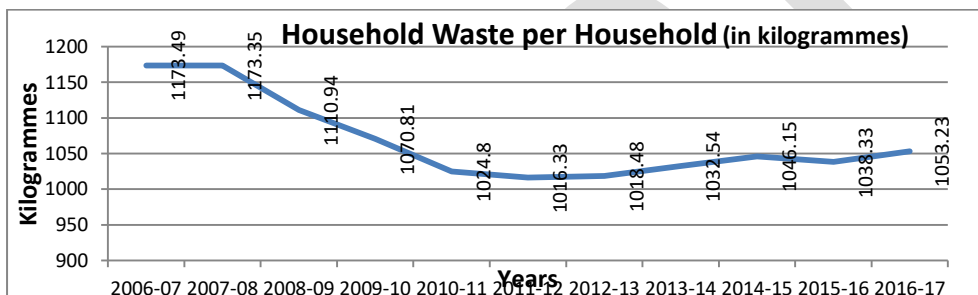
As well as national policy changes, there are other factors that may influence our activities over the next few years:

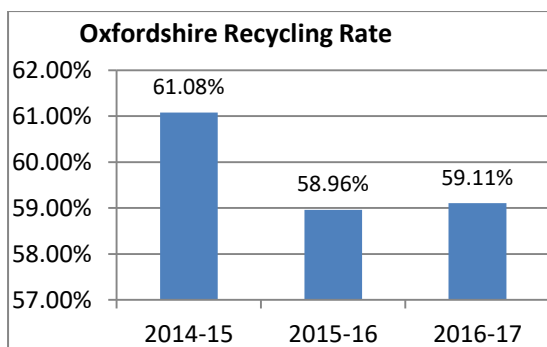
- Recyclables are traded on a global market and China's decision in 2017 to reduce the amount of contaminated recycling arriving in the country has put pressure on the UK, and other countries, to seek new markets. This infrastructure gap is yet to be fully filled.
- Changing shopping habits are altering the waste that people are looking to dispose of. The decline of newsprint and rise of online shopping is altering the amount of paper and card collected. Home delivery of groceries and menu boxes open up opportunities for 'take back schemes' where reusable and refillable packaging is used rather than disposable. Deposit return schemes for bottles and other packaging may reduce the amount placed in household bins. This is a rapid growth area, and it is possible that the composition of both recycling and rubbish bins will look quite different in a few years' time. This would be excellent progress towards the circular economy and reducing the amount of waste, and is fully supported by OEP. However the changing composition of waste will impact the reprocessing contracts we have in place, potentially leading to increased contract costs.
- There are several changes to legislation that have been raised, including the potential of an incineration tax, and a tightening of the standards that composted green waste needs to meet. These would have an operational and budgetary impact on the way that waste is managed within Oxfordshire.

## What we are currently doing with our waste

The good news is that countywide the amount of waste we produce has gone down per person (graph) and the amount of recycling has gone up (graph). We send less to landfill and generate energy from what we can; however, our recycling levels in recent years have started to fall (graph). This follows the national trend of stagnating recycling rates. There are several reasons suggested for this;

- standards have tightened impacting on our ability to recycle materials such as street sweepings and wood;
- reprocessors are focused on quality, not quantity, and are demanding material with less contamination;
- changing habits, such as accessing news and information online rather than through print media; and
- improvements in technology mean that materials such as packaging or glass bottles are lighter.





## How we compare with other areas?

OEP was one of the first partnerships to introduce such comprehensive kerbside collection schemes, and as such has had one of the best recycling and composting rates in England for a number of years. Other counties are now catching us up and we can learn from them to improve our services to residents. (graph/league table)

Despite having such historically good recycling rates, there is still a lot more that we can do. Although residents in Oxfordshire can recycle a wide range of materials at the kerbside, analysis shows that not all waste generated is separated for reuse and recycling. Authorities in Scotland and Wales have been set ambitious targets by their devolved administrations and are starting to pull away from England. In Oxfordshire we could achieve recycling rates of up to 80% by ensuring our current systems are properly used, and bigger increases may be achieved by looking at further collection changes.

## Why change is needed?

We must rethink how we prevent and deal with waste in the long term to minimise the environmental and financial costs of waste and move towards sustainability. A change in attitudes is needed across the whole of the country so that we consider our purchases, making smarter choices of products that have been responsibly made, and that will last longer. Amongst local authorities we may need to consider greater alignment of our services and how and when we collect rubbish if more recycling is to be achieved. Higher recycling rates may be able to be achieved by retaining weekly and fortnightly recycling collections, whilst reducing the frequency of rubbish collections.

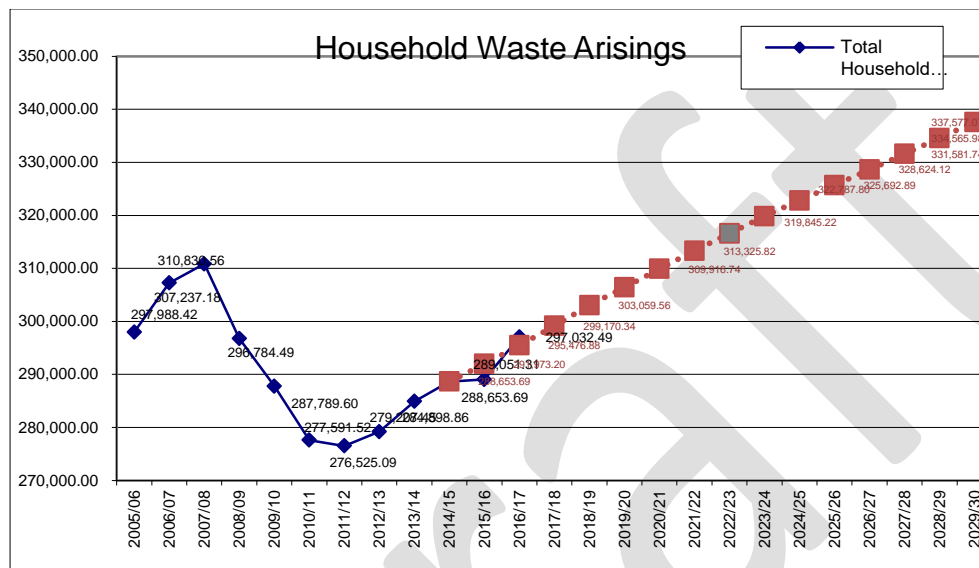
There is a lot more recycling that we could collect (infographic showing what is left in the residual bin). As well as being better for the environment, this would help save around £3 million each year, money that could be spent on other council services. Helping residents to make the most of existing services will be key to achieving our goals.

We want to improve the quality of the material we collect, reducing unwanted materials in the recycling, increasing the quality of acceptable materials and thus providing a better quality of feedstock to producers making new products from recycled materials. In



2017/18 4,500 tonnes material sent for recycling in Oxfordshire were deemed unrecyclable by the processor and rejected.

Oxfordshire is growing and pressure for housing growth creates additional demands for waste collection and street cleansing services. Oxfordshire currently has a population of around 677,000. By 2040 Oxfordshire’s population is expected to grow to 944,700 with over 123,500 new houses constructed. This will mean around 130,000 tonnes more waste generated from residents, at an additional cost of £16 million/year to collect, recycle, compost and dispose of the waste generated.



We need to:

- ensure that new households have easy access to information and services to minimise waste generation and increase recycling
- be adaptable to reflect changes in national policy and wider changes in governance such as the introduction of deposit recovery schemes, Extended producer responsibility, Brexit and Chinese import decisions,
- respond to public pressure on issues such as single use plastic.
- ensure waste collection and disposal services are efficient to reflect increasing financial pressure on councils and any changes surrounding available funding in the future. Funding provided to local government has changed and reduced over recent years, the national audit office found that local authorities experienced a 49.1% real term reduction in funding between 2010/11 and 2017/18.

## What we have done since 2013

OEP’s last strategy was published in 2013. Since then we have:

- **Improved recycling collections so residents can recycle more** - batteries, textiles and small electricals can be collected at kerbside for recycling.
- **Invested in new contracts, fleet, and technology** - to improve the service to residents and help increase recycling as well as reducing the costs and impacts of transport on the local environment.
- **Made it easier to recycle food waste** – including collections from flats in most districts. Where food waste is processed at an anaerobic digestion plant, residents can dispose of cooking oil and line their food waste caddy with plastic bags rather than compostable liners making it easier, cheaper and cleaner for residents to recycle their food waste. We have stickered thousands of rubbish bins to remind residents that food waste can be recycled in their food caddy, and delivered Love Food Hate Waste training to interested residents across the County.
- **Supported around 60 community groups** - to take local action on environmental issues, helping residents to save waste and energy in their homes, improve the natural environment, tackle fuel and food poverty and raised over £800,000 funding for various projects across the county. (CAG info box)
- **Procured a new Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) contract** that allows us to keep as many sites open as possible. Despite budget cuts, in 2017 we were successful in procuring a HWRC contract that keeps all sites open at the existing opening days and times. The new contract also allows hard plastics to be recycled at all sites for the first time.
- **Charging for some waste streams** – local authorities are not obliged to accept all waste streams for free, however we understand that residents want a quick and easy way to dispose of their materials. Charging a small amount for the collection of garden waste, or for disposing of DIY waste at the HWRCs allows us to cover the costs of providing these services, and ensure that residents still have easy access to disposal routes.
- **Tried a recycling reward scheme** – Oxford City's three year scheme offers a reward to communities who improve their recycling rates to identify if this results in sustained increases in recycling rates.
- **Taken enforcement action against flytippers** –working closely with enforcement and environmental health teams to prosecute offenders who flytip, drop litter, graffiti or do not remove their dog foul from the streets
- **Reduced the amount of waste landfilled to less than 5%** - the Ardley Energy Recovery Facility began operations in 2014 and now takes almost all of Oxfordshire's rubbish (non-recyclable waste), burning it to create enough energy to power over 38,000 homes.
- **Increased recycling rates by reducing contamination** – The wrong materials in the wrong bins can cause whole loads of recycling to be rejected. Batteries and gas bottles placed in the wrong bins can cause fires and explosions. All councils have improved their communication and education programmes to help residents, and

South and Vale recently introduced a clear sack policy, enabling collection crews to better see what they are collecting to avoid contamination.

- **Published a list of where all our recycling goes** - making it easier for residents to find out what happens to their waste after it is picked up ([Infographic/link to webpage?](#))
- **Increased the number of commercial collection services** - providing a cost-effective service to local businesses with recycling and waste collections that match those from residential sites.
- **Improved our own waste management** - introduced better recycling systems at all council offices, including food waste, to help people recycle as well at work as they do at home. We also encourage the reuse of furniture and electricals to reduce the number of new products bought.

## What residents say

To find out what residents thought about their waste services, and to explore thoughts on how we could help them to reduce waste and recycle more, we ran a consultation in January and February 2018, and held 3 focus groups. Over 2,200 people replied to the consultation, and 30 people attended the focus groups.

Respondents wanted to recycle more and waste less, but felt we needed to be realistic about people's busy lifestyles and make it as easy as possible to 'do the right thing'.

Respondents would like us to:

- Work with government and manufacturers to reduce the amount of packaging used, and to make it more easily recyclable.
- Provide more information on what types of plastic are recyclable
- Provide frequent, easy to understand, communications telling residents what can and can't be recycled and why, using leaflets, social media, and other forms of communication.
- Provide information on where waste goes
- Consider providing bigger recycling bins or more frequent recycling collections
- Increase the number of materials recycled at the kerbside and the HWRCs
- Catch and prosecute those caught flytipping, littering or allowing their dog to foul the area
- Promote places where second hand furniture can be bought and donated
- Improve the reuse facilities available at the HWRCs
- Provide information, hints and tips on
  - Home composting
  - Repairing electrical items
  - Cooking to reduce waste and save money
  - Repairing clothing
- Work with schools and other groups to develop skills and reduce waste.

Residents were divided on whether incentives or fines would work to increase recycling rates. Many people felt that fines could be unfair to those who were confused or unsure about what could be recycled. While some believed that incentives could work, they also commented that it could be complicated to administer, and that funds could be better spent on other council services.

## Our strategy

OEP's strategy is ambitious; some targets are aspirational and will be challenging to achieve. However we believe it is crucial that we continue to work together to reduce the amount of waste we generate and manage resources sustainably.

### **1. We will work with residents to reduce the waste produced by each household and maximise the amount of waste reused**

#### **Reduce**

Our aim: to stop waste growth per person per year by encouraging people to think about the products that they buy and how materials can be reused, recycled and composted.

We will:

- 1.1 work with residents to reduce the amount of food waste generated; making the most of the food they buy, encouraging smarter shopping, planning meals and using up leftovers
- 1.2 support efforts to reduce the amount of single use packaging produced and used by retailers
- 1.3 promote activity and provide advice and support to those composting at home, repairing electrical items and clothing, and using real nappies

#### **Reuse**

We will:

- 1.4 work to increase reuse at the HWRCs
- 1.5 encourage and promote the donation and purchase of reusable items across the county.
- 1.6 continue to support local community action on waste reduction through the CAG project.
- 1.7 focus activities on electrical items and bulky waste reuse through an A-Z listing of all the goods and materials that can be reused and recycled in Oxfordshire.

### **2 We will maximise the amount of waste that is recycled or composted and we will recover energy from the remainder in order to minimise the amount sent to landfill**

#### **Recycle**

Our aim:

Recycle or compost at least 65% of household waste by 31 March 2025

Recycle or compost at least 70% of household waste by 31 March 2030

We will:

- 2.1 ensure that recycling facilities and services are available to all residents
- 2.2 monitor recycling rates and target communications on areas where additional support would be beneficial
- 2.3 work with our reprocessors to ensure we have secure markets for the materials we collect.
- 2.4 promote what can and can't be accepted for recycling; reducing contamination and increasing the amount of materials recycled
- 2.5 work to increase the amount and quality of recycling collected through litter bins
- 2.6 keep residents informed of our recycling performance and where their waste goes
- 2.7 promote and encourage food waste recycling collections
- 2.8 continue to investigate recycling opportunities for new material streams, both at the HWRCs and the kerbside where reliable markets are available
- 2.9 recycle more waste from council offices

### **Compost**

We will

- 2.10 continue to provide advice and support to those composting at home to reduce the amount of garden waste generated
- 2.11 continue to offer garden waste collections from households
- 2.12 ensure that more of the garden waste from our own operations is composted

### **Recover and Dispose**

Our aim: to landfill no more than 3% of household rubbish

We will:

- 2.13 pick up and dispose of flytipped hazardous waste quickly and in accordance with the waste hierarchy
- 2.14 ensure that all clinical waste produced in homes is correctly segregated for appropriate management
- 2.15 work with residents to ensure batteries and gas bottles are disposed of correctly so that they do not cause fires or explosions
- 2.16 work with contractors and the wider industry to find the best possible practices and technology to collect, manage and process new and existing waste streams

## **3 We will work together, with local communities and service providers, to improve waste management services across the county ensuring that we become more economic, efficient, effective and that waste is managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy**

We will:

- 3.1 work to increase reuse capacity in the county through partnerships
- 3.2 work with the waste planning authority, Oxfordshire County Council, to ensure that waste facilities are suitably sized and distributed with the aim of minimising the transport of waste
- 3.3 Investigate potential new reprocessors for our materials we will encourage local facilities to tender for our business
- 3.4 look to introduce additional material streams to commercial waste collections making it easier for companies to increase their recycling rate and reduce waste that they produce
- 3.5 apply appropriate and affordable charges for household waste in order to ensure sustainability and protect council services where necessary.

**4 We will prepare for population growth by embedding circular economy principles into our activities and considering innovative ways of reducing, reusing and recycling more of our waste**

We will:

- 4.1 embrace the circular economy, embedding it into council practices and procurements in order to minimise waste generation in the future
- 4.2 promote the circular economy to residents, and lobby Government to make it an essential part of national strategy.
- 4.3 work with OxLep and Growth Board to embed circular economy principles into Oxfordshire's growth agenda
- 4.4 provide a planning guide for architects and property developers to ensure that adequate provision is made for sustainable waste management within new developments
- 4.5 consider new collection systems and technologies that actively encourage residents to segregate more of their waste for recycling

**5 We will work to improve the local environment for all residents through effective communications and enforcement activity**

We will continue to:

- 5.1 take enforcement action against those caught committing environmental crimes and seek to recover enforcement and clean-up costs through the courts
- 5.2 develop promotional and educational campaigns to promote responsible behaviour and good local environmental quality. Campaign messages will be developed according to local priorities identified through our monitoring data. These will include campaigns to discourage flytipping, littering and dog fouling. These were the top three priorities identified in our 2018 public consultation on this waste strategy.

Oxfordshire Environment Partnership

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