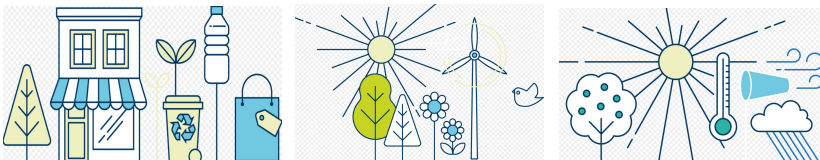


Sutton's Environment Strategy FAQ

Circular Economy

The council consulted on its Environment Strategy for eight weeks in August 2018. As well as answering the questions, participants were invited to provide comments. We received nearly 700 comments, all of which were reviewed and influenced the final draft of the strategy. A lot of the comments were very similar, and we have curated these comments into a comprehensive FAQ documents giving the answers for the public to view.



1. The boxes for recycling need to be bigger and easier to use. Why are there so many bins and not one big wheelie bin for all recycling?

The contract for the collection of waste and recycling was established with SLWP (South London Waste Partnership) to help identify savings required, and to increase recycling rates for the borough. The savings presented by separating the more valuable commodity of paper and card has helped in meeting some of our targets. This obviously results in more bins.

2. Incentives are needed to encourage people to recycle. How do you plan to do this?

The council has tried to make recycling as easy as possible, and has incentivised this by reducing residual (landfill) collections. The London Borough of Sutton has reached national recycling targets for 2020, by achieving 50% of household waste recycled in 2017/18, a substantial increase of 13.5 percentage points above the 2016/17 rate.

3. Recycling in flats is really difficult. What action do you plan to take to help people in flats?

The council and Veolia will continue to work with managing agents and residents where contamination issues have been identified. Crews are encouraged to report this, and where further engagement and awareness raising is needed we will address this. This is also something the Council will look to do with the SLWP as part of any targeted campaign work.

4. The council should be encouraging people to compost at home as it is better for the environment. What action will you be taking on this?

We are already providing residents with a home composting bin for free - residents just need to pay a £5 delivery charge to have the bin delivered to their door.

More details can be found on our website:

https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200597/garden_waste_and_composting/1168/composting

5. The cost of the garden waste collections means people aren't paying and are instead putting their green waste in the landfill bins.

The Council has over 17,000 subscriptions. Fees and charges are set in line with national benchmarks, and help keep down the cost of other services and does not impact on those without a garden. Garden waste can also be taken to the HRRC at Kimpton Road for free, and we offer free home composters.

6. Why are you restricting what we can throw away?

We only restrict what we can not recycle. If you have excess recycling that does not fit in your containers it will still be collected if you leave it out in another bag or box, or you can take it to the HRRC

7. It currently costs to dispose of large items. This results in them often being dumped in the borough. Instead manufacturers should make items to last.

Bulky waste is already separated and recycled as much as possible. Fees and charges are set in line with national benchmarks, and help keep down the cost of other services and does not impact on those who do not use bulky waste collections. Items can often be donated to local charities or advertised through websites such as freecycle.

8. Is it true that batteries cannot be recycled safely?

Batteries can be recycled both at the kerbside and the Reuse and Recycling Centre. Batteries are collected by specialist off takers who, dependent on the battery type, recover materials within the battery to make new products. More information can be found here:

https://www.recycle-more.co.uk/files/0150_how_batteries_are_recycled.pdf

9. What actions will you be taking to reduce plastics? There should be recycling points in the borough, more recycling bins on local streets and businesses should be encouraged to use paper bags instead of plastic carrier bags.

Since the consultation the council has passed a motion, committing to reduce single use plastics both in its own operations and across the borough. The implementation of this will be monitored via the Circular Economy action plan. We are producing a new waste strategy that will look at recycling provision in the borough.

10. What happens to our waste recycling in Sutton? I've seen on the news that recycling is often sent abroad or ends up in landfill

Around 90% to 97% of recycling materials collected each month are recycled.

Recycling materials are separated at material recovery facilities and then sent to specialist off takers across the region. This in the past has seen a significant tonnage being sent abroad for recycling. This has reduced over the past couple of years, mainly down to China rejecting plastic materials.

Off takers will only send material to landfill if it is heavily contaminated. This can vary from 3% to 10% of plastic tonnages.

Paper and card is widely recycled and has significantly lower contamination rates, averaging at 3%.

11. I'm happy to recycle and reduce my waste, but too often products come with a lot of packaging waste, much of which is not recyclable. You should be working with supermarkets to reduce this.

In September 2018 the council passed a motion, committing itself to reducing single use plastics and to work with organisations in the borough such as supermarkets to reduce the amount of single use plastic sold. This will be implemented as part of the Circular Economy action plan.

12. Kimpton HRRC shop should be expanded to include more items e.g. clothing.

Items selected for the Reuse Shop are reviewed and selected based on quality and reusability. The borough already has a good network of charity shops selling pre-loved clothing.

13. There needs to be a couple more recycle units across the borough. Having only one centre is inadequate.

The site at Kimpton Park Way currently provides enough capacity to meet the demand by residents to recycle. Neighbouring borough Merton and Kingston also have only the single site.

14. More parking is needed at Kimpton, there is nowhere to stop and look at the items in the shop.

There are three car parking spaces available specifically for visitors to the Reuse Shop at Kimpton. Walkways are marked on site meaning people can get safely to the Reuse Shop from the other parking bays.

15. The council should operate free collection of reusable but unwanted items to a recycling centre

The council collects textiles for recycling. Larger reusable items are not collected for free, but there are charities within the borough that will collect reusable items for free if the condition of the item is suitable for resale.

16. Reuse is important. The shop at Kimpton is a good start, but too often items end up in landfill as it is too difficult to do anything else.

We agree that there is more manufacturers could do to make their products easy to repair or reuse at the end of their working life. The council diverts materials from landfill through its kerbside waste collections and at the reuse and recycling centre. Anything the reuse shop cannot resell is recycled or sent to other suppliers who can reuse them.

17. I worry that 'circular economy principles' often fail because those in charge often don't have the skills to recognise when it is better to buy new rather than reuse, repair or remanufacture.

Whilst the circular economy is fairly new to Sutton, the principles underpinning it are not. We will be working with local businesses, organisations and groups to raise awareness of the circular economy and both the financial and environmental benefits of keeping products in use as long as possible. We will share the results of the pilot projects to help raise awareness across the borough.

18. Set up water points in the town so people can fill up water bottles rather than buying water.

This action has been included in the circular economy action plan. Delivery of this action will help to support our commitment of reducing single use plastic in the borough.

19. You should be encouraging a bottle return scheme, this would help reduce littering.

This is something which the government is currently consulting on. If the government goes ahead with their plans, a deposit return scheme could be in place to return single use drinks containers. There would be a small fee added to the initial price of purchasing the drink. This fee would be refunded when the container is returned for recycling.

20. I support the ambitions of the strategy and will be doing my part to make Sutton a greener borough. I think a national agreement is needed on recycling. At the moment it is too confusing as it changes from borough to borough.

The government is looking at whether recycling and waste collections could be more consistent to help reduce confusion. Different areas are likely to continue to need different approaches, for example rural countryside compared to inner cities. With the South London Waste Partnership boroughs, we have consistent collections across the four boroughs and collect the same materials. Details are on the council's website about what can be recycled in Sutton.

21. Action needs to be led by manufacturers and supermarkets to reduce waste and increase recycling.

The government is currently consulting on changes which will require manufacturers to design and use packing which can be recycled and labelling on all packaging to indicate if it is recycled or not.

22. Will reducing waste mean that the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility has to transport waste into the borough? Surely this would have negative impacts in terms of emissions from the waste vehicles transporting the waste.

There will be a reduction in the number of vehicles coming to Beddington Energy Recovery Facility, as there will no longer be a need for lorries to transport soil to cover the landfill site.

23. What are your waste and recycling targets? Be honest about them as competitiveness with other boroughs doesn't tell us what you are aiming for.

We have three targets relating to borough waste and recycling. They are:

- Promote recycling and keep Sutton's recycling rate at 50 per cent or higher.
- Help people throw less away and achieve year on year reductions in the amount of rubbish (residual waste) produced by each household.
- Help people reduce the amount of avoidable food waste they throw away by 20 per cent by 2025.

We we publish a progress report annually which details our performance against these and other targets in the strategy.

24. What plans do you have to work with businesses in the borough?

We will seek to work with businesses on a variety of projects in the strategy. The 'creating a circular economy' chapter is largely business led. For example we will work with new and existing businesses to facilitate circular economy pilot projects in the borough. The council has also committed to engaging businesses to reduce single use plastics. We will be contacting local supermarkets to identify how we can reduce the amount of plastic wrapped products sold in the borough. These are just a few of the many plans we have to work with businesses.

25. Why do you not have a target for recycling 100% of all recyclable materials?

This would be an aim for the future, but we haven't committed to it yet because we don't think it's achievable within the strategy's timelines. Action needs to be taken by manufacturers so that packaging used is recyclable or compostable. We also want to prevent waste in the first place, for example through reusable products, as this is better for the environment, and preferable to recycling.

26. More detail and ideas are needed for reducing the use of resources.

The action plan includes actions relating to reducing single use plastics. This will be the focus during year 1 of the strategy. We will update our action plans each year with details of emerging projects to reduce the use of resources.

27. Reuse needs to be easy, the council should create a reuse app for residents and businesses to use. Items could be posted when they break or need servicing. This should be at no cost to the user as it would help reuse.

Reuse apps such as freecycle and gumtree already exist. We will direct people towards these already established apps rather than creating our own. We will also seek to work with other organisations or groups to support people to repair items.

28. Why is the council telling people to repair items?

Repairing items helps to reduce the need for new resources and supports our ambition to create a circular economy. Not only does it have an environmental benefit, but repairing an item can also have a cost saving too. Making something last longer means not needing to spend money to buy a brand new item.

29. Hiring items isn't a new thing, why does your strategy indicate that it is?

Whilst hiring isn't a new concept, there are many items people could hire, but instead purchase and use very infrequently. For example, power tools are often purchased and only used from time to time. Our aim is to ensure all items are maintained at their maximum value and that we reduce waste. If people hired or loaned items instead of buying them this would help reduce the amount of raw materials used and waste created.

30. What are your plans to ensure we all work towards a less wasteful society?

These plans are set out in the circular economy chapter and action plan. Our aim is to reduce waste and ensure all items are kept in use at their maximum value. We will deliver communications throughout the duration of the strategy to encourage repair and reuse rather than disposal.

31. The council should incentivise local businesses and organisations in the borough to become zero waste and plastic free.

The council has passed a motion to reduce single use plastics. This includes a commitment to working with businesses and representative organisations to reduce the amount of plastic they use. We will also seek to encourage businesses to reduce their waste.

32. The council does not explain how ERF is compatible with meeting or exceeding recycling rates or the principles of a circular economy.

The waste taken to the Energy Recovery Facility is 'black bag' rubbish that cannot be recycled. It previously went to landfill.

A circular economy aims to ensure that resources are kept in use at their highest value possible. Waste disposal is a last resort for items which can no longer be reused or recycled. We will be encouraging the reduction of waste. The Energy Recovery Facility provides electricity to power homes, therefore ensuring maximum value is extracted from the waste.

33. How will you ensure that the strategy does not impact on the borough's waste collection service which has already undergone significant changes?

We do not have plans to change waste collections.

By making recycling as easy as possible, reducing residual (landfill) collections, and increasing communications in December 2018 residents and contractors achieved 50% of all waste recycled, two years ahead of schedule.

34. The targets are good, but what impact will they have on refuse collections? There should be a commitment to not reducing collection frequency.

We do not have plans at the moment to change waste collections.

35. What will you be doing to tackle littering and fly tipping?

The council will continue to work with contractors and residents to improve the cleanliness of the borough.

Residents can report incidents of littering and fly tipping, and council teams will work with the street cleansing contractor Veolia to target resources to ensure standards are maintained, improve communications with residents and take targeted action such as deep cleans and enforcement action where appropriate.