So, you want to go three-weekly?

West Berkshire Council | One year after launch | APSE Waste & Recycling Network



West Berkshire Council

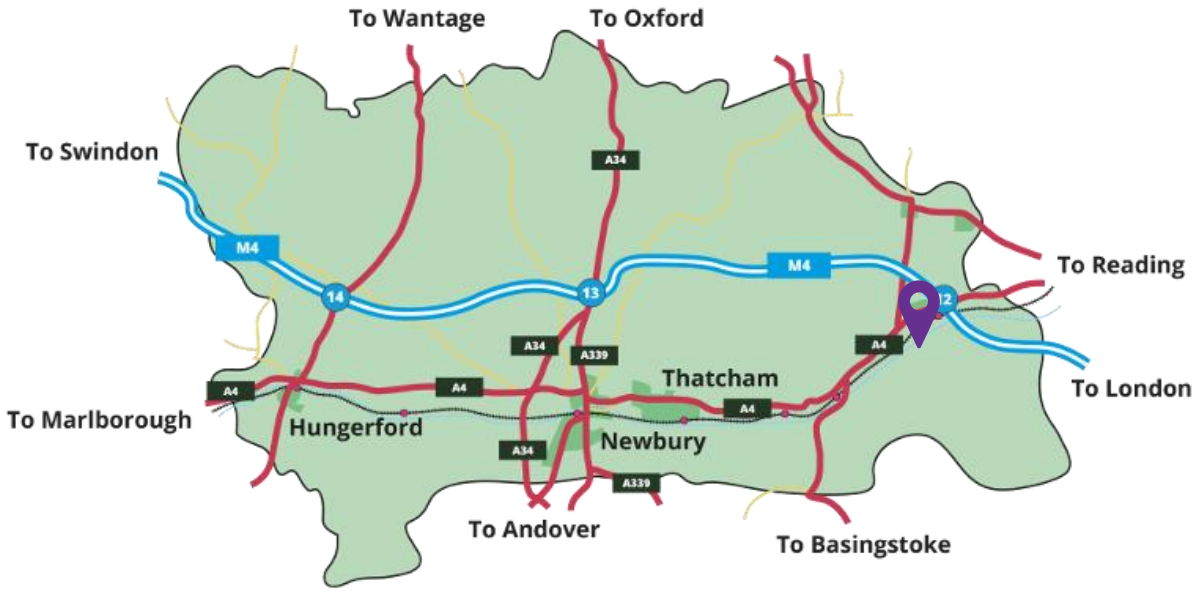
West Berkshire

72,000 households

272 square miles with significant rural geography

85 / 15 kerbside / communal service split

Unitary • Integrated waste PFI with Veolia • contract to 2032



Why three weekly

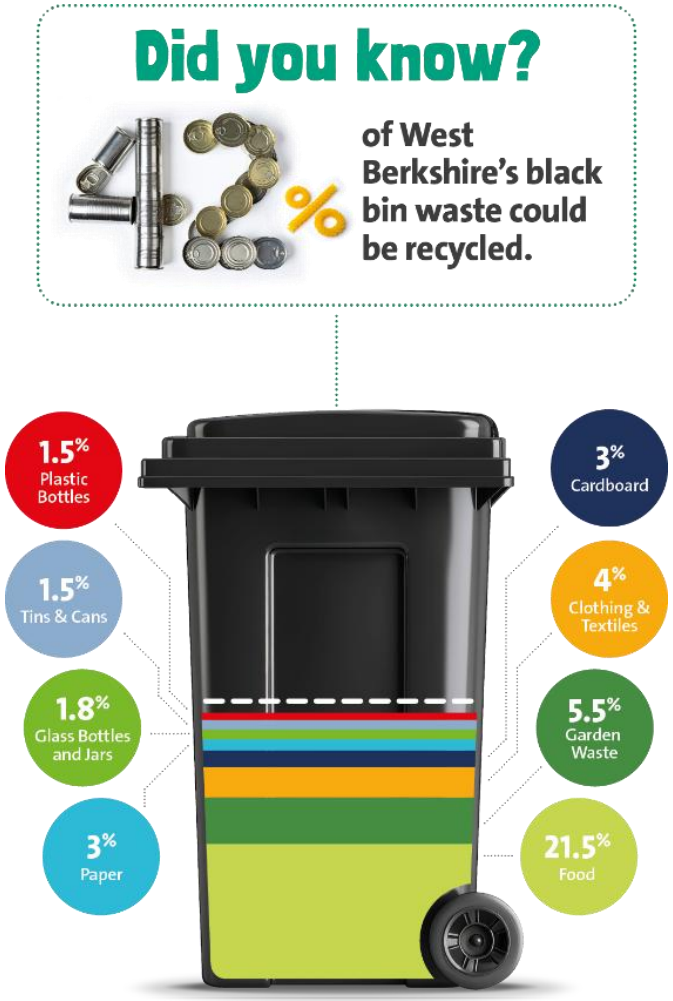
42% of residual bin could be recycled in existing kerbside services

49% of properties participated in weekly food waste

240 L residual capacity per household, collected fortnightly

With rates stagnating, alternative such as new vehicles, weekly recycling or co-mingling would cost millions. More acceptable than four-weekly. Zero capital investment required.

Decision: reduce residual frequency to support the ambition to reach 60% recycling.



The change

less residual capacity, the same recycling support

BEFORE

Residual every

2 weeks



AFTER

Residual every

3 weeks



Fortnightly recycling and weekly food waste continued. Moved from a two weeks cycle to a six week collection cycle. ‘Bin day’ remained on the same day of the week. No change to extra capacity eligibility criteria.

Five gates

Evidence | **Decision** | **Delivery**

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

1 — Dec 2022

Build the evidence

Development of successor Waste Management Strategy - External technical support

2 — 2023/24

Engage and model

Member and resident sessions; open forums. Openly discussed options (4 weekly, 3 weekly, different collection vehicles, collection methods etc)

3 — Sep–Oct 2024

Design and consult

Route design and public consultation on draft strategy

4 — Apr–May 2025

Adopt and prepare

Strategy adopted; communications launched

5 — 22 Sep 2025

Launch

Three-weekly residual service implemented



Communications

PREPARE



Advise on current service and what can be recycled

EXPLAIN



Why, how and when

REMIND



Bin hangers and direct mail to every effected property

REASSURE



Visible local coverage and repeated messages

Direct household information did the detailed work; community and media channels reinforced it.

One year on

Comparison period: October 2024 – September 2025 vs October 2025 – September 2026

0.1%

Reduction in total waste collected

food remaining in residual waste

21.5% → 17.9%

food waste participation

49% → 60%

KERBSIDE RESIDUAL

↓ 13.8%

3,406 t

KERBSIDE DRY RECYCLING

↑ 4.6%

1,037 t

Despite fall in glass tonnage

KERBSIDE FOOD WASTE

↑ 19.7%

930 t

HWRC RESIDUAL

↑ 61%

1,267t

3% increase in visits



Transition pressure

Comparison period: 2024/25 vs 2025/26

MISSED COLLECTIONS

+86%

Across all collection services.
Refuse peaked in October +537% (43 to 274)
But food saw the biggest increase over the year 199% (664 to 1985)

RESIDENT CONTACT

+36%

Logged service information requests.
Refuse +97% (761 to 1501)
Food waste +91% (220 to 420)
Recycling +20% (470 to 562)

COMPLAINTS

61

Stage 1 complaints

Demand rose for:

Extra Residual Capacity Applications

+356% applications. 32% approved.

Recycling Containers

+41% *events can contain multiple containers types*

No reported rise in excess/side waste from collection crews



Would we recommend it?

1 Prove there is room to improve

- Use composition analysis to identify recyclable material still in residual waste
- Use participation data to show which services have further potential

2 Engage early and explain the why

- Openly discuss options with members and residents
- Use composition evidence and comparative data
- Gather as much feedback as possible via multiple channels

3 Resource the transition

- Increase container-delivery capacity
- Plan for a temporary contact surge
- Maximise digitalisation, but don’t forget about hard copy

Three-weekly works when residents have the capacity to maximise recycling, support is readily available, the evidence shows change is achievable.

