

# BRIEFING REPORT

## Food Waste Project



### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to support the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change to make a decision to allow the Food Waste project team to commence the procurement process of capital assets (vehicles and containers) prior to the approval of the Business Case which is currently under development, and will be subject to a future separate decision. The reason for the request is to pre-empt and mitigate the very high risk of missing the statutory deadline to implement a weekly food waste to all households in Plymouth from April 2026. Any award of contract and financial commitment resulting from procurement processes will not be made until the Business Case is approved through a future Cabinet Decision.

The sooner the Council can commence the procurement processes the greater the likelihood of meeting the April 2026 deadline and also minimising the impact of any demand led price increases.

### 2. BACKGROUND

The Environment Act 2021<sup>1</sup> became law with “Simpler Recycling” being the overarching driving principle. A big part of that initiative was a directive for local authorities and Waste Collecting Authorities (WCA) to implement a weekly domestic food waste service. The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has provided £295 million to around 50 per cent of all WCA’s in England who have not already implemented a food waste collection service. £1.94 million capital funding for the procurement of containers and vehicles was awarded to Plymouth earlier in 2024. The food waste project has begun with early market intelligence and consultation with waste experts indicating that the limited number of manufacturers of bespoke food waste vehicles was leading to lengthening procurement timelines in particular for vehicles, with a further likely impact on containers.

Commencement of a procurement process usually takes place following the approval of a Business Case. The Household Food Waste Collection Business Case is under development and is planned to come to a future Cabinet Meeting for approval. However, due to the urgency of commencing the procurement process to mitigate the risks stated above we cannot wait for the final Business Case to be approved

This mitigation has a benefit from a legislative lens i.e. by meeting the deadline but also supports the Council’s green priorities and a demonstrable commitment to the Plymouth Net Zero Action Plan.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISK

The approval of the decision to commence procurement processes does not have any financial implications and significantly reduces a reputational and financial risk to the Council for the following reasons.

- a) Funding for the capital assets have already been provided to the Council by DEFRA there is no financial risk to the Council.
- b) There is a low likelihood that the Business Case will not be approved given the existence of funds and the legislative drive underpinning the food waste project.

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<sup>1</sup> [Environment Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

- c) The decision to approve commencement of the procurement process does not include actual procurement of capital assets or award of any contracts, it requires no financial commitment. No such contract or commitment will be made until the Business Case is approved.

#### **4. RECOMMENDED DECISION**

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change:

Approves the commencement of the procurement process for new Refuse Collection Vehicles and waste containers which will be necessary for the provision of a Citywide food waste collection service from 2026.