

Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

30 July 2026

Waste Deep Dive Review

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr Jon Andrews - Cabinet Member for Place Services

Local Councillor(s): All Members

Executive Director:

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Statutory Authority:

Environmental Protection Act 1990 (Sections 45–46 and 45A), as amended by the Environment Act 2021, places a statutory duty on Waste Collection Authorities to arrange for the collection of household waste and specified recyclable waste streams. The Separation of Waste (England) Regulations 2025 establish the requirements for separate collection of recyclable materials under the Simpler Recycling reforms.

Report Status: Public

1. Executive summary

1.1. This report provides the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee with a detailed review of Dorset Council's household waste and recycling service against the agreed Key Lines of Enquiry. It examines collection service performance, fleet resilience, resident engagement, food waste collections, fly-tipping enforcement, waste-related behaviours and the overall effectiveness and value for money of the service. The Committee is invited to consider the findings and make any recommendations to Cabinet to support future service improvements.

- 1.2. Dorset Council delivers waste, recycling, food waste and garden waste collections to approximately 187,000 households, completing more than 24.4 million collections annually at an average cost of £196.52 per household per year. During 2025/26, 98.7% of scheduled collections were completed on their planned collection day, and resident-reported missed collections remained below 0.1% of all collections, demonstrating generally strong service reliability despite significant operational pressures.
- 1.3. The review identifies staffing shortages, vehicle availability and reduced workshop capacity as the principal factors affecting service performance during 2025/26, accounting for almost three-quarters of all service disruptions. Housing growth, changes to disposal arrangements and severe weather events also increased operational pressures in some parts of the county. In response, the service has developed a programme of improvement actions focused on workforce resilience, recruitment and retention, workshop repairs, fleet replacement and route optimisation to improve performance and strengthen service resilience.
- 1.4. The report also highlights positive service outcomes. Dorset remains one of the highest-performing waste authorities in England, achieving a recycling rate of 59.9%, ranking third nationally amongst unitary authorities. Food waste collections remain particularly strong, with 14,675 tonnes collected during 2025/26, equivalent to 78.5kg per household annually. Customer satisfaction remains high, with 87.5% of residents satisfied with the overall waste service and 95.9% satisfied with the reliability of garden waste collections.
- 1.5. Environmental enforcement activity has increased significantly, with fly-tipping incidents reducing by 35% over the last three years while investigations and Fixed Penalty Notices have increased substantially.
- 1.6. The report also identifies further opportunities to reduce service costs and environmental impacts through improved food waste participation, increased recycling and behavioural change initiatives. Analysis suggests that around £1.48 million of annual disposal costs could potentially be avoided through greater use of existing recycling and food waste services.
- 1.7. The outcomes sought through the improvement activity outlined in this report are improved collection reliability, increased operational resilience, enhanced customer experience, higher recycling and food waste participation, reduced environmental crime and continued delivery of a high-performing,

cost-effective waste service that supports Dorset Council's ambitions to reduce waste, improve environmental sustainability and provide efficient frontline services for residents.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to consider the information provided in response to the agreed Key Lines of Enquiry and make any recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1. To enable the Committee to undertake detailed scrutiny of the waste service against the agreed Key Lines of Enquiry and, where appropriate, make recommendations to Cabinet to support service improvement.

4. Collection Service Performance

- 4.1. This section examines the performance of Dorset Council's household waste and recycling collection service and considers whether the level of service being delivered reflects the investment made in the service. It responds to Scrutiny's requests for information on collection performance, missed collections, consecutive collection failures, service disruptions and the factors affecting service reliability, including staffing, vehicle availability and operational resilience. The section also outlines the actions being taken to improve collection performance, strengthen resilience and maintain reliable services for residents.
- 4.2. The focus of this section is Dorset Council's household kerbside waste and recycling collection services, specifically rubbish, recycling, glass, food waste and garden waste collections. These are the services that most residents use regularly and form the agreed scope of the Key Lines of Enquiry.
- 4.3. Commercial waste collections, street cleansing services and Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) are not included within the scope of this review. Whilst these functions form an important part of Dorset Council's wider waste management service, they fall outside the agreed Key Lines of Enquiry. Should Members wish to explore these areas in greater detail, they can be considered as future scrutiny topics.

4.4. Service Overview & Cost

4.4.1. Dorset Council provides a fortnightly kerbside collection service for rubbish, recycling and glass, a weekly collection service for food waste, and an optional charged fortnightly garden waste collection service. Together, these services form the Council's household kerbside waste and recycling collection offer.

4.4.2. Dorset Council completed more than 24 million household kerbside collections during 2025/26. Food waste collections account for a significant proportion of collection activity due to the weekly frequency of the service. Recycling and glass collections represent the largest collection stream, with separate recycling and glass containers collected on each scheduled recycling round. The volume of collections completed provides important context when considering service reliability and performance measures such as missed collections. A breakdown of collections completed during 2025/26 is shown below.

Service	Number of Collections (2025/26)
Rubbish	4,630,769
Recycling & Glass	9,263,836
Food Waste	9,075,481
Garden Waste	1,470,259
Total	24,440,345

4.4.3. During 2025/26, the operational cost of Dorset Council's household waste and recycling service was £36.75 million (excluding street cleansing and commercial waste services). This expenditure can be broadly divided into two areas:

Cost Category	2025/26 Cost
Collection Operations (staff, vehicles, fuel and operational management)	£16,460,350
Waste Treatment and Disposal (including HRCs)	£20,288,753
Total Service Cost	£36,749,103

4.4.4. Waste treatment and disposal accounts for approximately 55% of total service costs, with collection operations accounting for 45%. This reflects the significant costs associated with processing, treating and disposing of waste after it has been collected from households.

4.4.5. The service provides waste and recycling collections to approximately 187,000 households across Dorset. Based on the total cost of the service, the average annual cost equates to:

Measure	Cost per Household
Collection Operations	£88.02
Waste Treatment and Disposal	£108.50
Total Annual Cost per Household	£196.52

4.4.6. In 2025/26, the service completed 24.44 million collections, meaning the average operational cost equates to approximately £1.50 per collection. These figures demonstrate the scale of the household waste and recycling service and provide important context for the performance information set out in the following sections.

4.5. Collection Performance

4.5.1. During 2025/26, Dorset Council completed 24,440,345 scheduled household kerbside collections across its rubbish, recycling, glass, food waste and garden waste services. Based on the number of resident-reported missed collections and collections affected by recorded service disruptions, 98.7% of scheduled collections were successfully completed on the planned collection day.

4.5.2. Collections that are not completed as scheduled are recorded through two separate reporting mechanisms:

- 1. Missed collections:** where the Council believes the collection was completed, but is subsequently reported as not collected by a resident.
- 2. Service disruptions:** where the Council is aware of an operational issue affecting part or all of a collection round and recovery

arrangements are implemented to complete collections as quickly as possible.

4.5.3. During 2025/26, the Council recorded 22,301 missed collections (18,881 household collections and 3,420 garden waste collections) and 281,565 collections affected by service disruptions. Together, these represent the primary causes of collections not being completed on the scheduled collection day.

4.6. Missed collections

4.6.1. A missed collection occurs where the Council believes a scheduled collection has been completed, but the collection is subsequently reported as missed by a resident. Missed collections are monitored as a key measure of service reliability and customer experience. Detailed missed collection data by depot and year is provided in Appendix 1. A summary of performance over the last three years, including both household and garden waste collections, is set out below.

Year	Missed Collections	Total Collections	% Missed
2023/24	19,254	23,923,923	0.08%
2024/25	20,625	24,020,152	0.09%
2025/26	22,301	24,440,345	0.09%

4.6.2. Despite a continuing increase in collection volumes, the proportion of collections reported as missed has remained below 0.1% across all three years. In 2025/26, approximately 99.91% of scheduled collections were completed without being reported as missed. Whilst the number of missed collections has increased from 19,254 to 22,301 over the period, this increase should be viewed within the context of a service delivering more than 24 million collections annually.

4.6.3. During 2025/26, analysis identified 412 properties that experienced two consecutive missed collections within a 7–9 day period, with 44 properties experiencing repeated consecutive failures on more than one occasion. Where patterns of repeat missed collections are identified, these are reviewed locally at depot level to determine whether there is an underlying cause, such as access issues, unclear collection point information, presentation issues or

route-specific operational factors. Appropriate action is then taken with the collection crew or resident to prevent recurrence.

Depot missed bin performance 2025/26

Depot	Missed Collections	Total Collections	% Missed
Bridport	1,339	2,410,379	0.06%
Crookhill	3,944	4,611,531	0.09%
Ferndown	4,383	5,569,850	0.08%
Poundbury	3,281	3,983,041	0.08%
Shaftesbury	7,312	4,820,311	0.15%
Wareham	2,042	2,999,891	0.07%

4.6.4. Missed collection performance varies across the Council's six operational depots. In 2025/26, Shaftesbury recorded both the highest missed collection rate (0.15%) and the greatest increase over the three-year period, whilst Bridport recorded the lowest missed collection rate (0.06%). Analysis indicates that higher missed collection rates are generally associated with staffing pressures, greater reliance on temporary staff and the complexity of collection rounds. For example, Shaftesbury serves a predominantly rural area where familiarity with local routes and property access arrangements is particularly important. Increased reliance on temporary and agency staff can reduce route familiarity and increase the risk of collections being missed. This highlights the importance of maintaining a stable and experienced workforce in areas with more complex collection rounds.

4.6.5. Staffing shortages have been a significant operational challenge during the period under review. The relationship between staffing pressures, service disruptions and collection performance is considered in more detail later in this report, together with the actions being taken to improve operational resilience and reduce missed collections.

Benchmarking missed collections to other councils

4.6.6. There is limited publicly available missed collection data that enables Dorset Council to directly benchmark its performance against comparable local authorities. Differences in service design, geography and performance reporting methodologies make direct comparisons challenging.

4.6.7. Discussions with other local authorities have identified a key difference in how collection performance is measured and reported. Whilst Dorset Council currently records resident-reported missed collections and wider service disruptions within a single KPI, many authorities report these separately.

4.6.8. The two measures typically reported are:

1. **Missed collections per 100,000 collections** – resident-reported missed collections where the collection should have taken place in accordance with the scheduled service and no wider disruption affected the round.
2. **Collections not completed on the scheduled day** – service disruptions resulting from factors such as vehicle breakdowns, severe weather, road closures, staff shortages or other operational issues that prevent collections from taking place as planned.

4.6.9. Separating these measures provides a clearer distinction between individual collection failures and wider operational disruptions. As Dorset Council currently reports both within a single measure, direct comparisons with other authorities should be treated with caution.

4.6.10. Dorset Council previously participated in the APSE Performance Networks benchmarking programme, which compares councils operating in similar demographic and service environments. Whilst the latest available APSE benchmarking data relates to 2021/22, it provides a useful indication of the range of missed collection performance achieved by comparable authorities. Within Dorset's APSE family group, performance ranged from 16.61 to 225.26 missed collections per 100,000 collections, with an average of 88.84 missed collections per 100,000 collections.

4.6.11. In addition to APSE benchmarking, Dorset Council has started to gather more recent missed collection performance information directly from neighbouring and comparable authorities through established local government waste management networks. As part of this work, Cherwell District Council recently shared its 2025/26 missed collection performance data, reporting 118 missed collections per 100,000 collections. For comparison purposes, and excluding collections affected by wider service disruptions, Dorset Council recorded 91.25 missed collections per 100,000 collections during 2025/26. Whilst direct comparisons should be treated with

caution due to differences in collection systems, geography and reporting methodologies, the available evidence suggests Dorset's performance is broadly in line with comparable authorities.

Authority Group	Missed Collections per 100,000 Collections (<i>APSE performance network 2021/22</i>)
Lowest	16.61
Average	88.84
Dorset Council (2025/26)	91.25
Cherwell District Council (2025/26)	118.00
Highest	225.26

4.7. Service Disruptions

4.7.1. Service disruptions are measured separately from resident-reported missed collections and capture operational events that prevent a collection being completed on the scheduled day as planned, including staff shortages, vehicle breakdowns, lack of suitable vehicles, severe weather, roadworks and access restrictions.

4.7.2. During 2025/26, 281,565 collections were affected by a recorded service disruption, representing approximately 1.15% of the 24.44 million scheduled collections delivered during the year. The most significant disruption occurred during January to March 2026, when 104,278 collections were affected.

4.7.3. Appendix 2 provides a detailed breakdown of service disruptions by depot. The tables below summarise service disruption levels over the last four years and the primary reasons for disruption during 2025/26.

Quarter	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
April – June	34,908	19,128	34,805	46,325
July – September	112,954	30,861	59,952	80,009
October – December	33,976	35,685	62,921	50,935
January – March	96,596	24,941	36,296	104,278
Total	278,434	110,615	193,974	281,565

Disruption Reason (2025/26)	Collections Affected	% of Disruptions
Staff Shortages	118,201	42.00%
No Suitable Vehicle	47,419	16.80%
Vehicle Breakdown	38,967	13.80%
Time Constraints	31,217	11.10%
No Access – Bad Weather	15,960	5.70%
No Access – Parked Car	10,618	3.80%
No Access – Roadworks	10,217	3.60%
Overgrown Tree / Hedge	5,330	1.90%
Delay at Tip	2,616	0.90%
Vehicle Accident	795	0.30%
No Access – Police	225	0.10%
Total	281,565	100.00%

4.7.4. Whilst 281,565 collections were affected by service disruptions during 2025/26, approximately 83.2% were recovered and completed within five working days. The principal exception related to the availability of split-bodied recycling vehicles, which enable glass and mixed recycling to be collected simultaneously whilst being kept separate. Where a suitable vehicle was unavailable, crews were able to collect mixed recycling but not glass. In these circumstances, residents were asked to retain their glass until their next scheduled collection. During 2025/26, 47,419 glass collections were affected for this reason, representing approximately 1% of all glass collection jobs undertaken during the year.

4.7.5. Analysis shows that staffing pressures, vehicle availability and fleet maintenance capacity were the primary causes of service disruption during 2025/26.

4.7.6. Staff shortages were the most significant driver of service disruption during 2025/26, accounting for over 118,000 affected collections, followed by vehicle availability issues (47,419 collections) and vehicle breakdowns (38,967 collections). Together, these factors accounted for 72.7% of all recorded service disruptions.

4.7.7. A total of 60 recurring service disruption events were identified during 2025/26, affecting approximately 1,442 properties. Of these, 87% occurred within the Ferndown and Shaftesbury depot areas, indicating a concentration of recurring service issues in these locations. The table below summarises the principal causes.

Reason	Recurring Disruptions	Properties Affected
Staff Shortages	35	875
Overgrown Tree / Hedge	16	233
No Access – Roadworks	5	104
No Suitable Vehicle	2	202
Vehicle Breakdown	2	28
Total	60	1,442

Factors Contributing to Increased Service Disruptions

4.7.8. There are a number of factors that can contribute to service disruptions. These are summarised below, alongside commentary on the key issues that resulted in increased disruption levels during 2025/26, particularly in Quarters 2 and 4.

1) Staff Absence and Limited Agency Cover

4.7.9. Staff absence and challenges in securing agency cover have been significant contributors to service disruption. Seasonal illness during Quarter 4, together with higher levels of annual leave combined with sickness absence during the summer months, reduced operational resilience across the service. Although agency providers were approached to provide additional resources, the availability of suitably trained agency staff was lower

than in previous years, particularly in the North and East of the county, contributing to higher levels of staff shortages and, on occasion, collections being temporarily suspended. Depots regularly support one another by redeploying available staff where capacity allows; however, where insufficient resources are available to safely crew a vehicle, affected collections are rescheduled and completed as soon as resources become available.

2) Vehicle Availability and Reduced Workshop Capacity

- 4.7.10. Vehicle availability issues increased during Quarter 4 due to a combination of vehicle defects and reduced workshop capacity. Several 70:30 recycling collection vehicles required repairs to hydraulic ram seals; however, a national shortage of these parts meant that some vehicles were unavailable for several weeks while repairs were completed. To minimise disruption to frontline collections, spare vehicles were deployed into service wherever possible. Additional cover vehicles were also sourced through vehicle hire providers; however, availability was limited as split-bodied recycling vehicles are a specialist vehicle type and are not widely available through vehicle hire companies. This reduced the service's ability to secure suitable replacement vehicles and maintain normal levels of fleet resilience during this period.
- 4.7.11. These challenges were compounded by reduced workshop capacity. In October 2025, the vehicle maintenance pits at the Ferndown (Nimrod) and Shaftesbury (Longmead) workshops were condemned following safety concerns relating to deterioration of the concrete supporting the vehicle lifting equipment. Whilst routine checks and minor maintenance activities that did not require vehicles to be lifted could continue, the range of repairs and servicing that could be undertaken at these locations was significantly reduced.
- 4.7.12. As a result, vehicles normally maintained at Ferndown and Shaftesbury were redirected to the Dorchester and Weymouth workshops for servicing and repairs. This increased vehicle downtime and created additional logistical pressures, with drivers required to transport vehicles between depots and workshops and collect replacement vehicles before commencing their collection rounds. For some depots, particularly Shaftesbury, this could result in several hours of lost operational time. These factors reduced fleet resilience and increased the risk of collections not being completed on their scheduled day.

- 4.7.13. A shortage of vehicle technicians has also contributed to capacity pressures within the fleet maintenance service. Across the four waste workshops, there are currently three vehicle technician vacancies, including a post at Shaftesbury that has remained vacant for more than two years despite a number of recruitment campaigns. Whilst shortages of qualified vehicle technicians are being experienced nationally, the service continues to explore measures to improve recruitment and retention. Further information on these initiatives is provided in Section 4.8. The shortage of workshop staff has reduced maintenance capacity and, in some cases, increased the time taken to repair vehicles with unplanned defects, further impacting vehicle availability and fleet resilience.

3) Housing Growth and Changes to Disposal Arrangements

- 4.7.14. Continued housing growth has placed additional pressure on collection rounds in certain areas, particularly within the North and East of the county. Increased property numbers have extended collection times and reduced operational flexibility on some routes.
- 4.7.15. Additional pressures have also resulted from changes to the mixed recycling disposal location. Whilst the revised disposal arrangements have delivered significant financial savings for the Council (circa £34,000 per annum), increased travel times and traffic congestion have extended vehicle turnaround times, reducing the time available to complete collection rounds and increasing the risk of service disruption on particularly demanding collection days.

4) Extreme weather events

- 4.7.16. Extreme weather remains a significant operational risk to the service. During January 2026, severe flooding resulted in an estimated 12,000 to 15,000 collections not being completed on their scheduled day. In these circumstances, the service worked closely with Highways colleagues and affected communities to restore access and complete missed collections at the earliest opportunity, minimising the impact on residents wherever possible.

4.8. Improvement actions

- 4.8.1. In summary, staffing shortages, vehicle availability and workshop capacity were the three most significant causes of service disruption during 2025/26. Together they accounted for almost three-quarters of all recorded disruptions.

The improvement actions below are designed to address these issues and improve service reliability for residents.

Workforce Actions

4.8.2. Recruitment and Retention of Staff – The service is working closely with the Organisational Development (OD) Team to address recruitment and retention challenges across both operational and fleet maintenance roles. This includes reviewing how vacancies are advertised, exploring apprenticeship opportunities and considering other initiatives to attract and retain skilled employees. Particular focus will be given to vehicle technician recruitment, where vacancies have proved difficult to fill and several experienced technicians are expected to retire over the medium term. As part of this work, the service is keen to explore the introduction of up to four Vehicle Technician Apprenticeship positions to strengthen long-term workshop resilience, support succession planning and develop a sustainable pipeline of skilled staff. These actions aim to build a stable and skilled workforce for the future, reducing recruitment risks and maintaining the technical expertise required to support the Council's fleet.

4.8.3. Workforce Resilience and Agency Provision – The service is reviewing its workforce model to reduce reliance on agency staff and improve operational resilience. This includes working with Connect to Dorset to increase the availability of suitably trained temporary staff, while also considering whether a pool of permanently employed relief staff could provide more sustainable cover for planned and unplanned absences.

Fleet & Workshop Actions

4.8.4. Urgent repairs to workshops - New workshop pits have been purchased and are scheduled for installation at the Ferndown and Shaftesbury workshops from September 2026, with completion expected by November 2026. This will restore full workshop capacity, reduce vehicle downtime and improve fleet resilience.

4.8.5. Reviewing Vehicle Requirements and Fleet Resilience – The service is reviewing its spare vehicle provision to ensure it provides sufficient resilience. As part of this work, consideration is being given to whether a greater number of specialist vehicles should be retained within the spare fleet, including 70:30 split-bodied recycling vehicles and smaller restricted-access collection vehicles. The service is also continuing its planned programme of fleet

investment, replacing older vehicles with newer and more reliable alternatives on an annual basis. Alongside this, the composition of the spare fleet is being reviewed to ensure that retained vehicles provide the best balance of reliability, operational flexibility and cost effectiveness.

Route Capacity & Infrastructure Actions

4.8.6. Route Optimisation and Future Capacity – The service is undertaking a programme of route optimisation to redesign collection rounds and accommodate approximately five years of housing growth within existing resources. This work aims to make better use of vehicle and staffing capacity across the service, including redistributing spare capacity from the west of the county to areas in the east where demand and growth pressures are greater. Optimised collection rounds have already been implemented at the Bridec (Bridport) and Crookhill (Weymouth & Portland) depots, with Wareham scheduled for October 2026. The development of new, more resilient and future-proofed collection rounds for Ferndown is planned for Spring 2027 and will coincide with the introduction of new waste transfer infrastructure. Together, these changes are expected to improve operational efficiency, strengthen service resilience and ensure capacity is available to meet future demand without requiring significant additional resources.

4.8.7. Improved Waste Infrastructure – The new Blandford Transfer Station will increase the amount of waste and recycling that can be accepted within the northern and eastern part of the county. This will enable more collection rounds from the Ferndown depot area to use Blandford as their disposal point, reducing travel times, creating additional operational capacity and improving service resilience. The facility will also provide benefits for the Shaftesbury depot, with some waste streams, including food waste, able to be tipped at Blandford rather than travelling to the treatment facility at Piddlehinton. This will improve operational efficiency, reduce vehicle downtime associated with travelling to disposal sites and provide greater resilience across the waste collection service.

Performance Management Actions

4.8.8. Making Performance Data More Visible – The service is developing Power BI dashboards to provide managers with better visibility of operational performance, enabling issues to be identified and addressed more quickly. The dashboards will also improve transparency for Members, with plans to provide councillors with access to up to date ward-level missed bin and

service disruption performance information. A proposed delivery timeline is late summer 2026 and an example of the dashboard in development is included in Appendix 3.

5. Fleet Resilience and Service Reliability

5.1. This section examines fleet availability, vehicle age and condition, maintenance arrangements, replacement planning and the resilience measures in place to minimise service disruption. It responds to Scrutiny's request to understand how fleet performance and resilience affect service reliability and the Council's ability to maintain service continuity.

5.2. Fleet Overview

5.2.1. The Waste and Street Cleansing Service operates a fleet of 217 vehicles. These vehicles support household waste collection, recycling collection, food waste collection, garden waste collection, street cleansing, container deliveries and commercial waste services across Dorset. The table below summarises the different vehicle types used across the service.

Vehicle Type	Number of Vehicles
Supervisor / Staff Van	10
3.5T Van	41
7.5T Van	8
Mini Sweeper	5
Large Sweeper	9
7.5T Food RCV	38
Restricted Access RCV (7.5T / 15T)	28
18T Rubbish RCV	1
26T Recycling RCV	31
26T Rubbish RCV	46
Total Fleet	217

* RCV = Refuse Collection Vehicle

5.2.2. The fleet includes a mix of specialist and multi-purpose vehicles. Some vehicle types, such as split-bodied recycling collection vehicles and restricted-access collection vehicles, perform specialist functions and are

more difficult to replace at short notice. As a result, maintaining resilience within these parts of the fleet is particularly important.

5.2.3. The table below shows the fleet allocation by service area.

Service	Number of Vehicles
Rubbish Collection	31
Recycling Collection	48
Food Waste	38
Garden Waste	17
Trade Waste	12
Street Cleansing	45
Bin Delivery / Supervisor van	26
Total Fleet	217

5.2.4. The fleet is operated from six waste depots across the Dorset Council area. The table below shows the number of vehicles based at each depot.

Depot	Number of Vehicles
Bridec Depot	29
Crookhill Depot	43
Ferndown Depot	44
Poundbury Depot	38
Shaftesbury / Blandford Depot	39
Wareham Depot	24
Total Fleet	217

5.2.5. All vehicles are maintained in accordance with, and as a minimum to, manufacturers' recommended service schedules to ensure safety, reliability and legal compliance. Non-Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) vehicles, including supervisor vans and 3.5-tonne cage tippers, undergo routine servicing and inspection twice annually.

5.2.6. LGVs are subject to a more intensive maintenance regime, including safety inspections every eight weeks in line with the Council's Operator's Licence

obligations. This helps ensure vehicles remain roadworthy, compliant and available for frontline service delivery.

5.2.7. Vehicle servicing, maintenance and safety inspections are scheduled on a rolling 12-month programme, providing visibility of workshop requirements and supporting effective fleet management.

5.2.8. Service managers receive monthly notifications identifying vehicles due for inspection, testing or servicing in the following month, enabling forward planning and minimising operational disruption.

5.2.9. This planned approach to fleet maintenance maximises vehicle availability, supports regulatory compliance and reduces the risk of unplanned breakdowns and service interruptions.

5.2.10. The fleet is managed through a planned replacement programme, with LGVs replaced every seven years and non-LGV vehicles every ten years. Capital funding for the programme is approved and in place through to 2029.

5.2.11. A planned replacement programme helps reduce the risk of unexpected vehicle failures, spreads replacement costs over a number of years and avoids large numbers of vehicles needing to be replaced at the same time. Purchasing vehicles through longer-term supplier contracts also helps standardise the fleet, making maintenance and servicing more efficient by reducing the range of parts, systems and suppliers that need to be managed.

5.2.12. Where vehicles require replacement outside the planned programme, or where additional fleet capacity is needed to maintain service levels, suitable vehicles are sourced through approved hire providers until a permanent replacement is available.

5.3. Fleet Age Profile and Asset Condition

5.3.1. The fleet contains vehicles of different ages across all service areas. This is intentional and helps spread replacement costs, maintenance demands and operational risk across the fleet.

5.3.2. As shown in the table below, the average age of vehicles across the fleet ranges from 2 years for sweepers to 10 years for the 7.5-tonne van and

18-tonne refuse collection vehicle fleets. The age profile demonstrates the ongoing implementation of the fleet replacement programme, with the majority of operational collection vehicles remaining within their planned replacement cycles and supporting fleet reliability and service continuity.

Vehicle Type	Average Vehicle Age (years)
Supervisor / Staff Van	7.0
3.5T Van	5.8
7.5T Van	10.0
Mini Sweeper	2.0
Large Sweeper	2.0
7.5T Food RCV	5.9
Restricted Access RCV (7.5T / 15T)	7.0
18T Rubbish RCV	10.0
26T Recycling RCV	5.5
26T Rubbish RCV	4.6

5.3.3. Whilst the fleet includes vehicles that have exceeded their expected replacement age, the overall age profile reflects a managed and phased approach to fleet renewal. Vehicles beyond their replacement age are monitored through maintenance and inspection programmes and remain operationally suitable until replacement funding and procurement timelines allow for renewal.

5.3.4. The table below shows the current number of vehicles that have exceeded their planned replacement lifecycle under the Council's fleet replacement policy of 7 years for LGVs and 10 years for non-LGVs. Although some vehicles are operating beyond these thresholds, all are maintained and inspected in accordance with statutory requirements and remain fit for purpose.

Vehicle Type	Replacement Threshold	Vehicles Over Lifecycle
Supervisor / Staff Vans	10 years	4
3.5T Vans	10 years	3
7.5T Vans	7 years	8

Vehicle Type	Replacement Threshold	Vehicles Over Lifecycle
Mini Sweepers	7 years	0
Large Sweepers	7 years	0
7.5T Food Waste Collection Vehicles	7 years	8
Restricted Access Collection Vehicles (7.5T / 15T)	7 years	8
18T Refuse Collection Vehicle	7 years	1
26T Recycling Collection Vehicles	7 years	5
26T Refuse Collection Vehicles	7 years	7
Total		44

5.3.5. The service is currently awaiting delivery of thirteen new 26-tonne Refuse Collection Vehicles, with orders also being placed for replacement caged and restricted-access vehicles. These acquisitions will replace the majority of frontline vehicles that have reached or exceeded their planned replacement lifecycle and will further improve fleet reliability, vehicle availability and operational resilience.

5.4. Fleet Resilience

5.4.1. The service maintains a combination of dedicated spare vehicles and operational spare capacity to support service continuity. Fleet Management currently identifies five vehicles as dedicated spare vehicles. These vehicles are not allocated to routine collection rounds and are retained specifically to cover frontline vehicles during planned maintenance, inspections, repairs and breakdowns. The dedicated spare fleet consists of three 7.5T food waste collection vehicles and two split-bodied 26T recycling collection vehicles.

5.4.2. In addition to these dedicated spare vehicles, the service also benefits from operational spare capacity within several parts of the fleet. Some vehicles classified as frontline assets are only required on specific collection days and can therefore be redeployed to provide cover when required. As a result, the level of fleet resilience available to the service is greater than would be indicated by the number of dedicated spare vehicles alone.

5.4.3. This approach seeks to balance service resilience with value for money. Maintaining a large number of dedicated spare vehicles would increase capital, maintenance and storage costs. The current model combines a small

fleet of dedicated spare vehicles with operational flexibility to provide cover across collection services where required.

5.4.4. The greatest resilience challenges are associated with specialist vehicle types, particularly split-bodied recycling collection vehicles, where suitable replacement vehicles are not readily available through the hire market. This was reflected during 2025/26, when vehicle availability issues accounted for 47,419 affected collections.

5.4.5. Fleet resilience will continue to be strengthened through a combination of planned vehicle replacement, improved workshop capacity and a review of spare vehicle provision across the service. Particular focus is being given to specialist vehicle types, including split-bodied recycling collection vehicles, where recent experience has demonstrated that a lack of suitable replacement vehicles can directly affect service delivery.

5.4.6. Any future decision to increase the number of dedicated spare vehicles will also need to consider depot capacity. Several waste depots are approaching their practical limits for vehicle storage, parking and fleet operations, meaning that additional vehicles cannot necessarily be accommodated without changes to infrastructure. Increasing the number of spare vehicles, or retaining a greater number of newer vehicles within the spare fleet, would improve fleet resilience and reduce the risk of service disruption associated with vehicle breakdowns, planned maintenance and workshop delays.

5.4.7. However, depot and workshop capacity are increasingly becoming constraints on future resilience. Additional vehicles require space not only for storage and daily operations, but also for servicing, maintenance and inspection. As fleet numbers increase, corresponding investment may also be required in workshop facilities and supporting infrastructure to maintain vehicle availability and operational efficiency.

5.4.8. The Waste Service is therefore working closely with Property and Assets as part of the Council's wider depot review programme to ensure that current and future fleet, workshop and operational requirements are fully reflected in long-term infrastructure planning. Investment in depot infrastructure is essential in ensuring that the service can safely accommodate future fleet requirements, improve resilience and support continued housing growth and service demand across Dorset.

5.5. Breakdown trends

5.5.1. Vehicle breakdowns are monitored as a key measure of fleet reliability because breakdowns can directly affect the Council's ability to complete collections on the scheduled day. During the last three years, recorded vehicle breakdowns have reduced from 625 to 562, a reduction of 10.1%, as shown in the table below.

Year	Total breakdowns
2023/24	625
2024/25	575
2025/26	562

5.5.2. The downward trend suggests that the Council's planned maintenance and vehicle replacement programmes are helping to improve fleet reliability, despite operational pressures affecting parts of the fleet.

5.5.3. Whilst vehicle breakdowns remain one of the causes of service disruption, accounting for 38,967 affected collections during 2025/26, the overall reduction in breakdown incidents indicates that the fleet generally remains reliable and capable of supporting frontline service delivery. Continued investment in vehicle replacement, maintenance facilities and technician recruitment will be important in maintaining this positive trend and improving fleet resilience further.

5.6. Maintaining Fleet Resilience

5.6.1. When replacement vehicles are introduced into the fleet, the service retains the best-performing vehicles being replaced as spare cover vehicles and disposes of the oldest and least suitable assets. This approach ensures that the spare fleet is refreshed regularly and helps maintain service continuity during vehicle breakdowns, planned maintenance and unexpected operational events.

5.6.2. The current operating model is considered the most cost-effective approach to providing fleet resilience and maintaining service continuity. Whilst the spare vehicle fleet is generally older than the frontline fleet, newer spare

vehicles could help reduce repair and maintenance requirements and improve vehicle availability. The service is currently reviewing its fleet operating and servicing model to ensure it remains the best fit for both current operational requirements and future service needs.

5.6.3. As part of this review, consideration will be given to whether the current number of spare vehicles provides sufficient resilience to meet future service demands, or whether additional spare capacity may be required. Any increase in fleet numbers would need to take account of depot space constraints, Operator's Licence capacity and the capacity of the vehicle workshop to maintain and support the fleet effectively.

5.6.4. The effectiveness of the service's fleet resilience arrangements was demonstrated in 2020 when a fire at Crookhill Depot resulted in the loss of approximately 20 vehicles. Through the use of hired vehicles and the reallocation of available fleet resources, collections resumed within 24 hours and service disruption was limited to approximately one to two days.

5.7. Vehicle Fires

5.7.1. Vehicle fires remain a significant risk to the waste collection service and continue to occur across the industry. During the last 12 months, the service experienced 4 vehicle fires. In each case, prompt action by collection crews minimised service disruption and prevented more significant damage to vehicles and infrastructure.

5.7.2. Where a vehicle fire is detected, crews follow an established procedure designed to protect public safety and minimise damage. This includes stopping the vehicle in a safe location, ejecting the load where safe to do so, reporting the incident to the Fire and Rescue Service, and arranging for the waste to be cleared and disposed of appropriately once the fire is extinguished. The vehicle is then subject to inspection before being returned to service.

5.7.3. Whilst the exact cause of vehicle fires cannot always be determined, three of the four recent incidents are suspected to have been caused by batteries being incorrectly disposed of within household waste or recycling. This assessment was made following investigations by the Fire and Rescue Service and inspections of the material ejected from the affected vehicles.

5.7.4. Vehicle fires can have a number of operational impacts, including disruption to collection rounds, the need to reschedule missed collections, removal and disposal of ejected waste, vehicle downtime, and subsequent inspection or repair work. Additional resources, such as grab lorries, may also be required to clear large volumes of waste from the incident location.

5.7.5. The financial impact of vehicle fires can be significant but is difficult to quantify accurately, as costs vary depending on the nature and severity of the incident. Costs may include vehicle repairs, replacement vehicle hire, waste clearance operations, specialist equipment such as grab lorries and additional disposal costs.

5.7.6. Based on recent incidents, the direct cost to the service is estimated at between £1,000 and £2,000 per fire, primarily relating to clean-up and disposal activities. These costs would have been considerably higher had collection crews not acted promptly to eject the load and prevent more extensive vehicle damage.

5.7.7. The service proactively communicates with residents about the risks of vehicle fires, particularly those caused by batteries being incorrectly disposed of in household waste and recycling bins. This includes awareness campaigns that encourage residents to use appropriate battery recycling and disposal routes. Following any battery-related vehicle fire, targeted communications are issued to raise awareness within the local area and reinforce the importance of correct battery disposal, helping to reduce the risk of similar incidents occurring in the future. An example of a social media post issued following a vehicle fire is included in Appendix 4. This communication activity also supports the Council's wider efforts to increase battery recycling and reduce the risk of future collection vehicle fires.

6. Service Quality, Resident Engagement and Waste Reduction

6.1. This section examines how resident behaviour, communication and engagement influence service performance. It responds to Scrutiny's requests for information on refused and tagged collections, resident communications, access to waste services, the process for obtaining and replacing bins and containers, and the performance of the food waste collection service.

6.2. Refused and Tagged Collections

6.2.1. Waste collection crews may occasionally be unable to empty a container where it does not comply with the Council's collection policy, has been presented incorrectly, or where it is unsafe or impractical to complete the collection. In these circumstances, the reason for non-collection is recorded by the collection crew using in-cab technology and, where appropriate, communicated to the resident through a collection tag attached to the bin or container. Monitoring these incidents provides valuable insight into resident presentation behaviours and operational challenges affecting service delivery. The data below summarises the reasons why containers were not emptied during the last three financial years.

Reason	Description	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Bin Not Out	Container was not presented for collection at the time of the crew visit.	560,997	585,972	692,754
Wrong Bin Presented	Incorrect container presented for the waste stream being collected.	10,915	11,323	12,663
Contamination	Incorrect materials placed in the recycling, glass or food waste container, preventing collection.	8,669	8,555	9,558
No Access	Crew unable to safely access the property or container due to obstructions, parked vehicles or access restrictions.	6,638	6,556	4,648
Side Waste	Additional waste presented alongside the container where collection policy does not permit it.	3,003	2,417	5,092
Overfilled / Too Heavy Bin	Container could not be safely lifted or emptied.	930	773	1,250
Unauthorised Additional Bin	Additional container presented without approval from the Council.	221	374	1,087
Total Recorded Reasons		591,373	615,970	727,052

6.2.2. Recorded non-collection incidents have increased by 23% over the last three years, rising from 591,373 in 2023/24 to 727,052 in 2025/26. However,

this should not be interpreted as a 23% increase in resident-related collection issues. Improved crew training and clearer guidance on the use of in-cab technology have resulted in more consistent and accurate recording of non-collection reasons.

6.2.3. These figures also include the Garden Waste Service. The high number of "Bin Not Out" records is primarily driven by seasonal variations in garden waste collections, particularly during winter when many households have little or no garden waste to present. As a result, a significant proportion of these records reflect normal resident behaviour rather than collection service issues.

6.2.4. Where a container cannot be emptied, the collection crew will attach a tag to the bin or container to advise the resident of the reason for non-collection. Appendix 5 provides examples of the tags used by the Waste Service. Each tag clearly explains why the container was not emptied and outlines the actions required by the resident to rectify the issue and ensure the container can be collected on the next scheduled collection date. The consistent use of tags helps reduce repeat presentation issues, improves recycling quality and supports resident understanding of collection policies.

6.2.5. Resident Communication

6.2.6. The Waste Service uses two main types of communication with residents. Reactive communication provides information about service issues, such as missed collections or service disruptions. Proactive communication focuses on encouraging behaviours that improve service performance, including waste reduction, recycling and food waste participation.

6.2.7. Reactive communications are primarily used to keep residents informed when service issues occur. When a resident reports a missed collection, the waste management system automatically checks the collection record for any information logged by the crew. This may include reasons such as the bin not being presented, contamination, access issues, or wider operational disruptions such as a vehicle breakdown. Where information is available, it is provided to the resident immediately at the point of reporting, helping them understand why the collection did not take place and whether any action is required on their part.

6.2.8. Whilst the current approach enables the service to respond to reported issues and communicate during significant disruptions, there is an opportunity

to further enhance direct communication with residents. The service is keen to develop a more proactive approach, whereby residents affected by service disruptions receive timely updates and notifications directly, rather than having to seek information themselves. This would also provide the Council with additional opportunities to share service updates, education campaigns and targeted communications with residents.

6.2.9. At present, this is limited by the fact that the service does not hold contact details for all residents and therefore cannot communicate directly with every affected household. The introduction of a customer account or customer portal would address this by enabling residents to register for waste service updates, receive notifications about collection disruptions, and sign up for collection day reminders. This would improve the customer experience, provide residents with more timely information and help reduce avoidable customer contact.

6.2.10. Functionality of this nature is available through the Council's current waste management system and could be purchased and implemented relatively quickly for the Waste Service. The absence of this functionality limits the service's ability to proactively communicate with residents affected by service disruptions and to provide automated service updates and notifications. However, the Council's wider ambition is to establish a consistent approach to customer accounts and communications across all services. As a result, the Waste Service is not currently pursuing a standalone waste-specific solution and will instead seek to engage with any future corporate customer account developments as they progress.

6.2.11. A significant proportion of the Waste Service's communication activity is focused on behaviour change and encouraging residents to reduce waste, recycle more and use services correctly. This is delivered through a combination of targeted improvement projects and wider communication campaigns designed to improve service performance, reduce contamination and increase participation in recycling and food waste collections.

6.2.12. The service regularly undertakes targeted interventions in areas where performance is below expected levels. This includes the Round Improvement Programme, which focuses on increasing recycling rates through measures such as leafleting, container stickers, replacement containers and engagement with local communities. Similar approaches are used in communal properties through the Communal Improvement

Programme, alongside projects focused on reducing contamination, diverting waste from disposal and reducing side waste presented for collection.

- 6.2.13. These projects are supported by an ongoing programme of resident communications, including a quarterly recycling and waste e-newsletter distributed to approximately 25,000 households, regular social media activity, community events and roadshows, town and parish council presentations, and targeted campaigns on specific topics such as recycling, waste reduction and reusable products. Together, these activities help improve recycling performance, reduce contamination, support waste reduction and encourage greater use of the Council's waste services.

6.3. Resident Access to New and Replacement Bins and Containers

- 6.3.1. Under the Key Lines of Enquiry, Scrutiny requested information on the process for obtaining and replacing bins and containers.
- 6.3.2. The Waste Service provides residents with a simple and accessible process for requesting new or replacement containers. Requests can be submitted online through the Council's website, where integrated electronic forms allow residents to view the containers currently assigned to their property and select any that require replacement due to loss or damage.
- 6.3.3. Separate online forms are available for residents requiring additional capacity or specialist services. This includes requests for larger refuse bins for larger households or medical needs (subject to policy criteria), additional rubbish sacks for households with children in nappies, and garden waste containers. Residents who are unable to access online services can also make these requests by telephone, with Customer Services officers completing the process on their behalf.
- 6.3.4. Once a request is submitted, a delivery task is automatically created within the Waste Service management system and allocated directly to the relevant depot's bin delivery crew via their in-cab technology. The service operates to a target of delivering new and replacement bins and containers within 20 working days of a request being received. However, the automated allocation process enables delivery crews to identify requests that are located close to their planned routes. Where crews are already operating in the locality and have sufficient capacity, requests can occasionally be completed on the same day, although this is the exception rather than the norm and delivery times vary depending on operational priorities and demand.

6.3.5. For smaller items, such as food waste containers, glass recycling boxes and battery recycling bags, residents also have the option to collect containers from one of 28 local stockists located across Dorset. These are primarily based within libraries, town and parish council offices, and other staffed community buildings. This often provides residents with a quicker alternative to home delivery. The Council's website enables residents to identify their nearest stockist, together with location details and opening hours.

Example Resident Journey

6.3.6. The example below illustrates the process for a resident in Beaminster who requires a replacement 23-litre food waste container:

- 1) The resident visits the Council's website and determines that either home delivery or collection from a local stockist is available.
- 2) The resident chooses to collect the container and is presented with details of nearby stockists, including addresses, contact information and opening hours.
- 3) The resident identifies The Yarn Barton Centre as the most convenient location and visits the site to collect a replacement food waste container.
- 4) As stock levels reduce, The Yarn Barton Centre uses an online form provided by the Waste Service to request additional containers.
- 5) The request automatically creates a delivery job within the Waste Service management system, which is then issued directly to the Bridport depot's bin delivery crew through their in-cab technology.
- 6) The crew delivers replacement stock to the centre, ensuring containers remain available for local residents.

6.3.7. This end-to-end process helps ensure residents can access replacement containers quickly and conveniently, while reducing demand on bin delivery resources and supporting continued participation in recycling and food waste services.

6.3.8. During the 2025/26 financial year, the service completed more than 72,000 container delivery and removal jobs, with a further 11,125 containers collected directly by residents from local stockists.

6.4. Food Waste Service

6.4.1. Under the Key Lines of Enquiry, Scrutiny requested information on the performance of the food waste collection service.

6.4.2. Dorset Council provides a weekly food waste collection service to all households. Residents are supplied with a 23-litre outdoor food waste container and a 7-litre kitchen caddy to make it easy to separate and present food waste for collection.

6.4.3. Food waste tonnages have remained consistently strong over the last decade, with 14,675 tonnes collected during the 2025/26 financial year. This equates to approximately 78.5kg of food waste collected per household each year.

6.4.4. Benchmarking data from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and other well-established food waste collection authorities suggests that councils collecting:

- Less than 25kg per household per year are considered low performing;
- 25–45kg per household per year are considered average performing;
- 45–60kg per household per year are considered good performing;
- 60–80kg per household per year are considered high performing; and
- More than 80kg per household per year are considered exceptional performers.

6.4.5. Dorset's 78.5kg of food waste collected per household per year places the Council at the upper end of the high-performing range and close to the exceptional category. This demonstrates strong resident participation and a well-established food waste collection service.

6.4.6. All food waste collected by Dorset Council is treated within Dorset through an anaerobic digestion process. This process converts food waste into biogas, which is used to generate renewable electricity, and a nutrient-rich biofertiliser which is used as a soil improver for agricultural land and crop production.

6.4.7. By collecting food waste separately, the Council diverts significant quantities of biodegradable waste away from disposal routes and supports the generation of renewable energy. This contributes to the Council's

environmental objectives and helps reduce the carbon impact associated with managing household waste. It also helps reduce disposal costs by diverting material away from more expensive residual waste treatment routes.

6.4.8. The Waste Service continues to promote the food waste collection service through its wider programme of communication and behaviour change activities. This includes the use of social media, community engagement, educational campaigns and targeted communications aimed at encouraging residents to participate in the service and use it correctly.

6.4.9. The service also seeks to improve participation through ongoing service optimisation and operational improvements. This includes ensuring residents have easy access to replacement food waste containers through the Council's bin delivery service and network of local stockists, helping to remove barriers to participation and maintain high levels of service usage.

6.4.10. In summary, the evidence presented in this section demonstrates that service quality is influenced not only by collection performance but also by resident participation and engagement. The use of container tagging, targeted communications, accessible container replacement services and a well-established food waste collection service all contribute to improving recycling performance, reducing avoidable costs and supporting positive environmental outcomes across Dorset.

7. Enforcement, Waste Behaviour and Environmental Impact

7.1. Fly Tipping

7.1.1. Under the Key Lines of Enquiry, Scrutiny requested information on fly-tipping trends, investigation processes, enforcement activity, costs, challenges and improvement activity.

7.1.2. Environmental enforcement is delivered by a team of five enforcement officers. Whilst the Environmental Enforcement Team sits within Regulatory Services rather than Waste Services, the two teams work closely together to manage fly-tipping incidents. This includes the reporting, investigation and clearance of fly-tipped waste, ensuring that incidents are dealt with efficiently and that potential evidence is identified and secured wherever possible. This joined-up approach helps ensure that fly-tipping incidents are investigated appropriately whilst minimising delays to waste clearance.

7.1.3. The Council works closely with Dorset Police and the Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner's Office (OPCC) to tackle fly-tipping and wider waste crime. This partnership recognises the links between waste crime and other rural offences, including theft and rogue trading. As part of this approach, Dorset Council and the OPCC jointly fund an Environmental Enforcement Officer role focused on evidence gathering, community engagement and supporting investigations. The role has strengthened relationships with landowners and local communities, improved the quality of evidence obtained from fly-tipping incidents, and contributed to increased enforcement activity. Vehicle seizures and other higher-risk enforcement activities are also supported by Dorset Police where appropriate.

Reporting and Investigation Process

7.1.4. All fly-tipping incidents are reported through Dorset Council's online reporting portal. Reports are automatically transferred into the Council's waste management system and triaged by the Environmental Enforcement Team. Incidents on public land that do not appear to contain evidence are passed directly to Waste Services for clearance. Reports containing potential evidence are referred to Enforcement Officers for further investigation, including site visits, witness enquiries, CCTV review and evidence gathering. Dorset Council investigates fly-tipping on both public and private land.

Fly-Tipping Numbers and Trends

7.1.5. The number of fly-tipping incidents reported across Dorset has reduced significantly over the last three years. Incidents have fallen from 1,719 in 2023/24 to 1,410 in 2024/25 and 1,113 in 2025/26, representing an overall reduction of 35% during the period.

Year	Incidents
2023/24	1,719
2024/25	1,410
2025/26	1,113

7.1.6. This equates to an average reduction of approximately 300 incidents per year over the last two years.

7.1.7. Fly-tipping incidents are not evenly distributed across Dorset. The table below shows the number of incidents recorded within each operational depot area and the corresponding geographic area of Dorset that they serve. During 2025/26, the highest number of incidents were recorded within the Western Dorset and Eastern Dorset areas, which together accounted for

approximately 59% of all reported fly-tipping incidents. Encouragingly, all areas have experienced a reduction in fly-tipping over the last three years, contributing to an overall countywide reduction of 35%, demonstrating a broadly positive trend across all operational areas.

Depot Area	Dorset Area Description	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Change
Poundbury	Western Dorset	463	393	351	-24%
Ferndown	Eastern Dorset	421	313	309	-27%
Wareham	Purbeck Area	217	251	178	-18%
Crookhill	Weymouth & Portland Area	253	180	164	-35%
Shaftesbury	Northern Dorset	365	273	111	-70%
Total	Dorset Council Area	1,719	1,410	1,113	-35%

7.1.8. The data demonstrates a sustained reduction in fly-tipping incidents across Dorset over the last three years. Whilst reductions have been achieved in all areas of the county, the most significant reduction has been seen in Northern Dorset, where incidents have fallen by 70%. The reasons for these improvements are likely to be multifaceted; however, increased enforcement activity, improved intelligence gathering, stronger partnership working and targeted community engagement are all considered to have contributed to the positive trend.

7.1.9. This local improvement is particularly encouraging when viewed against the national picture. DEFRA data shows that reported fly-tipping incidents in England have increased in recent years, rising from approximately 1.08 million incidents in 2022/23 to 1.15 million in 2023/24 and 1.26 million in 2024/25. Whilst direct comparisons should be treated with caution due to differences in geography, demographics and local reporting practices, Dorset's reduction in fly-tipping incidents contrasts with the overall national trend and suggests that local prevention, enforcement and engagement activities are having a positive impact.

Investigations and Enforcement

7.1.10. The Council adopts a proportionate enforcement approach, with outcomes ranging from informal advice and warning letters through to fixed penalty notices and prosecution where appropriate. Enforcement action is

determined by the quality of evidence available and the seriousness of the offence.

7.1.11. Enforcement outcomes include:

- Informal and formal warnings.
- Community Protection Notices.
- Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs).
- Vehicle seizures (undertaken with Police support).
- Successful prosecutions through the courts

7.1.12. Whilst the number of fly-tipping incidents has reduced, enforcement activity has increased significantly. Investigations increased from 311 in 2023/24 to 650 in 2025/26, whilst Fixed Penalty Notices increased from 13 to 41 over the same period. This demonstrates a more proactive and intelligence-led approach to tackling waste crime.

Measure	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Investigations	311	567	650
Warning Letters	309	565	610
Fixed Penalty Notices	13	24	41

Prosecutions

7.1.13. Prosecution is reserved for the most serious fly-tipping offences, repeat offenders, or cases where alternative enforcement approaches are not considered appropriate. Dorset Council currently maintains a 100% conviction rate for fly-tipping prosecutions taken to court. However, prosecutions are resource intensive and must be funded directly by the Council rather than the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). In many cases, the costs associated with investigation, legal preparation and court proceedings significantly exceed the costs recovered through the courts. As a result, Fixed Penalty Notices are generally considered the most proportionate and cost-effective enforcement tool where sufficient evidence exists, allowing the Council to hold offenders to account while making the most effective use of limited resources. The Council will continue to pursue prosecution where it is considered proportionate, in the public interest and supported by sufficient evidence.

Cost of Fly-Tipping

7.1.14. The direct cost of clearing fly-tipping from public land has reduced over the last three years:

Year	Cost to Dorset Council
2023/24	£96,428
2024/25	£83,442
2025/26	£60,562

7.1.15. The reduction in fly-tipping incidents has been accompanied by a corresponding reduction in clearance costs, generating financial benefits for the Council as well as environmental benefits for local communities.

7.1.16. This represents a reduction of approximately 37% over the period. The reduction is considered to have been influenced by increased enforcement activity, improved evidence gathering and greater community engagement.

7.1.17. The figures above relate only to costs incurred by Dorset Council. They do not include the costs borne by private landowners, who are responsible for the removal of fly-tipped waste from their own land. Whilst these costs are not recorded centrally, it is considered likely that the overall financial burden on private landowners is substantial.

Challenges

7.1.18. Tackling fly-tipping presents a number of challenges. Many incidents occur in isolated rural locations where there are no witnesses or readily identifiable sources of evidence, making it difficult to identify offenders and take enforcement action. Dorset's large rural geography further increases these challenges by making detection and investigation more resource intensive. Whilst enforcement activity has increased significantly, the Environmental Enforcement Team continues to operate within finite resources, requiring activity to be prioritised towards incidents that present the greatest environmental impact or provide the strongest opportunities for enforcement action.

Communication

7.1.19. Communication and public engagement play an important role in the Council's approach to tackling fly-tipping. The Environmental Enforcement Team regularly works with the Council's Communications Team to promote enforcement activity, publicise successful outcomes and encourage residents to report fly-tipping incidents. Appendix 6 includes examples of media releases issued to raise awareness of waste crime, deter offenders and seek

information from the public to support investigations. This communication activity helps increase public confidence in enforcement activity, encourages reporting and supports efforts to deter future offending.

7.2. Improper Waste Disposal and Cost Impact

7.2.1. Under the Key Lines of Enquiry, Scrutiny requested information on the costs associated with improper waste disposal and resident behaviours that increase the cost of delivering waste services. Whilst it is not possible to quantify every cost associated with non-compliance, there are several areas where the financial impact can be clearly demonstrated.

Side Waste

7.2.2. Side waste is waste presented alongside a household's refuse bin. To understand its impact, the Waste Service undertook a pilot across 15 collection rounds covering approximately 44,000 households. Crews left side waste behind, applied information tags and recorded incidents through the waste management system. The project demonstrated that consistent application of the Recycle for Dorset kerbside collection policy can significantly change resident behaviour. On one depot's rounds, side waste presentation reduced by 84%. This demonstrates that clear communication, consistent policy application and effective monitoring can bring about significant behavioural change.

7.2.3. The project identified estimated disposal savings of between £33,000 and £56,000 per year if side waste was consistently prevented from entering the waste stream across Dorset. This could increase to approximately £95,000 per year if all forms of excess waste presentation, including overfilled bins, were addressed. These findings demonstrate how relatively small behaviour changes can deliver significant financial benefits when applied at scale.

Contamination

7.2.4. Contamination occurs when incorrect materials are placed in recycling containers. This reduces the quality and value of recyclable materials, increases processing costs and can result in recycling loads being rejected.

7.2.5. In 2025/26, 13.6% of material delivered to Dorset's Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) was identified as contamination. This is lower than the national average contamination rate of 16.6%, as reported by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), indicating comparatively good

recycling quality across Dorset. However, where contamination levels are excessive, entire loads can be rejected by the MRF and returned to Dorset for disposal as residual waste.

- 7.2.6. Rejected loads are relatively uncommon in Dorset, with only two loads rejected during the last 12 months. Nevertheless, when a rejection does occur it creates additional haulage and disposal costs, with the total cost estimated at approximately £7,000 per load. This highlights the importance of continuing to educate residents on what can and cannot be recycled, whilst also ensuring collection crews identify and do not collect heavily contaminated recycling containers. Once contamination enters a collection vehicle it can affect the quality of material already collected from other households and increase the risk of the entire load being rejected, resulting in avoidable costs to the Council.

Waste Analysis

- 7.2.7. A composition analysis of Dorset's residual waste was undertaken in 2023 to understand what materials residents continue to place in their rubbish bins rather than using existing recycling and food waste services. The analysis found that approximately 29.6% of the average sampled rubbish bin consists of food waste and recyclable materials that could potentially be diverted through better use of existing services.
- 7.2.8. The largest opportunity relates to food waste, which accounted for 18.7% of material found in rubbish bins. Based on the 45,257 tonnes of residual waste collected during 2025/26, this equates to an estimated 8,474 tonnes of food waste being disposed of through the residual waste stream. The analysis indicates that if this material were captured through Dorset's separate food waste collection service, the Council could avoid disposal costs of approximately £1.06 million per year. This demonstrates that food waste remains the single greatest opportunity for further improvement in Dorset's household waste stream.
- 7.2.9. A further 10.9% of residual waste was identified as recyclable material, including paper, cardboard, plastic, glass and metal packaging that could have been placed in residents' recycling containers. Based on current waste volumes, this equates to approximately 4,919 tonnes of recyclable material being disposed of as residual waste each year. The analysis indicates that diverting this material through existing recycling services could reduce disposal costs by approximately £418,000 per year.

- 7.2.10. Taken together, the food waste and recyclable materials identified through the composition analysis represent an estimated annual disposal cost reduction opportunity of approximately £1.48 million. These findings highlight the continued importance of investing in behaviour change, improving participation in recycling and food waste services, and helping residents make full use of the collection services already available to them.

Behaviour change campaigns

- 7.2.11. These initiatives aim to reduce avoidable costs whilst also improving environmental outcomes and service performance. Through targeted communications, container tagging, recycling education campaigns and operational improvement projects, the service seeks to reduce side waste, improve recycling quality and encourage residents to use services correctly.

7.3. Dorset's National Performance

- 7.3.1. Whilst previous sections of this report have focused on service pressures, performance challenges and areas for improvement, it is also important to recognise that Dorset's waste service performs strongly when compared with national benchmarks and continues to deliver high levels of service, environmental benefit and value for money.

Recycling Rate

- 7.3.2. In 2024/25, Dorset achieved a recycling and composting rate of 59.9%, placing it 3rd out of approximately 90 unitary and waste disposal authorities in England. This compares favourably with the national household recycling rate of 43.8%.

Residual Waste Per Household

- 7.3.3. Dorset also performs strongly in reducing the amount of residual waste produced by households. During 2024/25, Dorset households generated 368kg of residual waste per household, ranking Dorset fourth among unitary authorities in England. This reflects the high levels of recycling and waste diversion achieved across the county.

Landfill Diversion

- 7.3.4. Over the last decade, Dorset Council has reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill by approximately 70%. In 2025/26, only around 2% of residual waste is disposed of through landfill.

Carbon Performance

7.3.5. Dorset Council has historically been recognised as one of the highest-performing authorities nationally for the carbon benefits achieved through recycling. In the last published Eunomia Recycling Carbon Index (published in 2020 using 2018/19 performance data), Dorset was ranked within the top three local authorities for the carbon emissions avoided through its recycling service. Whilst this index and associated national rankings are no longer produced in a directly comparable format, the results provided independent evidence that Dorset's recycling service was delivering significant carbon benefits when the measure was last available.

7.3.6. The findings demonstrated that Dorset's recycling service not only diverted waste from disposal but also made a significant contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As one of the Council's largest frontline services, waste collection and recycling continues to support the Council Plan's objectives to address the climate and ecological emergencies and reduce Dorset's carbon footprint.

Customer Satisfaction

7.3.7. Customer satisfaction with the Waste Service remains high. A resident satisfaction survey undertaken in 2022/23 found that 87.5% of Dorset residents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall waste service. This positive position was reinforced by a dedicated Garden Waste Service survey completed in December 2025, which received almost 11,000 responses. The survey found that 95.9% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the reliability of collections, demonstrating consistently high levels of customer satisfaction with one of the Council's most widely used waste services.

Value for Money Assessment

7.3.8. An independent review undertaken by external consultants during 2020/21 benchmarked Dorset Council's Waste Service against a range of local authorities across the country. The review concluded that:

"The waste service is deemed to be effective, provides quality and achieves high diversion rates. In fact, it delivers real value for money."

7.3.9. The Council's internal value for money dashboard, which compares Dorset Council's waste service revenue expenditure on a cost per head of population basis against other local authorities, provides a more recent assessment of whether the service is delivering value for money. The 2024/25 comparison indicates that Dorset's waste collection costs are £35.50 per head, compared

with an average of £23.18 for the authorities currently included within the dataset. This difference is likely to be influenced by Dorset's rural geography and the additional operational costs associated with delivering services across a large geographic area with a dispersed population. Work is therefore underway with the Directorate Business Intelligence Manager to refine the benchmarking group and compare Dorset against authorities with similar demographic, geographic and service characteristics, providing a more meaningful and robust assessment of value for money.

- 7.3.10. Taken together, Dorset's strong recycling performance, low residual waste levels, reduction in fly-tipping, landfill diversion achievements and high levels of customer satisfaction demonstrate that the Council operates a high-performing waste service which compares favourably with national benchmarks whilst continuing to provide value for money for residents.

8. Alternative options considered

- 8.1. This is a key line of enquiry, so no alternative options are required to be considered.

9. Legal considerations

- 9.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from consideration of this report. Any recommendations resulting from the review will be subject to appropriate legal consideration before implementation where required.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the consideration of this report. Any future recommendations that require additional resources or changes to service delivery will be considered through the appropriate budget-setting and governance processes.

11. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 11.1. Waste services contribute to Dorset Council's environmental and climate ambitions through the efficient management of waste and maximising the recovery of materials for reuse, recycling and treatment, helping to reduce carbon emissions and minimise environmental impact.

11.2. The review itself has no direct environmental implications. However, any recommendations arising may support improvements in recycling performance, waste reduction and environmental sustainability.

12. Well-being and health implications

12.1. Effective waste collection services contribute directly to public health, community wellbeing and environmental quality.

12.2. The review itself has no direct health implications but seeks to provide assurance regarding the effectiveness and resilience of services that support healthy communities.

13. Other implications

13.1. There are no other implications identified with this key line of enquiry.

14. Risk implications

14.1. HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

15. Equalities

15.1. No adverse equality impacts have been identified through this review.

15.2. The waste collection service is delivered to all residents across Dorset and includes assisted collection arrangements for residents who are unable to present their bins due to age, disability or mobility needs. This supports equitable access to the service and contributes positively to the Council's equality objectives.

15.3. Any recommendations arising from this review will be considered in line with the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty obligations.

16. Appendices

16.1. Appendix 1 - Detailed missed collection data for the last three financial years broken down by each depot.

Rubbish, Recycling, Glass and Food waste missed collections for last three financial years

Depot	2023-24			2024-25			2025-26		
	Number missed	Total collections	% missed	Number missed	Total collections	% missed	Number missed	Total collections	% missed
Bridec Depot	546	2,199,335	0.02%	678	2,221,328	0.03%	1,265	2,306,249	0.05%
Crookhill Depot	2,667	4,440,311	0.06%	3,452	4,484,714	0.08%	3,615	4,494,658	0.08%
Ferndown Depot	2,807	5,003,626	0.06%	3,288	5,053,662	0.07%	3,880	5,116,133	0.08%
Poundbury Depot	2,183	3,754,248	0.06%	2,413	3,791,790	0.06%	2,510	3,749,599	0.07%
Shaftesbury Depot	5,664	4,325,697	0.13%	5,835	4,368,954	0.13%	5,722	4,427,158	0.13%
Wareham Depot	2,055	2,825,268	0.07%	1,746	2,853,521	0.06%	1,889	2,876,289	0.07%
	15,922	22,548,484	0.071%	17,412	22,773,969	0.076%	18,881	22,970,086	0.082%

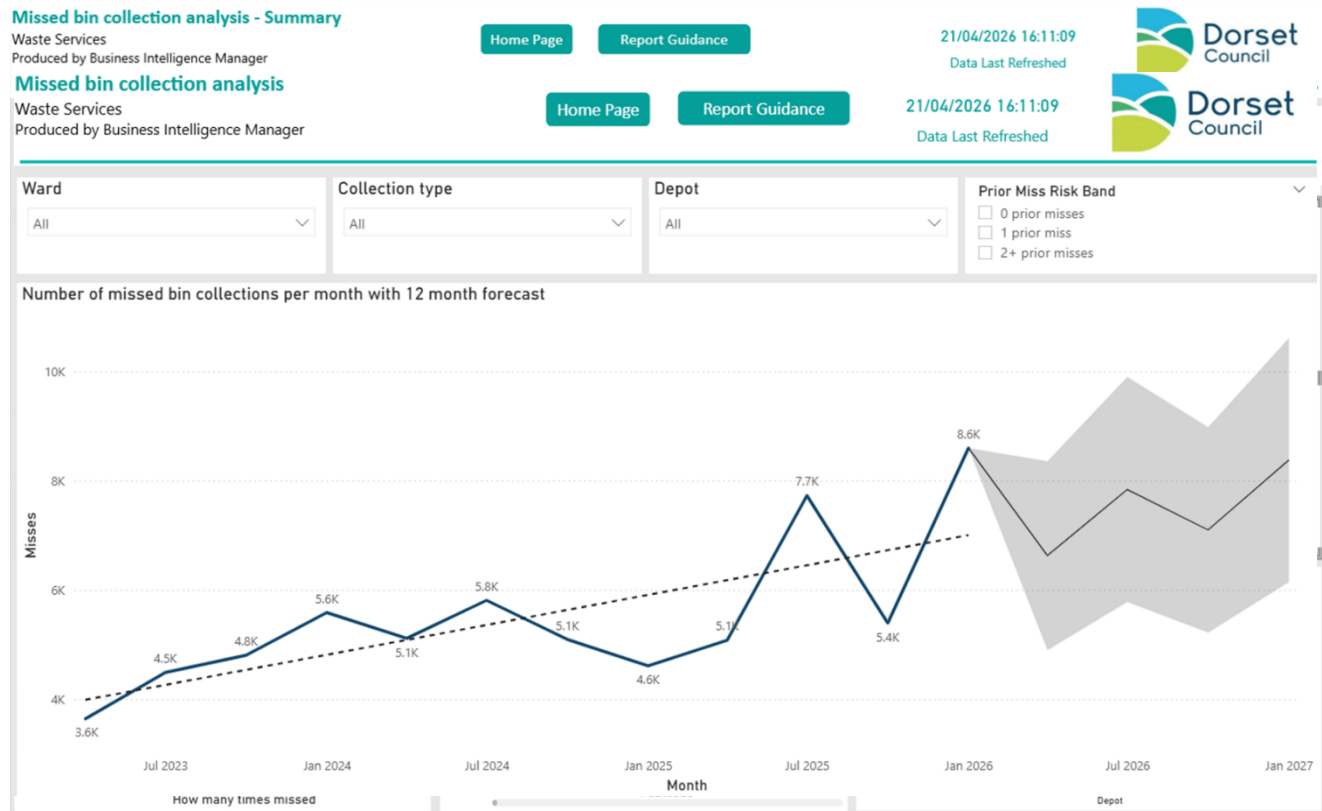
Garden waste missed collections for last three financial years

Depot	2023-24			2024-25			2025-26		
	Number missed	Total collections	% missed	Number missed	Total collections	% missed	Number missed	Total collections	% missed
Bridec Depot	72	95,131	0.08%	54	100,406	0.05%	74	104,130	0.07%
Crookhill Depot	280	158,401	0.18%	316	169,140	0.19%	329	162,215	0.20%
Ferndown Depot	626	432,042	0.14%	543	449,904	0.12%	503	453,717	0.11%
Poundbury Depot	315	218,585	0.14%	485	230,413	0.21%	771	233,442	0.33%
Shaftesbury Depot	1,824	355,596	0.51%	1,625	372,761	0.44%	1,590	393,153	0.40%
Wareham Depot	215	115,684	0.19%	190	123,560	0.15%	153	123,602	0.12%
	3,332	1,375,439	0.24%	3,213	1,446,183	0.22%	3,420	1,470,259	0.23%

16.2. **Appendix 2** - Detailed breakdown of 2025/26 service disruptions by depot

Depot	Total Disruptions Recorded	% of Collections Affected by a Disruption	Principal Causes of Disruption
Bridport	5,543	0.24%	• Time constraints (3,854) • Staff shortages (761) • Vehicle breakdowns (468)
Weymouth (Crookhill)	49,018	2.17%	• Staff shortages (37,399) • Time constraints (4,916) • Roadworks (1,962) • Parked cars (1,918)
Ferndown	106,952	2.38%	• No suitable vehicle (32,085) • Staff shortages (32,272) • Vehicle breakdowns (16,362) • Time constraints (10,005) • Bad weather (9,349)
Poundbury	14,188	0.28%	• Staff shortages (3,597) • Time constraints (3,201) • Parked cars (2,012) • Vehicle breakdowns (1,617)
Shaftesbury	87,441	2.33%	• Staff shortages (39,402) • Vehicle breakdowns (15,695) • No suitable vehicle (14,671) • Time constraints (5,346)
Wareham	17,424	0.39%	• Staff shortages (4,770) • Time constraints (3,895) • Vehicle breakdowns (3,399) • Bad weather (2,161)

16.3. **Appendix 3** – Example Waste Service Performance Dashboard Currently in Development



16.4. **Appendix 4** – Example Social Media Communication Following a Battery-Related Vehicle Fire

Dorset Council's post



Dorset Council Waste Services

19 December 2024 · 🌐

⚠️ NEVER PUT BATTERIES IN ANY OF YOUR BINS ⚠️

We've had another fire in one of our recycling collection vehicles in Bridport this morning.

The crew ejected the load, and our colleagues in [DWFireRescue](#) extinguished the blaze. You can see from the photos this was caused by a pack of batteries that were placed in a recycling bin. Fortunately, no-one was injured and - due to the quick actions of our collection crew - no damage was caused to the vehicle. However, a lot of recyclable material has been lost, and our crews will need to clean up the mess too.

Waste is crushed in the back of our vehicles after collection. When batteries - even dead ones - are crushed, they can catch fire. When surrounded by waste paper, cardboard, and plastics, it's a recipe for disaster.

Batteries should be placed in a battery bag (or any other clear plastic bag) and left on top of your recycling bin, never inside it. Or you can recycle batteries at most supermarkets, or our household recycling centres.

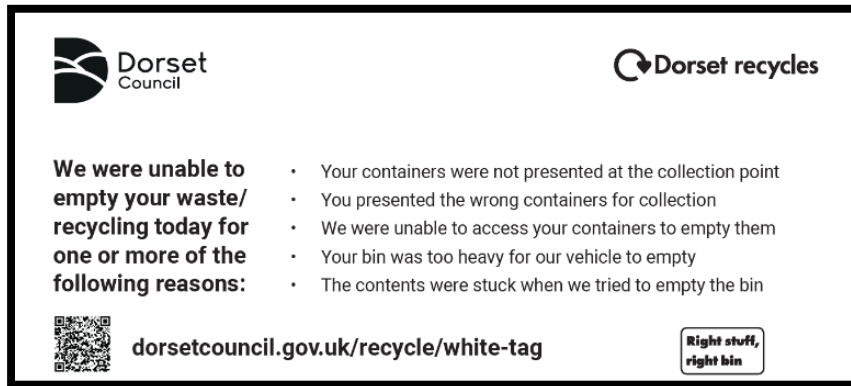
Thank you for your cooperation.

👍🙄🙄 91

44 comments 57 shares

16.5. **Appendix 5** – Examples of the Bin Tags Used by Collection Crews to Communicate Reasons for Non-Collection

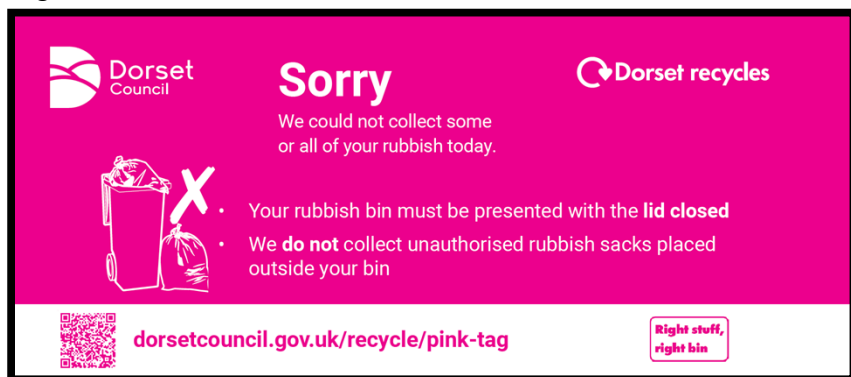
White Tag - for any bin problem (e.g. containers not presented at the collection point, wrong containers for collection, unable to access containers or too heavy to empty)



Red Tag - for any bin containing batteries or electrical items



Pink Tag / Sticker - for rubbish bins that are overfilled with rubbish or for a bin where side waste has also been presented. You can also use a pink sticker on the bags



Green Tag - for recycling bins that are contaminated (glass, plastic bags and film, rubbish, clothes, etc)



Blue Tag - for food waste bins that contain incorrect items (plastic bags, film, packaging etc)



16.6. **Appendix 6 – Examples of Enforcement Communications and Public Appeals Relating to Fly-Tipping**

Fly-tipping crackdown leads to double the number of fines

24 March 2026



An increase in enforcement against fly tipping and waste related offences by Dorset Council led to 80 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) to be issued in 2025, almost double the number given in the previous year.

[Fly-tipping crackdown leads to double the number of fines - Dorset Council](#)

Appeal for information after large fly tipping incident on A35 near Bloxworth

15 April 2026



Dorset Council is appealing for information from the public after a significant fly-tipping incident involving large containers and liquid waste was discovered on the A35 near Bloxworth and Morden.

[Appeal for information after large fly tipping incident on A35 near Bloxworth - Dorset Council](#)

17. Background papers

17.1. The Recycle for Dorset Service Policy - [Recycle for Dorset Service Policy - Dorset Council](#)

17.2. Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee 2025/26 Quarter 2, Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 Performance Reports

18. Report sign-off

18.1. This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)