



**Surrey  
Environment  
Partnership**

# SEP 2025

A partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling

Version	Author	Date	Changes	Distribution
1.0	Nick Meadows	5/10/22	First draft	SEP 2025 Steering Group and the SEP Officers Group
2.0	Nick Meadows	27/10/22	Amendments throughout following partner feedback	SEP Officers Group
3.0	Nick Meadows	16/11/22	Minor amendments to give additional information in places	SEP Members Group
4.0	Nick Meadows	23/11/22	Final draft following feedback from the SEP Members Group	SEP Officers and Members Group

## Executive Summary

SEP (Surrey Environment Partnership) continuously strives to improve collection and disposal services in Surrey and aspires to be among the best nationally on all key performance indicators.

Since the Resources and Waste Strategy (RaWS) for England was published in December 2018, the Government has consulted on a number of the strategy's ambitions across a range of subjects, the results of which will provide policy direction, which we eagerly await. The policy situation combined with Surrey's growing population, increasing numbers of households, and changes in the types of waste produced by our residents means change is a certainty. However, the exact direction of the change and the impact it will have on our collection and disposal services remains unclear.

Whilst things are so uncertain, now is not the right time to update the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) and consult with residents, so we need a short-term approach to help manage Surrey's recycling and waste in the most efficient, effective, economical and sustainable way.

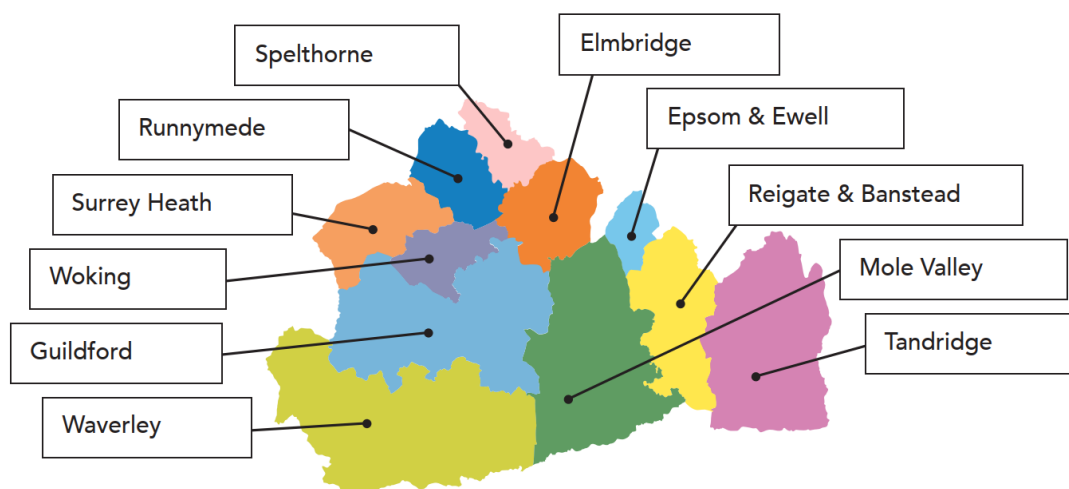
SEP 2025 has been developed to bridge the gap between our existing out-of-date JMWMS and further clarity from central government. It will reflect the vision of SEP and provide clear strategic direction for the partnership for the next three years to 2025 and a longer-term vision that will allow SEP to continue to follow the waste hierarchy and work towards zero waste.

SEP 2025 is therefore a partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling, and has been developed on behalf of all Surrey local authorities through the SEP.

## Background, policy, context and vision

### Background

[SEP](#) is made up of Surrey County Council (SCC) and the 11 district and borough councils in the county (as shown in **Figure 1** below). It was formed originally as the Surrey Waste Partnership (SWP) in 2009 to overcome the challenges of two-tier service delivery and aims to manage Surrey's recycling and waste in the most efficient, effective, economical, and sustainable way possible. SEP's plan (the JMWMS) outlined our approach to achieving this.



**Figure 1: A map of Surrey showing the district and borough council areas**

SEP's current JMWMS is meant to run until 2024-25. However, it was last updated in 2015 and is therefore considered to be 'out-of-date'. This was delayed due to the publication of the RaWS, which proposes some fundamental changes on how recycling and waste services will be funded and delivered in the future (further explained below). The key policy to support the RaWS is still emerging and therefore, the review has been postponed until national direction is clearer.

It was also decided to stop the annual monitoring of the JMWMS's action plan at the end of 2017-18 and in its place annual work programmes were developed instead. They have been in place each year through to the latest programme for 2022-23. These have effectively been the plan for working together in partnership since 2018-19. The current SEP work programme for 2022-23 can be found in **Annex 1**.

The partnership name was changed from SWP to SEP in April 2019 to reflect a growing remit and desire to tackle wider environmental issues in Surrey.

### Existing policy

As a group of councils providing recycling and waste management services, we have several duties and responsibilities in accordance with relevant key legislation. These are set out in **Annex 2**, which has been the legislative framework that we have operated under during the last 30 years.

A key concept set out here is the 'waste hierarchy', which ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment. It gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place. When waste is created, it gives priority to preparing it for reuse, then recycling, then recovery<sup>1</sup> (this is where most of our residual waste goes in Surrey), and last of all disposal, e.g., landfill, as shown in **Figure 2** below.

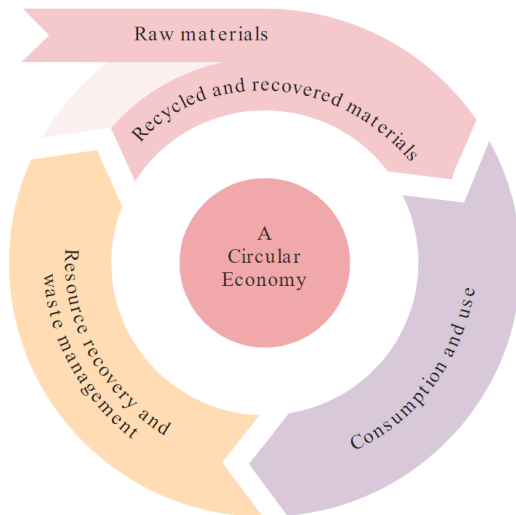


**Figure 2: Waste Framework Directive - five step waste hierarchy<sup>i</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> this includes anaerobic digestion, incineration with energy recovery, gasification which produces energy (fuels, heat and power) and materials from waste.

## New and emerging policy

Several policies are currently being developed following the publication of the RaWS. Launched in December 2018, RaWS is the Government's plan to preserve material resources by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy. This will see products kept in use for as long as possible, making it easier to reuse, repair, refurbish or recycle them (as illustrated in **Figure 3** below).



**Figure 3: A circular economy<sup>ii</sup>**

RaWS combines actions the Government will take now with firm commitments for the coming years and gives a clear longer term policy direction in line with its [25 Year Environment Plan](#).

RaWS has set out several proposed policy reforms including to:

- Invoke the 'polluter pays' principle through **extended producer responsibility (EPR)** for packaging to ensure producers of products bear financial responsibility for the management of the waste stage of a product's life cycle (except ground litter). The Government has committed to introducing this from April 2024. The key change for local authorities is that they will be compensated for the necessary costs of managing packaging waste from households, community recycling centres and street bins. Defra is still working on the details of this with more clarity expected in 2023.
- Introduce a **deposit return scheme (DRS)** for drinks containers to reward residents for bringing back bottles and encourage them not to litter them; thereby increasing the quality and quantity of recycling. This is to include cans and plastic bottles of between 50ml and 3l and will include containers sold both individually and as part of a multipack. Glass bottles will not be included. The scheme is still under consideration for implementation from late 2024.
- Improve recycling rates by ensuring **consistency in household and business recycling** collections. This is still under consideration for implementation from 2023-24, but are likely to be delayed slightly to coincide with EPR. Key proposals include:
  - Collection of the same dry recyclable materials (glass, metal, plastic and paper and card) as separately as possible (with consideration given to circumstances where separate collection of recyclable waste streams may

- not be technically or economically practicable or may not provide a significant environmental benefit).
  - Collection of additional dry recycling (metal jar lids, aerosols, cartons, aluminium foil and trays, aluminium tubes, and plastic films and pouches). The Government has so far stated that plastic films and flexibles must be collected by local authorities for recycling by 31 March 2027.
  - Collection of food waste separately at least once a week.
  - Collection of garden waste for free or for a maximum cost.
  - Service standards for collection arrangements and frequency.
- The above proposals on recycling consistency together with EPR and DRS are now collectively known as the collection and packaging reforms (CPR).
  - Stimulate demand for recycled plastic by introducing a **tax on plastic packaging** manufactured in or imported into the UK that contains less than 30% recycled plastics. This came into effect on 1 April 2022.
  - Reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastic (SUP) products including bans on items such as plastic straws, cotton buds, and drink stirrers. These were banned from 1 October 2020 and supply stopped from 3 July 2021. Proposals to ban plastic plates and cups, balloon sticks, polystyrene cups, expanded polystyrene food boxes, trays and pots. If agreed these proposed bans would come into effect in April 2023.
  - The introduction of a mandatory takeback scheme for the collection and recycling of fibre-based composite cups (disposable coffee cups). This is set to come in from 2024.

The measures in RaWS alongside other key plans have set out strategic ambitions to be achieved nationally over the next 30 years such as:

- Increase the municipal recycling rate to 55% by 2025 and 65% by 2035.
- Near elimination of biodegradable municipal waste to landfill from 2028.
- Work towards eliminating food waste to landfill by 2030.
- 76% recycling rate for packaging by 2030.
- Business fleet owners and operators work towards 100% of vehicle fleets being zero emission by 2030, or earlier where markets allow (COP26 ambition).
- No more than 10% of municipal waste to landfill by 2035.
- 50% reduction in per capita residual waste (excluding major mineral wastes) by 2042 from 2019 levels (proposed).
- Work towards eliminating avoidable waste by 2050.
- Net zero domestic greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

To that end, the Government introduced the [Environment Act 2021](#) in November 2021 that makes provision for most of these targets and gives them the legislative power to introduce the measures above. The act will also make some changes to existing legislations to enable consistency in collections.

## Context

In Surrey about £105 million<sup>2</sup> is spent each year collecting, managing and processing recycling and waste. By increasing the amount of waste prevented and the proportion

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<sup>2</sup> From the Local Authority Revenue Expenditure and Financing: 2020-21 Final Outturn, England

recycled in the county it enables the cost of this service to reduce. It also benefits the environment; less raw materials are required, saving energy, emissions and protecting natural resources.

Significant achievements have been made possible by working together as a partnership; the most notable being our improved recycling rate, which in 2010-11 was 46.4% (13<sup>th</sup> highest nationally) and by 2020-21 was 55.1% (3<sup>rd</sup> highest nationally). More information on current performance can be found in **Annex 3**.

Despite this, it's now the right time to revisit how we work together, considering some of the challenges we face including the emerging policy to support RaWS. The direction of travel is not clear on this yet but should become apparent over the next couple of years. So, while now is not the right time to update the Surrey JMWMS and consult with residents whilst things are so uncertain, we do need a short-term approach to help us ensure we continue to manage Surrey's recycling and waste in the most efficient, effective, economical and sustainable way.

Therefore, our response to this emerging situation is to develop a partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling in Surrey for the next three years. This will look to, as a minimum, align with the Government's ambitions such as a 55% recycling rate by 2025 and 65% by 2035. There might be a requirement as a high performing county in England to go beyond this. In any event, we will strive to go beyond the national targets where possible and begin to respond to decarbonisation by planning changes to our vehicle fleets and infrastructure to reduce emissions in the shorter term and move towards net zero emissions in the longer term. The approach will.

- Bridge the gap ahead of further clarity from central Government.
- Consider the anticipated changes that may result from the key emerging national policy to support RaWS.
- Provide clear strategic direction for the next three years and a longer-term vision for the partnership that will continue to follow the waste hierarchy and work towards zero waste<sup>3</sup> reducing emissions in the process. This will aid the future development of a new JMWMS for Surrey post-2025.
- Enable us to drive down waste (particularly food and SUP waste) and increase the quality and quantity of our recycling.

## **Our vision**

With the above in mind, we have developed the following vision statement for SEP 2025:

*Our vision is to eliminate avoidable waste and reuse, repair, recycle and recover any waste which cannot be eradicated in the most economical way.*

*Surrey's councils will continue to work in partnership to ensure our residents receive the highest quality of collection and disposal services possible and encourage our residents to reduce their household waste and own their impact on the natural environment.*

*Our ambition is to decarbonise our fleet and ensure that any new infrastructure is built and operated to minimise carbon emissions.*

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<sup>3</sup> means that at least 90% of operational waste has been reduced, reused, repurposed or recycled compared to the original baseline.

## Key drivers and priorities

### Drivers for change

We are at a crucial point now where we must reconsider how we can prevent more waste from arising, increase the quality and quantity of recycling and manage waste in the long term to minimise the impact on the environment and move towards a circular economy, which is being driven by several pressures including:

#### Emerging national policy

We will need to align with emerging national policies (as outlined above) that will be enshrined in legislation. While the policies aren't clear yet, they will fundamentally change the way recycling and waste services are funded and delivered. Therefore, we'll need to be mindful for future service provision and well prepared to deliver any required changes resulting from new national policy in the best way possible.

#### Reducing carbon at pace

Most authorities in Surrey have declared a climate emergency and all have set a target for reaching net zero emissions as individual organisations. Of the 12 authorities in Surrey, nine have agreed to be carbon neutral organisations by 2030, one authority by 2035, and two by 2050. The climate change strategies and action plans that have been produced by Surrey authorities recognise the carbon that recycling, and waste collection and disposal operations emit. They also recognise the role that preventing and reducing waste, increasing reuse and recycling and planned changes to vehicle fleets and infrastructure will play in tackling climate change.

#### Increasing population and number of households

The population of Surrey could rise to an estimated 1,309,500 by 2041, which could translate into 34,000 new houses being constructed<sup>4</sup>. This will result in more recycling and waste and therefore more pressure on our waste collection and disposal services.

#### Budget pressures

Surrey's authorities are facing unprecedented challenges because of reduced financial support from the Government combined with an increasing population and greater demand for our services. In addition, we are now experiencing the cost-of-living crisis in which prices for many commodities have risen sharply meaning services and infrastructure projects will cost more. This situation is being caused in part by a rise in inflation in the UK, in addition to the economic impact of global issues including the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and COVID-19 pandemic (which had already reduced economic activity across the county whilst further increasing the support our communities need from us).

#### Infrastructure limitations

There is only one energy from waste type facility (an Eco Park which includes a gasifier<sup>5</sup> and an anaerobic digestion<sup>6</sup> plant), a lack of recycling processing infrastructure and there are

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<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics

<sup>5</sup> A process used to convert waste into energy

<sup>6</sup> A process which uses micro-organisms to break down biodegradable material

limitations with transfer stations in the county such as the distance to/from them for some waste collection and street cleansing rounds. This situation drives up cost and emissions, which come from transporting waste over longer distances. Also, where we use third party sites to sort recycling, we are limited by what the operator chooses to accept, which drives up inconsistency and causes confusion for household waste collection regimes. Over the next two to three years, SEP will need to consider infrastructure options for future service delivery that reflects the plans and strategies across authorities and enables successful attainment of the performance objectives and targets set out in this document.

Stalling performance

The amount of residual waste per household in Surrey has been falling since 2013-14, hitting a low of 450.9kg per household in 2019-20. However, the COVID-19 pandemic saw this figure increase with more people being at home. While this is starting to decrease again as we move away from the pandemic, much more will need to be done to reach the proposed national target of a 50% reduction on 2019 levels by 2042.

Also, recycling rates levelled off back in 2016-17, and Surrey’s performance has stayed around the 55% mark. While this meets the national target for 2025, significant investment and/or changes to approach will likely be required to meet the 65% recycling rate target by 2035.

A recent composition analysis (set out in **Annex 3**) highlighted there is still an estimated 90,000 tonnes of material in residual bins which can be recycled. So, the scope for significant improvement on both residual waste reduction and recycling does exist.

**Key priorities**

The challenges set out above mean that the current situation is unsustainable. We need to reduce costs where possible whilst increasing performance and still providing a high-quality service to Surrey residents. To that end, we believe our key priorities should be to:

**Table 1: SEP 2025 priorities**

<p><b>Reduce all residual waste with a particular focus on food waste</b>          To ensure focus is applied at the top of the waste hierarchy and to align with national targets, we will focus on reducing residual waste by preventing it in the first place. Compared to high performing authorities in England, Surrey has a much higher level of residual waste. We will use the learning gained from these authorities in our future work programmes, and we will continue to engage with Surrey residents to reduce their waste, especially food waste.</p>
<p><b>Promote and maximise reuse</b>          To support the principle of a circular economy, we will seek to maximise opportunities to keep products in use for as long as possible through sharing, reuse, repair and refurbishment. This is an area we’ll provide focus and priority to by developing a reuse strategy for Surrey.</p>
<p><b>Increase participation in food waste recycling</b>          Of course, it’s best to reduce food waste where possible, but any food that is left over should be composted<sup>7</sup> or recycled, not only for the environmental benefits, but because of the money that can be saved, as it costs less than a third to recycle food waste than it</p>

<sup>7</sup> This should be done in a completely enclosed process such as a food waste digester as to not attract vermin



does to dispose of it as rubbish. Our capture rate for food waste recycling in Surrey in 2021 was 43%, and as the composition analysis highlighted, there is still an estimated 50,954 tonnes of food waste in residual bins that could be recycled. Therefore, as well as trying to reduce food waste from arising at all, increasing participation in food waste recycling will continue to be a priority for us.

**Increase the quality and quantity of dry mixed recycling (DMR)**

The recent composition analysis highlighted that there are still over 20,000 tonnes of plastic, paper and card, glass and metals that could be collected for recycling. Increasing the quantity collected and reducing contamination of DMR further (13,837 tonnes of recycling was rejected in 2020-21) will boost performance towards the 65% recycling rate target and will improve the quality of material and the prices we receive for selling it to re-processors. Therefore, we will work to improve the quantity and quality of the DMR recycling that we collect, which aligns with emerging policy.

**Decarbonise our waste collection and street cleansing vehicle fleet**

To align with our ambition to reach net zero emissions, we must look to reduce emissions from our collection vehicle fleet and switch to alternative fuels<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, SEP will develop a plan over the next couple of years to look at how we can achieve this objective to decarbonise our waste collection and street cleansing vehicle fleet that recognises the challenges that exist including affordability.

**Support the development of infrastructure**

We will consider what appropriate infrastructure is required to power our vehicles and how we create it, addressing limitations with the lack of recycling and waste infrastructure in the county and work together to develop solutions that address our collective needs.

**Support optimised collections**

We will help review collections, especially with the upcoming national changes in mind, so services run in the most optimal way from a financial and emissions viewpoint.

**Reduce fly-tipping**

We will work with enforcement teams to help bring those who fly-tip to justice, with the longer-term impact of reducing fly-tipping.

**Reduce litter**

We will develop a strategy which sets out our approach to tackling litter, and how we will work with different groups to take advantage of any funding opportunities that arise to reduce litter.

## **The partnership approach to delivering our vision and priorities**

### **Targets**

We appointed Eunomia Research and Consulting to develop a long-term waste flow model for Surrey. The model was created to help us understand how far upcoming national changes and the work we do will get us towards achieving national and existing local targets. Working with Eunomia, we reviewed a range of different scenarios to enable us to set realistic targets for the next three years (the monitoring period of SEP 2025) that keep us

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<sup>8</sup> This could include renewable diesel, biodiesel, electric or hydrogen. Options appraisal to be determined.

on track in the short term to meet longer term national targets. Our partnership targets are set out in **Table 2** below.

**Table 2: SEP 2025 targets**

Measure	2021-22 (unaudited) <sup>9</sup>	SEP 2025 (monitoring period)		
		2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Residual waste per household (KG)	470.95	461	449	446
Recycling rate (inc DRS)	54.43%	56%	57%	58%
Food waste capture rate	43% <sup>10</sup>		48% <sup>11</sup>	
DMR contamination rate	8.9%	<8%	<8%	<8%
Waste to landfill	15.1%	<6%	<3% <sup>12</sup>	<3%

The targets set out above have factored in the following measures that we think will happen nationally and locally over this three-year period:

#### National measures

- The SUP bans on plastic plates and cups, balloon sticks, polystyrene cups, expanded polystyrene food boxes, trays and pots come in from April 2023.
- The implementation of EPR from 2024, through a combination of mandatory labelling, consistency in collections and national communications campaigns, is expected to increase capture rates of recyclable packaging material.
- It is expected that there will be a change in waste composition due to EPR fee modulation and recyclability requirements when this comes in from 2025. There is likely to be a shift from non-recyclable pots, tubs and trays and composite packaging to recyclable alternatives, and some change from flexible composites to mono-material flexible polyethylene. There could be further changes in the recyclability of 'other plastics'; more challenging formats (composite flexible packaging and tubes) could also become recyclable.
- The UK Government introduce an additional set of core materials that must be collected at the kerbside for recycling. This will result in kerbside collections of at least cartons, aluminium foil and trays (from 2024), and film and plastic bags (from 2027).
- The UK Government introduce a DRS for plastic bottles and cans from late 2024, whereby materials will be returned via a separate network, but the recycling rate is apportioned to local authorities.

#### Local measures

- Food waste collections will be rolled out to all flats in Surrey where space and operations permit.
- The food waste recycling and DMR contamination reduction intervention work will continue to be developed and delivered by SEP in collaboration with Surrey's councils.

<sup>9</sup> Data for a financial year is confirmed and made available to the public once information has been validated by the WasteDataFlow team and the Environment Agency. This usually happens on the following December.

<sup>10</sup> Figure from 2021 composition analysis

<sup>11</sup> To be measured when the next composition analysis is carried out in 2024/25

<sup>12</sup> Aligns with SCC's target set out in their waste disposal contract re-procurement

- SEP will continue to encourage Surrey residents through multiple platforms to participate in food waste recycling.

### Strategic objectives and actions

To address our priorities above and meet our targets, we must deliver the work which is described in the strategic objectives and key actions in **Table 3** below.

**Table 3: List of strategic objectives and key actions**

Strategic objective	Key actions
Deliver joint work programmes that focus on partnership priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued creation of annual work programmes that address the key priorities of the partnership to reduce waste, increase food waste recycling, reduce contamination to improve the quality and quantity of DMR and decarbonise our vehicle fleet. This will move to a new level of focus which will tie in with the individual authority delivery plans mentioned below.</li> <li>• Develop an infrastructure and transport plan that enables us to comply with the RaWS and key emerging policy; and decarbonise the fleet ideally by 2030 but in line with existing local authority policies.</li> <li>• Develop key countywide strategies for reuse and litter.</li> </ul>
Set local targets and actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and agree annual performance indicators for each Surrey council that will contribute towards the overall partnership targets, along with individualised delivery plans that will enable the realisation of local and countywide targets.</li> </ul>
Exploit further opportunities to work jointly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on past work and look at opportunities to carry out joint processes where viable to procure required products (vehicles and bins/containers) to introduce consistent collections as determined by emerging Government policy.</li> </ul>
Respond to policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to respond to consultations held by Government on proposed policy to ensure our collective views are heard and that SEP 2025 remains aligned.</li> <li>• Engage positively with industry groups such as the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning &amp; Transport (ADEPT), The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) and The National Association of Waste Disposal Officers (NAWDO) to raise concerns and share thoughts and ideas on future policy and its implementation.</li> </ul>
Adopt best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to research top performing authorities in England that are comparable to Surrey's authorities using rurality and deprivation as a starting point, and overlaying delivery factors, and then feed this learning into the development of the above annual work programmes and individual delivery plans.</li> <li>• Work with the fly-tipping enforcement teams to continue to share and develop intelligence, knowledge and best practice.</li> </ul>

## **Monitoring**

Progress against the targets, key actions including the annual SEP work programme and local delivery plans will be monitored quarterly. A standard template will be developed for this, and it will be reported back to the SEP Officers and Members Group at their quarterly meetings.

## **Review**

Targets and the work programme/individual delivery plans will be reviewed annually with adjustments to targets made where necessary including adding new projects to the annual SEP work programme and individual delivery plans, where required to support target achievement. This will be developed and agreed with the SEP Officers and Members Groups.

## **Revision process**

SEP 2025 is set to run to 2025. At the start of 2025 (the final year for SEP 2025) we'll begin work on developing a new Surrey JMWMS. At this point we should have further clarity from Government on the way forward following the implementation of the RaWS measures which are set to start from 2024-25. Once the Surrey JMWMS is drafted, consulted on, approved and adopted, this will be our new plan for partnership working from 2026.

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<sup>i</sup> Waste Framework Directive 2008. Image taken from [Waste Framework Directive \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/inline-photos/2008/04/Waste_Framework_Directive_2008.jpg).

<sup>ii</sup> Resources and Waste Strategy. Image taken from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/resources-and-waste-strategy-for-england/resources-and-waste-strategy-at-a-glance>