

Background Context (UK)

The UK waste industry is going through a period of significant change in response to the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy (RAWS) published in December 2018) and subsequent legislation. The way waste is generated from households, businesses and other institutions and the methods for handling, collection, transportation, recycling, treatment and disposal are being radically overhauled to promote a more "circular economy" where the use and re-use of resources is prioritized and optimised, in preference to disposal of materials after single use.

Some of the imminent changes include:

- separation of household generated food waste at source and weekly collection by councils, by 2025/26;
- DRS (deposit return schemes) requiring return of containers, bottles etc to the point of sale;
- EPR (extended producer responsibility) regulations with more controls on packaging;
- a consistent collections regime which will stipulate the method of collection and types of receptacles for kerbside collection of recyclables and residual waste.

The implication for waste collection authorities (WCAs) such as the GCSWS is the need to run an efficient service that is agile and readily capable of responding to the forthcoming changes, whilst also seizing the business opportunities that may arise, i.e., via the commercial waste service.

GCSWS Context

Greater Cambridge is one of the fastest housing growth areas in the UK with continued significant growth (up to 2,000 new housing units per year) expected over the next few years. With so many new houses being added to the Service area, it is essential to undertake a route optimisation review about every three to five years to ensure waste collection operations are being delivered in the most optimum manner. The last review was carried out in 2017.

Considering the above context, the waste collection rounds optimisation is very timely. It will enable the Service to optimize existing operations, better cater for and respond to housing growth, and explore options for implementing a four-day week working pattern trial.

