

Frequently Asked Questions

From 13th June 2011 the brown bin and refuse collection service in Three Rivers is changing. To find out more please click on the questions below.

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Why are you changing / reducing the service?

This change is being driven mainly by public demand for the weekly collection of organic waste including food waste. It will be an enhancement of the current service, not a reduction.

Last year we conducted a survey in the spring edition of Three Rivers Times, in which we asked residents for their views on our refuse and recycling services. [Results](#) showed that residents' highest priority was the recycling of food waste. 91% of those who responded were aware food waste can go into the brown bin, but 47% were not doing so as they said the bin wasn't collected frequently enough.

People are also recycling more of their other rubbish, and are telling us they no longer need their refuse bins emptied weekly, because they are nowhere near full. The survey results back this up, showing that while 84% of residents put out their waste bin on a weekly basis, only 16% said the bin was full each week, with 56 % either half full or less. This has largely come about because the Council is now collecting a much wider range of plastics and food and drinks cartons, which used to take up a lot of space. As a result there has been a big drop in the amount of bulky rubbish in the refuse bins.

Another reason why we are changing the service now is because the new arrangements will help the Council to reduce costs and meet its targets under the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. The Council has had to make savings across all services, including refuse and recycling. This change will enable the Council to increase its recycling rate and boost its income. Leaving services unchanged was not an option; the only alternative would have been to make cuts in services.

To summarise, this is not a reduction in service. The Council remains committed to providing a weekly service for rubbish that can rot or smell, and we will still be collecting from each house as frequently as before. What we are doing is changing the weekly collection from residual rubbish to organic waste. The message for all residents is that they should put food waste in their brown organic waste bin instead of their refuse bin. It will then be composted instead of going to landfill, which is better for the environment.

Some properties currently have more than one brown bin, but with the introduction of weekly organic waste collections we will be emptying one free brown bin per household, although residents will have the option of paying for a second bin, for which an annual charge of £104 will be made. We are making this change so as not to overload our vehicles and crews; weekly emptying of one bin per property offers the same level of service as the previous fortnightly collection where a maximum of two free brown bins were allowed.

How can this save the Council money?

By introducing weekly organic waste collections we expect the recycling rate in Three Rivers will increase to 60%. While we won't be saving on the actual cost of the collection services (we still need the same number of vehicles and crews) we will receive a greater payback from Hertfordshire County Council through the Herts Waste Partnership. This will be a share of the money saved because of reduced landfill charges, together with the additional recycling credits paid for every tonne of waste which is recycled or composted instead of being sent to landfill.

What can I do if I fill my residual/domestic bin within two weeks?

Your domestic refuse bin should only contain rubbish that can't be recycled or composted (we call it "residual waste"). If you're recycling as much as possible you really shouldn't have much to put in your refuse bin, so fortnightly collections shouldn't be a problem.

Remember you can now recycle all plastics and cartons, as well as food tins and drinks cans, aerosols, glass bottles and jars, and paper. Food waste, cardboard and garden waste should go in your brown bin, so generally there shouldn't be much left over to put in your refuse bin.

If you're recycling as much as possible and your bin is still full we'll be happy to provide you with advice on how to reduce your rubbish. We'll also provide extra recycling boxes if you need them, including a larger size box for your plastics, cans and cartons. (These larger boxes are ONLY for plastics, cans, tins and cartons, we will not empty them if filled with paper or glass, because they'd be too heavy). You can have as many extra recycling boxes as you need. Information can be found on our website if you're unsure about what can and what cannot be recycled. You can also leave out extra recycling in clear bags or carrier bags (Please be aware we will NOT collect extra recycling from black sacks).

Food waste should be going into your brown bin, which will be emptied weekly. The kitchen caddy we have provided will help you to separate and store your food waste before emptying it into your brown bin. To watch a short film about how to use your caddy please visit www.ourclimateischanging.com/kitchen-caddy.

Finally, please also think about reducing your rubbish, such as taking reusable bags when you go shopping, and buying products with minimal packaging such as re-fill packs, loose fruit and vegetables etc.

What is the timescale for introducing this change?

The new collections will commence on **Monday 13th June 2011 from 6am**. From this date onwards the refuse collection will be made on a fortnightly basis and your brown bin will be done weekly. The recycling collection will remain fortnightly and will be collected on the opposite week to your refuse. In advance of this date we will be issuing new collection calendars to all properties and also a leaflet providing all the relevant information, including a reminder about what can and can't be recycled.

Residents are reminded that we only collect refuse that is contained within a wheeled bin issued by the Council and the bin lid must be closed. We will not be collecting any bags left on top of, or next to, bins.

We will be writing to residents who currently have a second brown bin at the start of March to ascertain who would like to keep, and pay for, their second brown bin. Any resident wishing to keep their bin will be asked to complete an [application form](#) and return it to us. This will enable us to update our collection records and arrange for an invoice to be sent to you.

At the time of invoice you will also receive a sticker which must be placed on **the front of your bin**. We will only empty second brown bins which have the sticker on and have paid for the service, so please ensure you place the sticker on your bin as soon as you receive it. The sticker will be marked with your house name / number.

Any resident who has not previously had a second brown bin, but who would now like one is, of course, able to [apply](#).

Why are you now starting at 6am?

This is because the composting site closes an hour earlier than the refuse and recycling tip and as yet we are unclear how many residents will want more than one brown bin and therefore we cannot correctly gauge how long our rounds will take. We therefore need to start earlier to ensure we can complete the rounds on the scheduled day. Our neighbouring authority, Watford Borough Council, start at 6am so this change will also bring us in line with their collections. This will be reviewed six months into the new scheme.

I live in a flat, what will our arrangements be?

The flat blocks across Three Rivers do not currently all have the same collection arrangements, as there are many factors determining how collections are made from flats, such as the space to store bins, the number of flats, the access for our vehicles etc. Therefore our Environmental Inspectors will continue to monitor the collections to flats and adjust as necessary. However, in general if your flat block currently has brown bins, regardless of if they are individual or communal, they will be collected weekly.

If your flat block has communal bins for refuse these will, for now, remain on a weekly collection. We will review this in due course, as if everyone recycles correctly we will be looking to collect on a fortnightly basis as we do for households. If you have your own bin for refuse it will now be collected fortnightly along with other households

If your flat block doesn't currently have brown bins our Environmental Inspectors will be aware of this and will look to get them out in due course. We do however have to wait until the scheme has bedded in to ensure that when we do give you brown bins that the collections will work well. Until that time your refuse collection will remain weekly.

I can't contain my green waste in my brown bin, but I can't afford to pay for an additional bin, what can I do with the extra green waste?

Use your brown bin for your food waste (and remember ALL food waste can go into this bin), a small amount of garden waste and cardboard. Don't forget that it is much better to compost garden waste and peelings at home and that all households are entitled to a subsidised home compost bin, which can be ordered from <http://www.herts.getcomposting.com/> or by calling 0844 571 4444. WasteAware also has more details about composting www.wasteaware.org.uk or by calling 0300 1234 051. We have a limited supply of booklets with advice about home composting if you would like one sent out. Please call the Customer Service Centre on 01923 776611 or email enquiries@threerivers.gov.uk to request a booklet, on a first come first served basis.

Garden waste and cardboard can also be accepted at the local Household Waste Recycling Centres (although please note the garden waste and cardboard should be kept separate at these sites). For further details visit www.wasteaware.org.uk or call 0300 1234 051.

I have children in nappies, how can I dispose of them?

You are still able to purchase nappy sacks from Council offices and local libraries, for 25p each which can be placed out next to your refuse bin as extra waste each fortnight. And, of course, the Council offers a cash-back scheme for parents who choose real nappies. Please ask for more information about the cash back offer.

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I require a clinical waste service, is that something you offer?

Yes, residents are offered a clinical waste collection free of charge. Please contact us if you require this service.

We are able to supply yellow sacks which any pads, dressings etc can be placed into and we can then arrange to collect these yellow sacks on a weekly or fortnightly basis. We also offer a free sharps collection to residents and will provide you with a storage container. None of these items should be placed in your refuse bin.

Can I leave out cardboard boxes next to my brown bin?

Only if they are too large to go into your brown bin and they must be flattened and any packaging must be removed.

Will I be charged if my brown bin goes missing or gets broken?

No, you only pay for the collections, please contact us if your bin needs replacing,

I have not been given a brown bin as it is too difficult to collect from my property, how do I cope with the fortnightly collections?

You are entitled to a free home composter for your garden waste, please contact us. Smaller receptacles, which can be carried, will be provided for your food waste.

Can I have as many brown bins as I like or is it limited?

You can have one free brown bin. You are then able to have one extra bin only, charged at £104 per year. You will need to complete an [application form](#) and return it to us. If you decide to pay for a second brown bin we will issue you with a sticker for that bin.

What if I move?

The payment is non-refundable so if you move out of the district you will not get a refund. If you move within the district you must let us know so we can update our records and to ensure you keep receiving your collections. Please take the brown bin that you have paid for, with the sticker on, with you when you move.

How can I pay?

On receipt of the invoice you can pay by cheque, made payable to Three Rivers District Council (please write on the back what the cheque is for, the Customer number, which starts 79, and your address), or by cash at one of our Council offices. You can also ring Customer Service Centre on 01923 776611 and pay by card. You will need to quote your customer number, starting 79.

The initial batch of invoices will be sent out in May and early June, ready for the start of the scheme in June. We are writing to households in March, who have more than one brown bin to inform you of the change.

Once the scheme has started invoices will be sent out as and when we receive an [application form](#).

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I am on benefits, can I have a discount?

No, there it is a standard charge across the whole district for all households. If you need advice about what can and can't be recycled don't forget we can provide advice via our website www.threerivers.gov.uk

I have just moved in and want to pay, but only for part of a year? (i.e. I've moved in September so I don't want to be charged from April)

Your invoice will be pro-rata so that you only pay for the months that you have been living there. The year after, however, you will be invoiced for the full amount. The year runs from April through to March.

Can I just pay for certain months or seasons of the year? (i.e. spring and autumn) Or pay for one off collections?

No, it is an annual charge from April through to March.

How will you know which are my brown bins on the street?

You will be issued with a sticker for a second brown bin that you have paid for. This sticker will be issued with your invoice and must be placed on **the front of your brown bin as soon as you receive it**. The crew will also have a record on their electronic reporting system of who has extra bins. If your sticker fades over time please contact us for a new one.

I do not want my 2nd bin anymore, please let me know when you are coming to collect it so I can leave it out.

As we want residents to be able to use their second brown bins until the 13th June we will not be collecting in any unwanted bins until that time, unless you ask us to. We will write to you again at the beginning of June to remind you that your additional bin(s) will be collected by our crews over the forthcoming weeks.

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What can I recycle and compost from the kerbside?

Remember there isn't really much that should be placed into your green refuse bin.

You should have boxes for;

- Glass bottles & jars
- Newspaper, magazines, junk mail, telephone directories including Yellow Pages,
- All plastics*, food tins and drinks cartons, tins and cans and aerosols.
(*except cling film or expanded foam-like plastics)

You should have a brown bin for;

- ALL food waste, raw or cooked, including bones.
- Cardboard
- Envelopes (no plastic windows)
- Shredded paper
- Garden waste

Please remember it is important **not** to use biodegradable, corn starch or plastic bags to contain your food waste in your brown bin. The composting site is unable to accept these and therefore we will not be able to empty your brown bin if it contains these bags. You may wrap food in newspaper, cardboard boxes, envelopes or paper bags.

We are also unable to empty your brown bin if it contains anything other than waste which will compost, so please do not use black bin liners or use your brown bin for general rubbish. If your brown bin is contaminated in any way we will not return until your next scheduled collection and we will expect that the contamination has been removed. We are able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to any resident who continues to wilfully contaminate their brown bin, however we would hope that by issuing these guidelines we will avoid this action.

You may have as many recycling boxes as you require, but only one refuse bin and one free brown bin. One extra brown bin can be emptied at a charge of £104 per year (see above for details).

Please try to squash your plastics, cans and cartons as they take up a lot of space in your boxes and our vehicles. By squashing them down this should reduce the number of boxes you require and the number of times the vehicle has to tip each day. Please also give your recycling a quick rinse, at the end of your washing up.

What else can I recycle?

The local Household Waste Recycling Centres collect many other items for recycling, including; fluorescent tubes, scrap metal, toners and inkjet cartridges, wood, household and car batteries, mobile telephones, textiles, tyres, fridges, freezers, TVs and engine oil. Visit www.wasteaware.org.uk or call 0300 1234 051 for further information.

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Need more information?

If you have any further queries please contact our Customer Service Centre on 01923 776611 or visit the website www.threerivers.gov.uk.

Our *Environment News* e-newsletter contains everything you need to know from our latest refuse and recycling initiatives and reporting graffiti to local health walks and energy saving ideas. Sign up by clicking on the banner at www.threerivers.gov.uk. You can also follow us on Twitter www.twitter.com/ThreeRiversDC and get regular updates on news, events and service information relating to Three Rivers District Council.

And please remember if our services are disrupted for any reason, such as snow, the website is updated on a regular basis.

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