

Waste Task Group Interim Report

Report of the County Solicitor

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation(s)

To adopt the task group's recommendations.

Background

1. The Place Scrutiny Committee set up a task group in response to a number of items relating to waste management on its work programme: i.e. the Waste Plan and the Municipal Waste Management Strategy. These items have a strong policy development component and the task group has examined them prior to the present reports being submitted to the Committee.

2. The Municipal Waste Management Strategy is in the course of being updated and features under the next item on this Committee's agenda on 6 March 2012; the task group wishes to inform the Committee's consideration of the refresh of the draft strategy by presenting its observations and recommendations.

3. The task group met on three occasions – on 6 December 2011 and on 8 and 21 February 2012; members also visited a variety of waste management sites and, on 7 February 2012, observed a meeting of the Devon Authorities Waste Reduction and Recycling Committee (DAWRRRC). To date the group has considered the following written evidence:

Waste Planning:

- Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Presentation on the Waste Core Strategy and Local Plan
- Waste Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Report

Waste Management:

- Recycling Statistics 2010 -11 (report to DAWRRRC on 22 June 2011)
- Update of the Municipal Waste Management Strategy project proposal and draft programme
- Presentation on waste policy and performance, partnerships and schools
- Presentation on changing the public's behaviour in respect of waste
- Waste management key statistics and performance information

4. Members of the task group are Polly Colthorpe (Chair), Eileen Wragg, Andrew Eastman, Dennis Smith and Ray Radford.

Findings

Strategic setting

5. The County Council is responsible for setting waste planning policy and, in its capacity as Waste Planning Authority, for determining planning applications which relate to waste. It is also responsible for managing and disposing of municipal waste in its capacity as Waste Disposal Authority; among other things, providing a network of recycling centres and promoting behavioural change by encouraging the public to reduce, re-use and recycle. As well as developing a new

infrastructure for the treatment and management of waste, the authority also manages waste disposal through contracts with specialist companies and is responsible for the aftercare and management of 55 closed landfill sites.

6. The Council's Municipal Waste Management Strategy is reviewed every five years in order to reflect national policy changes as well as to ensure that it remains aligned with the County Council's Strategic Plan. Following a period of consultation, the revised Strategy will be published in November 2012. The review mainly deals with domestic waste but, where possible, will also look at the commercial and industrial sectors.

7. Municipal waste is defined as household and trade waste, collected from households and at recycling centres, and including soil, rubble and fly-tipped waste. The term has been revised by central government as part of the on-going evolution of national waste policy and 'municipal waste' is now referred to as Local Authority Collected Waste.

8. Further research is currently being undertaken in order to gain an overview of residual waste (i.e. black bag contents) and in order to inform a cost-benefit analysis on separating additional items and how to target the "Don't let Devon go to waste" campaign (see below) in the future. A study of waste performance in Devon is also being undertaken which makes use of current performance data. In addition, ACORN profiling and WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) survey findings are being used to identify target groups in Devon and opportunities to maximise the impact of behavioural change initiatives by improving communication with residents.

Recommendation 1: To review the outcomes of the research currently being carried out and how these are represented in the refreshed Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

DAWRRC

9. The Devon Authorities Waste Reduction and Recycling Committee (DAWRRC) is a joint committee, the remit of which is to co-ordinate strategically the establishment of waste minimisation and recycling schemes including the oversight of joint contracts, behavioural change campaigns, the communications strategy, funding initiatives and events. The task group suggested that the committee remit could be refreshed and widened.

Recommendation 2: To suggest to all member authorities that the terms of reference of the Devon Authorities Waste Reduction and Recycling Committee be reviewed in order to strengthen its strategic role and further enhance cooperation with district and unitary councils.

District and unitary authorities

10. The district councils, in their function as waste collection authorities, collect household and bulky waste from households, collect trade waste by special arrangement, provide local recycling points, remove fly-tipped waste and abandoned vehicles, clean streets and collect litter.

11. A move which gave DAWRRC a more strategic role might also contribute towards encouraging a joint waste service with the district and unitary authorities. Somerset have realised significant savings by establishing a joint approach and, if a similar service were established in Devon, savings could potentially be achieved.

Recommendation 3: To investigate the merits of establishing a joint waste service with all district and unitary councils in Devon and to engage with all the local authorities over any opportunities in respect of:

- a) harmonisation of policies;
- b) provision of infrastructure and facilities;
- c) operational contracts as well as
- d) further development of behavioural change campaigns.

Striking the balance between recycling and waste recovery

12. Devon currently has the best recycling county rate in the country at 55%, a rise of 53% over the last 20 years. This figure represents a joint National Indicator for performance with the district authorities.

13. Two “Energy from Waste” facilities are currently planned which will divert approximately 120,000 tonnes of waste from landfill each year. Construction of the Exeter facility is already underway and construction of the South West Devon Waste Partnership / MVV Plymouth facility will begin later this spring. Energy from waste is the process of generating energy in the form of electricity or heat from a variety of waste treatment processes. Creating energy from waste provides a sustainable waste management solution.

Recommendation 4: To compare the cost benefits of achieving high recycling targets versus the energy recovery from waste through alternative waste treatment technologies in relation to the waste hierarchy.

Community engagement

14. Given the current financial restraints, officers are currently exploring more creative ways to work with communities. There are some avenues for external funding for waste initiatives: for instance, officers work with the private sector to secure sponsorship for joint projects and talks are underway with the Co-Op about work with schools. European funding is also available for community engagement. There are also routes to explore with third sector partners who are able to access different funding streams.

15. Schools are important in targeting behavioural change campaigns. The County Council has a waste education contract with ‘Resource Futures’ to educate children on waste. This helps young people to grow up with the right messages on waste and recycling and creates the opportunity for such information to be taken into their homes. Pupils are giving extremely positive feedback on the ‘Resource Futures’ work; primary schools in particular are very welcoming although going into secondary schools represents more of a challenge. About 70 schools in the County are involved with the Devon schools’ composting project and there are now some schools which are not sending **any** food waste to landfill.

Recommendation 5: To increase the number of schools involved in educational and behavioural change campaigns, including amongst those schools which are now academies.

Contractor reliability

16. The task group found anecdotal evidence to suggest that contractors and waste collection and disposal operatives appear to be disregarding the recycled materials which have been separated, and instead position different types of waste together for what appears to be possible disposal at landfill sites.

Recommendation 6: To review monitoring of contractors as well as waste collection and disposal operatives in order to ensure the highest possible standards of operations, including customer care, in the areas of waste management for which the County Council is responsible.

Behavioural change campaigns

17. Although Devon is the top performing recycling county at 55%, there is still a need to continue to work to change people’s behaviour and to reduce waste. Devon is ranked only 27th for overall waste per person collected from households. There is a need to connect with those people who are not yet recycling habitually and even those who are more aware still need encouragement and information particularly about waste minimisation and re-use. The ultimate aim is for people to adopt waste prevention behaviour and become advocates.

18. Many local authorities in the county use the “Don’t let Devon go to waste” campaign or a localised version of it. The County Council has a contract with a marketing company which provides economies of scale and which is evaluated via qualitative and quantitative research done annually. Research has shown that where there has been a dip in expenditure on advertising, brand recognition rates go down.

19. The “Love Food Hate Waste” campaign aims to ensure that food waste should not be going to landfill as significant sums of money can be saved by using food left overs. The campaign provides advice and tips - as well as information on realising savings – while significantly reducing the volume of waste to landfill. If the number of people committed to reducing food waste in Devon increased by just 2% there would be total savings of £44,196 in one year. It is intended to target families with young children.

20. Behavioural change campaigns play a vital role in preventing the growth of waste and in altering residents’ behaviour towards a more sustainable approach to waste. This leads to costs saving for the district councils in not collecting the waste in the first place, and the County Council in not having to treat it. Overall, the following targets are being pursued during 2012/13:

- Develop digital opportunities where possible
- Increase number of Committed Food Waste Reducers by 2%
- Increase recycling rate by 1% by targeting communications
- Re-commission the Don't let Devon go to waste marketing services contract via the corporate tender process (August 2012)

Recommendation 7: To continue to resource and support behavioural change campaigns in the future and to investigate new opportunities to deliver such campaigns to residents.

Conclusion

21. The task group presents the following recommendations for adoption and proposes that it reviews progress against them during 2012:

1	To review the outcomes of the research currently being carried out and how these are represented in the refreshed Municipal Waste Management Strategy.
2	To suggest to all member authorities that the terms of reference of the Devon Authorities Waste Reduction and Recycling Committee be reviewed in order to strengthen its strategic role and further enhance cooperation with district and unitary councils.
3	To investigate the merits of establishing a joint waste service with all district and unitary councils in Devon and to engage with all the local authorities over any opportunities in respect of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) harmonisation of policies; b) provision of infrastructure and facilities; c) operational contracts as well as d) further development of behavioural change campaigns.
4	To compare the cost benefits of achieving high recycling targets versus the energy recovery from waste through alternative waste treatment technologies in relation to the waste hierarchy.
5	To increase the number of schools involved in educational and behavioural change campaigns, including amongst those schools which are now academies.
6	To review monitoring of contractors as well as waste collection and disposal operatives in order to ensure the highest possible standards of operations, including customer care, in the areas of waste management for which the County Council is responsible.
7	To continue to resource and support behavioural change campaigns in the future and to investigate new opportunities to deliver such campaigns to residents.

Jan Shadbolt
County Solicitor

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member: Cllr Roger Croad, Environment & Community

Local Government Act 1972: list of Background Papers: None.

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