

Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Looking After the Environment

5 January 2006

Review of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for County Durham



Report of Acting Head of Environment and Planning

Purpose of Report

1. To explain the progress of the review of the Strategy and to seek the views of Scrutiny Members

Background

2. Durham County Council in partnership with the constituent district/borough councils is undertaking a review of the existing Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) for County Durham using funding secured for the purpose from Defra. Consultants ERM have been appointed by Defra to support the process.

ERM's brief is to:

- (1) Work with the key stakeholders at County and District level to ensure a long term strategy is delivered in partnership;
- (2) Make sure that a clear, common vision for the long term management of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) in County Durham is achieved;
- (3) Provide County Durham with long term waste minimisation, recycling and residual waste management options for inclusion in the Strategy; and
- (4) Develop a Joint Strategy that is deliverable through a series of Action Plans.

Why do we need to review the strategy?

3. The current JMWMS was produced in 2001. Over the last four years there have been a number of significant changes to the way in which waste needs to be managed. The key changes include:
 - the introduction of the Waste Emissions Trading Act (WET) 2003 which places a statutory duty on two tier authorities to produce a JMWMS in line with new Government Guidance;

- the introduction of the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) which limits significantly the amount of biodegradable municipal waste that can be landfilled;
- the introduction of other legislation including the Animal by-products Directive, the Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment (WEEE) Act and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 which all influence how local authorities manage waste; and
- the need to increase recycling and composting in line with Statutory Performance Standards.

What will the Strategy look like?

4. The Strategy needs to answer three main questions in relation to the management of MSW in County Durham.

- *Where are we now?*
- *Where do we want to get to, and when?*
- *How are we going to get there?*

The Strategy will be a practical document, regularly updated, and providing a high level strategic statement accompanied by Action Plans which are regularly rolled forward.

The Strategy will systematically address the waste hierarchy, examining waste reduction, recycling and composting, and the treatment of residual wastes in turn and in an integrated way.

In line with new guidance, ERM are carrying out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the JMWS which examines the environmental impacts of the Strategy.

Progress so far

BASELINE AND SCOPING REPORT

5. A baseline report has been produced to answer the '*Where are we now?*' question. This looks at waste movements, contract arrangements and waste growth as well as any relevant legislation and socio/economic factors that are likely to affect the development of the Strategy.

Concurrently, a Scoping Report was produced as part of the SEA which has undergone a statutory five week consultation with the Environment Agency, English Heritage and English Nature. Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth were also consulted and the SEA was put on the County Council's Website in attempt to broaden the engagement of stakeholders.

STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

6. High level objectives have been developed which will be translated into more detailed, action-oriented objectives, targets and milestones in the Action Plan.

The proposed objectives are:

- provide integrated waste collection and disposal services that protect human health and the environment;
- provide Value for Money in all waste management services while achieving and exceeding government targets for waste management;
- manage waste, as far as possible, in accordance with the waste hierarchy, maximising the amount managed at higher levels of the hierarchy;
- manage County Durham's municipal waste, as far as possible, within the boundaries of the County; and
- enable flexibility to allow for new technology developments and changing legislation.

OPTION DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT

7. Initially seven broad options were identified as follows:

1. Start again
2. Use the Governments Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme to buy permits.
3. Minimise more
4. Recycle and compost more
5. Add additional treatment capacity
6. Investigate thermal treatment with energy recovery
7. Add an incinerator with energy recovery

Following consultation the preferred options are now being considered more fully. This involves developing a series of options for waste minimisation, recycling and composting, and residual waste treatment. Each option will examine how waste will be managed over a twenty year period.

Options will include consideration of;

- how and to what extent the authorities will utilise waste minimisation initiatives;
- a range of recycling and composting rates and different methods of achieving these rates, including the introduction or exclusion of 'green waste' kerbside collections and changes to Household Waste Recycling Centre operations.
- what additional treatment capacity is required, a review of different treatment technologies and different scales of plant.

CONSULTATION

8. The Working Group has requested feedback from the public of County Durham on what should be included/excluded in these options. Briefings and requests for feedback have been included in 'Countywide' and on the website. Public daytime and evening meetings have been held to

encourage stakeholder input. We are now at a stage where we need to both advise Members of progress and seek Member input to the process.

ASSESSMENT

9. Following consultation a number of options will be developed and presented to the Working Group for agreement. The assessment will be both quantitative and qualitative against a number of criteria. The results will be presented in a clear technical report which will be annexed to the main JMWS.

Following this assessment it is intended each authority will need to agree and sign up to the preferred option(s) to feed into the overall Strategy.

TIMESCALES

10. Preferred options need to be agreed by each of the authorities in February 2006, following which the draft Strategy and Action Plans will be developed. The finalised Strategy and Action Plans should be available for adoption by the County Council and the partner authorities in March 2006.

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