

**Environment and
Sustainable Communities
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**



24 November 2021

**Strategic Overview of
Resources & Waste
Management Services in
County Durham**

**Report of Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods
and Climate Change**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide members of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the strategic waste management policy, context and service delivery with regard to management household waste and recycling in County Durham.

Executive summary

- 2 Durham County Council as a unitary authority has a statutory duty for both the collection and treatment of household waste. It fulfils its responsibilities through direct "in house" provision of collection services including refuse, recycling and garden waste. It fulfils its disposal obligations through a range of contracts, for example residual waste treatment, household waste recycling centres and materials reprocessing facilities (recycling).
- 3 Head of Environment, Oliver Sherratt will provide a presentation which will outline the Councils overall approach to waste management, reflected in a simple priority hierarchy of waste avoidance/reduction where possible, encouraging reuse, promoting recycling and as a last resort waste treatment/disposal. The presentation will illustrate what the Council and partners have been doing against the themes in the waste hierarchy, some of which has gained national recognition.

- 4 The presentation will highlight some of the progress made in the last decade, for instance a move to alternate weekly collection and new waste contracts. It will also outline some of the on-going challenges relating to Covid 19, including adaptations to service. It will look ahead to the next decade with an insight into new developments for instance a multi-Council procurement of waste treatment which commenced in 2019, and the potential statutory requirement for food waste collection signalled in the Resources and Waste Strategy for England 2018.

Recommendations

- 5 That Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the report and comment on it accordingly.

Background

- 6 The Council has statutory responsibility for collection and disposal of household waste. It discharges these functions through a mixture of “in-house” provision (for collection) and through a range of contracts. There is also a statutory duty to make arrangements for the collection of commercial waste if requested by the occupier of the premises in the area.
- 7 A summary of the services provided include:
 - Refuse and recycling collections (in house, free at point of delivery)
 - Clinical waste collection (in house, free at point of delivery)
 - Bring sites (in house, supplemented by third parties, free a point of delivery)
 - Garden waste collection and treatment (in house except in Teesdale, charged scheme)
 - Bulky waste collection (in house, charged scheme)
 - Trade waste collection (in house, on request, charged scheme)
 - Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs)(contract, HW Martins)
 - Materials Reprocessing (Recyclates) (contract, Biffa)
 - Waste Treatment (Energy from Waste) (contract Suez).
 - Haulage (contract Suez)

Waste Hierarchy

- 8 The European Waste Framework Directive (2008) first set out the waste hierarchy, enshrining the important principles of avoiding waste where possible, and a descending order of priorities, from reuse to recycling to waste treatment and disposal, with a requirement that Member states adopt these in their waste strategies. Many of these principles remain just as valid today, indeed the latest national Resources and Waste

Strategy 2018 sets out how material resources will be preserved by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy in England.

- 9 A presentation provided by Oliver Sherratt, Head of Environment will outline the Councils work in fulfilling the principles of the waste hierarchy, making reference with County Durham examples of the benefits of a circular economy. The presentation will include several examples of waste reduction/avoidance together with reuse.
- 10 Collection of refuse and recycling are substantial operations in a large County like Durham. They employ over 300 staff, and 86 vehicles utilising 4 transfer stations for the onward haulage of residual waste and recycling. A range of policies guide the work, including assisted collections, no side waste and extra receptacles for households with more than six people.
- 11 An insight into the use of modern technology will be given for instance in use of a Bartec system for recording missed and non-presented bins, 360 degree cameras which brings benefits for respect of crews and insurance, as well as a breaksafe system.
- 12 An overview of the range of external contracts will be provided in the presentation, ranging from household waste recycling centres through to the energy from waste contract.

Challenges and Opportunities

- 13 The last decade has seen considerable change in waste services in County Durham – the introduction of alternate waste collection, the wind down of Premier Waste and letting of new waste management contracts. These have delivered considerable budgetary savings (c. £4M pa) and also increased recycling/composting to 41.2% (2019/20) which has subsequently decreased due to the pandemic to 37.3% (20/21).
- 14 The service continues to operate robustly, managing impacts of Covid-19 although on a much lesser scale now than during the first lockdown. Initially temporary service suspensions were put in place (bulky goods, garden waste and household waste recycling centres whilst refuse and recycling collections remained fully operational). Services which were initially restored after the first lockdown were done so at significant additional cost and involved providing extra vehicles, staffing, weekend working and in some circumstances (e.g., household waste recycling centres) traffic management. These adaptations came at a time when demand was greater than ever before and at its peak in May 2020 handling 24.8% more recycle and 17.3% more residual waste resulting from more people staying at home.

- 15 The next decade will be guided by the Resources and Waste Strategy for England, and although provisions and timings may change due to Covid -19, the Strategy does signal mandatory food waste collections and the potential of free garden waste collection services through the 'Consistency in Household and Business Recycling in England' agenda, as well as wider impacting on recycling for instance through the introduction of an 'Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Scheme' where producers and manufactures of products will be required to provide full net cost recovery of materials placed on the market and a 'Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for England. In addition to this, locally for County Durham, a range of waste contracts will be procured, the largest of which would be a collaboration between 7 North East Councils, for an Energy From Waste (EFW) treatment facility in order to meet future waste treatment needs following achievement of recycling targets for at least the next 25 years.

Conclusions

- 16 The Council follows the principles of the waste hierarchy which offer the lowest cost and most sustainable solutions to waste management.
- 17 The last decade has seen considerable change in how the Council undertakes its waste management services. It remains to contend with the impacts of Covid 19 where safety of staff and customers are paramount. The next decade will also bring substantial change, with new large scale procurement, and the potential provision of new services.

Background papers

Defra Resources and Waste Strategy (2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/resources-and-waste-strategy-for-england>

Directive 2008/98/EC on waste (Waste Framework Directive)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eudr/2008/98/contents>

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Council has a range of duties and powers for waste management, including those within (but not restricted to) Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Finance

This will be covered in the presentation.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Climate Change

Waste avoidance, minimisation, reuse and recycling are important ways we can all help in reducing carbon emissions.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable.

Staffing

This will be covered in the presentation.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

Not applicable.

Procurement

An outline of contracts and new procurement will be provided in the presentation.