

21 March 2023

Report of	Strategic Director	Author	Rosa Tanfield
Title	Waste & Recycling Strategy update		
Wards affected	All wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report is for information only and sets out the progress of the development of the Council's Recycling and Waste strategy following the approach approved by the Environment and Sustainability Panel on 20 September 2022, in the context of other decisions made by the Council in light of the current economic climate and the agreement of a new strategic plan.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 Report to be noted.

3. Reason for Review

- 3.1 This report is not requesting a decision and is for information only as agreed as part of the Environment & Sustainability Panel's work programme.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 At its meeting of 20 September 2022, the Environment and Sustainability Panel agreed to undertake a series of workshops in addition to its work programme, to lead the development of a new recycling and waste strategy, working with the portfolio holder, officers, and an appointed consultant. This report sets out the progress to date.
- 4.2 Consultant's Ricardo Energy & Environment (Ricardo) has been appointed to support the Council in the development of the strategy. They were selected following evaluation within the Council's procurement rules. Ricardo is an internationally renowned consultancy with world-leading energy, environmental and technical expertise based primarily in the UK and operating globally. Ricardo has recently assisted several councils with exploring options to inform decision making about household waste and recycling collection and alignment of services with local and national priorities. Ricardo has relied on their proven methodology to deliver clear, easily communicable results based on robust and detailed modelling.
- 4.3 The timetable for the development of the strategy through workshops is set out below:

Meeting No.	Date and location	Focus
1a	01/03/2023 Location: Shrub End Depot	Exploratory meeting to discuss the current service and scope of the strategy Facilitated by Officers
1b	15/03/2023 Location: 'online' via MS Teams	Exploratory meeting to discuss the current service and scope of the strategy (<i>repeat of above, but online</i>) Facilitated by Officers
2	(March / April 2023) Location: 'online' via MS Teams	Vision and aspirations workshop Facilitated by Ricardo
<i>Possible online meeting to discuss the update from the Government's update on the Environment Act 2021 proposals (see 'Environmental and Sustainability Implications' below)</i>		
3	September 2023 Location: 'online' via MS Teams	Preferred option meeting Facilitated by Ricardo
<i>Possible visit to another authority</i>		
4	November 2023 Location: 'online' via MS Teams	Pre consultation 'Draft' Strategy presentation Facilitated by Ricardo

Workshop 1

- 4.4 Drafted Terms of Reference have been developed for the Panel's work to undertake a series of workshops in addition to its work programme as described in the report from the meeting of 20 November 2022.

- 4.5 All Panel members have been invited to attend the Shrub End depot to experience the operational workings of the site, its fleet and logistics, along with demonstrations of the back office and management systems.
- 4.6 Workshop 1 included a review of the context of the service, the scope of the strategy, the strategic drivers and the aims and objectives:

The Colchester Recycling and Waste Strategy, by 2030, will:

- Deliver value for money
 - Provide a safe, compliant, and resilient service
 - Have a community asset based approach
 - Minimise the impact on the environment
 - Be transformative
- 4.7 Ricardo presented to the Panel for feedback and discussion:
- 'Ricardo's understanding of Colchester's needs'
 - An overview of the strategy development methodology and steps
 - A description of the stakeholder engagement approach
 - An overview of the modelling approach and examples of how data may be presented

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 The development of the strategy is being supported by 'transformation' funding which enables the Council to recruit the consultant Ricardo, a project officer, technical officer and undertake technical training for existing staff.
- 5.2 In developing the strategy and through modelling, Ricardo will look at the collection, sorting and reprocessing infrastructure along with costs, performance and local or national priorities that are important to the Council, to ensure it is in the best and most well-informed position to make recommendations on the strategy and take proposals forward.
- 5.3 The Council currently faces some of the most challenging times ever experienced in local government; from the sustained economic turbulence and high inflation, rising energy costs, the war in Ukraine and continuing fallout from Brexit and the pandemic. To address this and to put the council on a stable financial footing for the future a raft of measures to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead were approved by Full Council on 22 February 2022, following recommendation by the Cabinet, Scrutiny Panel review and consultation with residents and other stakeholders. Faced with a significant budget deficit, limited government support and £10m of extra costs, the budget includes a mix of savings, income generation and transformation of services. Several changes have been agreed for the Recycling and Waste service, as summarised below. These changes will be incorporated and will be considered as part of the strategy development.
- 5.4 To be delivered in 2023/24:
- Garden waste changes
- 5.5 As part of the budget options outlined above, one of these decisions is to introduce a charge for garden waste collections, commencing from January 2024. A [webpage](#) providing an update and Frequently Asked Questions has been set up and will be updated periodically.

Recycling kit changes

- 5.6 An additional option was also that of charging for recycling kit. This project is in the early stage of development and no updates are available just yet.

Bulky collections service

- 5.7 Beyond the budget options, a review has been undertaken of the bulky collection service. The policy had set out to provide a free service to residents with certain postcodes based on a previous assessment of deprivation. This assessment of deprivation was no longer representative and unfair to other residents. A Portfolio Holder Decision agreed that the Council will signpost residents wishing to have bulky household items disposed or recycled, to either the Council's chargeable collection service or to local recycling centres and/or charity collection services, and that it no longer offers free collections for those residents in certain postcode areas.

Saturday household drop off service

- 5.8 A review has been undertaken of the current free Saturday Household Drop-off Service. A Portfolio Holder Decision sought to agree to change the current free operating model for the Saturday Household Drop-off Service so that the Council only offers a selection of chargeable Saturday collection services to residents' associations, parish councils, managing agents or other organisations, with the fees as set out within the report. This decision was 'called-in' and considered by the Scrutiny Panel at its meeting of 3 March 2023, where it made recommendations to the Portfolio Holder, which the Portfolio Holder has not accepted. In these circumstances the decision is referred to Cabinet to determine. At the time of this report, the outcome has not been decided.

Recycling bank review

- 5.9 The Council operates numerous bring bank sites across Colchester. These [locations](#) offer residents the opportunity to recycle materials such as glass, cans, textiles, cartons and coffee pods. Officers will review the sites and their effectiveness.

Materials contract renewal

- 5.10 The current contract for the transfer, treatment and disposal of source segregated municipal dry recycling (materials consisting of paper, plastic, and cans) is due to end on 31st July 2023. A procurement process will be undertaken shortly and will comply with the Public Procurement Regulations 2015. An open two stage tender will be used to ensure that all interested parties can apply.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The Council has recently agreed the Strategic Plan 2023-26. This sets out the framework for annual delivery plans and recognises the significant transformation of council services that will be required to respond to future challenges, to reduce spend while still providing services for a city fit for the future.
- 6.2 The new plan sets out five strategic themes to:
- Develop modern services for a modern city
 - Respond to the climate emergency
 - Tackle health, well-being, and happiness
 - Deliver homes for those most in need
 - Grow our city's economy so everyone benefits
 - Celebrate our city and our heritage and culture.
- 6.3 Whilst the strategy will no doubt cut across all themes, the one for consideration is that of: **Respond to the climate emergency:**

- *Reduce our carbon footprint;*
 - Remain on track for the council to be net zero by 2030
- *Continue to be a leading council in our waste and recycling collections;*
 - Simplified waste and recycling services and progress towards government recycling collection targets of 70%

7. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 It has previously been reported to the Environment & Sustainability Panel the potential changes to legislation under the Governments Resources and Waste Strategy, and the consultations undertaken by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), and consistency in household and business recycling collections. Whilst a response from DEFRA has been received on EPR and DRS, no response has been received on 'consistency in household and business recycling collections', which is vital to inform the development of the strategy. The announcement has been delayed from 2022 and is expected in coming months. It is therefore proposed that once a communication has been received, and when Ricardo and officers have considered it in more detail, a briefing will be undertaken with the Panel as part of the workshop programme (this is indicated in the table 4.3)
- 7.2 DEFRA has set out new legislation, whereby soft furnishings that contain Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) such as sofas and chairs needed to be segregated from other waste as part of the whole waste collection process through to disposal. The impact of this will be considered through the development of the strategy and projects.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The creation of the Strategic Plan 2023-26 utilised consultation as well as discussion groups to inform the delivery plan. One discussion group included the topic of changes to waste and recycling collections. This initial insight will help inform future consultation activities to develop the strategy.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 At this stage of the project there is no publicity consideration, but this will form part of the development of the strategy and projects.

10. Health and Safety Implications

- 10.1 At this point of the strategy development there would be no harm to the health and safety of the general public, however this will be carefully considered when developing options and proposals.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 Health and wellbeing of residents, and community safety can be influenced through the effectiveness of recycling and waste services. As the strategy is developed consideration

will be given to ensure the council is doing all it reasonably can to promote positive health benefits to residents whilst reducing, removing or minimising any unintended consequences to health, and to prevent crime and disorder that may arise from the development of the strategy and projects.

12. Risk Management Implications

- 12.1 This report is not requesting a decision and is for information only so there will be no impact on the Council's risk management.

13. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 13.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be developed as the strategy is progressed and as appropriate. This report is not requesting a decision and is for information only.