

22 March 2022

Report of	Assistant Director Environment	Author	Rosa Tanfield Group Manager, Neighbourhood Services
Title	Recycling and Waste Strategy development proposal		
Wards affected	All Wards		

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The current Waste Vision and Strategy was developed and launched in 2015 and 2016, respectfully. The Borough has changed since that time, but operations of the recycling and waste service has changed little. Whilst the service is performing well regionally, the time is right to review the strategy to align the service to the ambitions of the Council and Government. There are several drivers for change, including Government legislative changes, county-wide waste strategy changes, Borough growth, budget, and operational challenges.
- 1.2 The recycling and waste service impacts on every resident, visitor, and business in the Borough. The strategy could be far reaching and broad, impacting on a variety of areas.
- 1.3 It is proposed that the Environment and Sustainability Panel will work with officers to develop a new strategy for Colchester.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To agree to the proposed approach, objectives, principles and testing as set out in the report.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Council has the opportunity to undertake a considered review and develop a new strategy for Colchester ahead of changes that could impact on service delivery in the future.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 If no review is undertaken, the service delivery continues under the existing vision and strategy. This could potentially limit the ability for successful service delivery in the future and impact on income to the Council.

5. Background information

5.1 The Council's current 'Waste Vision' was adopted by the Council in 2015 and the subsequent 'Waste Strategy' was agreed by Cabinet in December 2016. The lifestyles and behaviours of the residents in Colchester have changed since then and as a society, greater focus has been given to the impact on the environment; the Council declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019. In addition, the Borough has continued to change and grow over the last 7 years. How the Council operates its recycling and waste service since the launch of the vision and strategy has changed very little and there are operational pressures that are emerging. Nevertheless, the service performs very well regionally, sitting in the top performing tier for those in the eastern region for measures around the amount of residual waste and percentage of recycling that residents produce.

5.2 In order to continue to be high performing in the future, and to address strategic and operational drivers for change, the time is right for the Council to review and implement a new strategy.

Strategic and operational drivers for change

5.3 The following section sets out in more detail some of the strategic drivers for change:

Environment Act (2021) – Resources and Waste Strategy

5.4 The Environment and Sustainability Panel received a presentation from the Group Manager of Neighbourhood Services at its meeting on 22nd July 2021 that explained in detail the consultation by the Government on changes that it proposed under the Environment Bill (as it was at the time). The Panel received a further report from the Assistant Director of Place and Client Services at its meeting on 24th February 2022 that set out an overview of the Environment Act (2021).

5.5 The proposed changes will potentially see the biggest changes to waste services in years, including how services will be delivered, the infrastructure required and how Council costs are recovered. Three key areas are discussed:

- Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging (EPR): The proposals cover the mechanisms to make packaging producers responsible for the full net cost of managing packaging that they place on the market.
- Deposit Return Scheme (DRS): The proposals instigate upfront deposits for plastic, metal, and glass drinks containers, to be reimbursed at return points.
- Consistency in household and business recycling: aims to standardise the materials collected across the UK from households and businesses.

Climate Change 6th Budget

5.6 The Climate Change Budget sets out targets for how the UK will be net zero and fully decarbonised by 2050. This includes targets for increased recycling rates, food waste reduction, reducing landfill, and increased targets for zero-emission vehicles

Essex Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS)

- 5.7 The Council works closely with Essex County Council (who has responsibility for the disposal of waste) and the other Borough, City, and District Councils as part of the Essex Waste Partnership (EWP). One of the primary roles of the EWP is to consider how the authorities can work together to deliver high performing waste services that meet the needs of communities.
- 5.8 In 2007 members of the EWP published a 25-year Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS). This established a strategic framework and plan for the future of waste and recycling in Essex, enabling the delivery of high levels of recycling and waste avoidance. Although much progress has been made since its adoption, the climate challenge and emerging legislation will require the EWP to do more to tackle waste growth and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 5.9 To ensure the authorities are best placed to meet future challenges the EWP is currently in the process of reviewing the JMWMS to ensure it is aligned with the collective aspirations.

Local Development Plan

- 5.10 The Local Development Plan sets out to increase the growth of the Borough. New developments such as the Garden Community offer the opportunity for the Council to explore innovative ways for residents to live and thus, the potential for how waste is managed. The continued growth of the Borough has an impact on the sustainability of the current operational set up and it is important that this is considered and adapted.

Operational drivers

- 5.11 The operations of the service during the recent pandemic, fuel crisis and most recently storms, has demonstrated to the Council the importance of operational resilience and to that end, the simplification of the service in order to ensure resources can be redeployed to priority services as necessary. Recent work completed to review the Shrub End depot facility where the service operates from has demonstrated that capacity is an emerging challenge when faced with increasing tonnages of material and an increasing workforce with limited space and facilities. The fleet is broad and varied, and the Council has set out clear ambitions to transition to low carbon options by 2030. Overall, as with other services in the Council, it is important to consider the financial sustainability of the service; not just efficiencies and savings, but income generating opportunities too.

Proposed approach

- 5.12 It is proposed that the Environment and Sustainability Panel will work with officers in a combination of workshops and reported meetings to develop the strategy over the next 18 months, using a **three phased approach**:
- Phase 1 will aim to explore in more detail the outline objectives and set out the current operations, as well as the future risks, issues and opportunities forecasted for the future. It will assess the evidence and data captured on the current level of service, benchmark (as like for like as possible), and, consider the approach of other local authorities, undertaking case studies and site visits.
 - Phase 2 will aim to engage partners, stakeholders, and the public. Pilot schemes may be undertaken to test theories of the strategy development, and these will be assessed against agreed outcomes.

- Phase 3 will aim to finalise the Strategic Vision defining what the Council wants to achieve, balancing all the strategic and operational drivers and finally a workplan will be developed.

5.13 The following initial **objectives** are proposed which will be further developed through the programme:

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

- 1 Deliver value for money
- 2 Provide a safe, compliant, and resilient service
- 3 Have a community asset based approach
- 4 Minimise the impact on the environment
- 5 Be transformative

5.14 It is proposed that the strategy is developed with the following **principles** and **testing**, which will evaluate the robustness of the strategy:

The strategy will be developed:

- Using an agreed evaluation process and criteria
- On the basis of evidence and data led forecasting
- Using 'prototypes' and 'pilots' to provide evidence for informed decision making

Tests will be carried out on the strategy in the following areas:

- *Environmental implications* - the appropriateness of the strategy to meet the Council's strategic and Government aims to tackle the climate challenge and leading sustainability
- *Public implications* - the appropriateness of the strategy to support communities, through the Communities Can approach
- *Operational implications* - the impact of any change on the operational delivery of Neighbourhood Services, including efficiencies, and performance, service resilience, and staff wellbeing, income generation taking account the Council's budget strategy

6. Strategic Plan References

6.1 This project work is directly aligned to the Council's strategic priorities of *Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability* (in particular, responding to the climate emergency), and *Creating safe, health and active communities* (in particular, building on community strengths and assets).

7. Financial implications

7.1 Transformation funding has been allocated for this work in recognition that the recycling and waste service is one the largest cost areas in the budget, with income also associated with credits and recycling material. It is clearly set out in the proposed objectives that there should be value for money outcomes. This will be further explored as the programme of development takes place. Any proposed changes through the development of the strategy will give proper consideration to budget implications.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 It is proposed that the strategy will be developed through the Environment and Sustainability Panel at closed workshop style meetings, as well as public meetings as appropriate. Officers will use the Climate Action Plan and Environment Act (2021) as a mechanism for engagement of the strategy and use the opportunity to support public education on the Government changes and impact it may have on their lives, shopping, etc. Officers will also undertake partnership and stakeholder workshops, working groups, surveys, and interviews throughout the programme.

9. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 9.1 This report set out proposals for an approach to developing a new recycling and waste strategy. It does not propose or set out to make any service changes at this stage and to that extent does not impact on the promotion of equality and overcome discrimination in relation to gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, and race/ethnicity. However, any proposed changes through the development of the strategy will give proper consideration to equality, diversity, and human right implications.

10. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 10.1 It is clearly set out in the proposed objectives that there should be outcomes for communities. This will be further explored as the programme of development takes place. Any proposed changes through the development of the strategy will give proper consideration to health, wellbeing, and community safety implications.

11. Health and Safety Implications

- 11.1 It is clearly set out in the proposed objectives that there should be outcomes with health and safety. This will be further explored as the programme of development takes place. Any proposed changes through the development of the strategy will give proper consideration to health and safety implications.

12. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 12.1 It is clearly set out in the proposed objectives that there should be outcomes with environmental and sustainability within the recommendations. This is driven through the Council's own ambitions and that of Government through the Environment Act (2021) and the Climate Change Sixth Budget. This will be further explored as the programme of development takes place. Any proposed changes through the development of the strategy will give proper consideration to environmental and sustainability implications.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 There are no implications at this stage, but as the development of the strategy takes place, proper consideration and reporting of risk management will be made.