

## DOMESTIC WASTE & RECYCLING STRATEGY

Cabinet – 14 November 2024

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer - Finance & Trading

**Status:** For Decision

**Also considered by:**

- Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee – 11 November 2024
- Council – 19 November 2024

**Key Decision:** Yes, in part (rec b to Cabinet)

**Executive Summary:** This report outlines a new domestic waste and recycling strategy for the district.

**This report supports the Key Aim:** Environment and Communities

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Irene Roy.

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**Recommendation to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee:**

- (a) Members comments on the proposed Waste and Recycling Strategy are noted and are submitted to Cabinet for consideration;
- (b) Cabinet are recommended to approve a public consultation takes place on the delivery of the Waste and Recycling Strategy, delegating responsibility to the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener to agree the survey approach and questions; and
- (c) It is noted that a further report to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee will be presented in March 2025 setting out options to deliver the Strategy, following the public consultation.

**Recommendation to Cabinet:**

- (a) It is recommended to Council that the Waste and Recycling Strategy is adopted;
- (b) Public consultation on the delivery of the Waste and Recycling Strategy, delegating responsibility to the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener to agree the survey approach and questions is approved; and
- (c) It is noted that a further report to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee will be presented in March 2025 setting out options to deliver the Strategy, following the public consultation.

**Recommendation to Council:** The Waste and Recycling Strategy is adopted.

**Reason for recommendation:** The Council's domestic waste collection services are a priority for the Council, and it is vital that they operate in an efficient, safe and effective manner, whilst remaining sustainable and affordable for the Council. Current working practices and future legislative challenges require a new Strategy to direct the future of the service.

**Introduction**

1. On the 18 July 2024, Cabinet agreed a number of recommendations for domestic waste and recycling services. It resolved that an internal review, exploring service opportunities, costs and increasing recycling rates for new waste collection options that include food and glass collection, be undertaken.
2. It is a significant challenge for any local authority to manage waste in a more sustainable way. Reducing the environmental impact of waste in the Sevenoaks district will only be possible if we all work together. This means residents, businesses, and the council 'doing more' to help tackle the challenge of climate change. To reduce carbon, we will be giving top priority to the prevention of waste, helping our residents reduce and reuse more materials. We need to make more sustainable choices for our waste and recycling service and ensure we can all recycle as much as possible, reducing our general waste to an absolute minimum. The most effective way to do this is to change and improve our frontline collection services.
3. Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) recycling rates are currently below the national average, at 37.7% in 2022-23. Current national targets (for the UK as a whole), are set at 55% by 2025, rising to 65% by 2035. New legislation and waste regulations has made it clear that providing an efficient waste and recycling service will be key to maximising funding for council services.

4. The current collection system will not meet national recycling targets, nor will it be in line with forthcoming legislation. Change is therefore essential. However, this is an opportunity to increase and expand the waste collection service currently delivered by the council.
5. Cabinet approved the Councils Climate Change Strategy 2024, on 14 March 2024. One of the main priorities of the strategy is resources, consumption and waste, which aims to improve our rates of recycling and reduce the amount of non-recyclable waste (black residual) that we collect.

### **Waste and Recycling Strategy**

6. This draft strategy (included at Appendix A) sets out our approach to managing waste and recycling collections in a more sustainable way, with the aim of reducing the environmental impact of waste in the Sevenoaks District.
7. The Vision and Objectives presented in the Strategy will form our service priorities, to be reviewed annually. In its creation the following has been considered:
  - a. How we need to review our frontline services to better manage waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy, preventing waste, reusing materials and increasing recycling
  - b. How new services can be delivered in the most sustainable way.
  - c. How we work with residents and other stakeholders to make the future service even more successful
  - d. How we will work closely with partners to develop implementation plans for the collection and processing of new waste and recycling streams
  - e. How we will ensure all elements of our waste and recycling meet or exceed government legislation and meet regulatory standards.
8. The strategy does not review arrangements for the treatment and disposal of non-recyclable waste, as we will continue to use the infrastructure provided by Kent County Council (KCC). In addition, this strategy does not review collection of business waste; a review of this service is being carried out separately in 2024.

### **National Context**

9. The UK Government has a target to reuse and recycle at least 65% of domestic municipal waste by 2035. The 2022 national recycling rate is 44%,

which is below the previous target set to reuse and recycle at least 50% of municipal waste by 2020.

10. The recycling rate for Sevenoaks district in 2023/24 is well below the National average at 36.7%; made up of 20% garden waste and only 16.7% recycled material. This situation needs to change so that we can significantly increase our recycling rate, while reducing residual black waste.
11. Recent waste research has shown that the lack of a consistent recycling infrastructure may prove an obstacle to improving recycling rates as residents across the UK face different recycling schemes organised by each English authority.
12. By 2025 DEFRA, who set the targets, hope to have 55% of waste recycled, as measured by weight.

### **Resources and Waste Strategy for England - Environment Act 2021**

13. The Resources & Waste Strategy for England makes it clear that the UK Government is determined to transform the way waste is collected, recycled and reused for waste materials so all avoidable waste is eliminated by 2050.
14. Therefore, under the new requirements: All local authorities in England must collect the same recyclable waste streams for recycling or composting from households. The recyclable waste streams include paper and card, plastic, glass, metal, food waste, and garden waste.

### **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)/DEFRA funding formula.**

15. The Councils' EPR funding will depend on assessment of waste and recycling services.
16. DEFRA have set out how the scheme will operate to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of local authority recycling services. Technical advisers will examine, in detail, how each council performs. Our data shows us as a high cost, low performing Council.
17. EPR intends to shift the cost of dealing with packaging from councils to producers. This is required because packaging producers will not want to pay extra for council services deemed excessively expensive because they are inefficient.
18. The Council's rating for this funding formula is of great concern as we are considered to have a high cost, low performing service for recycling. The result of this would mean that our funding settlement will be penalised and reduced, meaning that the costs of providing additional domestic waste collection services are unlikely to be covered by additional funding.

## **Why sustainable waste management is important.**

19. This Strategy recognises the impact that waste management can have on the environment. Dealing with waste uses energy to collect and transport it, using fossil fuels which when burned release greenhouse gases (including methane and carbon dioxide), contributing to climate change.
20. The Strategy also considers the wider environmental impact of items that we use in our daily lives and recognises that the impact on the environment does not begin when things are thrown away. The extraction of raw materials from the earth, material processing, manufacturing and transport are all stages in the process that use energy and emit greenhouse gases.
21. Recycling uses fewer natural resources from the earth and less energy to produce the same new product. Recycling and composting reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with landfill and incineration.
22. This Strategy is underpinned by the principles of the waste hierarchy that prioritises not producing waste in the first place, then reusing it followed by recycling and composting.

## **A case for change**

23. The policy, drivers and research carried out in preparation for this Strategy has demonstrated the need for change in frontline service delivery.

Summarised below:

- We have pledged to increase recycling rates, reduce residual black waste and reduce carbon footprint as detailed in the adopted Climate Change Strategy 2024.
- We have a legal obligation to apply the waste hierarchy by reducing, reusing and recycling as much of the waste we collect as possible.
- We need a service that will comply with central government's future direction regarding consistency of collections.
- The current service does not encourage waste minimisation because it offers unlimited collections of general waste.
- We need to offer a wider range of recycling services to meet resident needs and expectations.
- We have committed to work with our Kent partners to ensure that the future collection service is compatible with future waste and recycling transfer and processing arrangements.
- We need to improve the cleanliness of the district's streets, by minimising waste from split bags and the associated detritus.

- We need to ensure that our staff are protected from the risks associated with handling waste and recycling collections, and meet regulatory standards.
- We need a collection system that allows us to help residents recycle more when services are used incorrectly, for example, where the wrong items are placed into recycling containers. This will enable us to help bring about behavioural change and will improve performance, by reducing waste and improving recycling.
- Satisfies residual waste (black sack) manual handling safety concerns.

### **Garden waste collections**

24. We will continue to provide our fortnightly subscription service for garden waste collections.

### **Improved performance**

25. In the development of our Strategy, we have worked with experts, such as the waste charity WRAP and the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) to help us understand how these changes will improve performance.

### **Reducing carbon**

26. As highlighted previously, both our current and proposed future services generate emissions (such as from collection vehicles) and there are avoided emissions that would have been created if all waste were sent to incineration or landfill, rather than being recycled.

27. Our research into delivering the Strategy will include an environmental impact assessment using a carbon-modelling tool. This considers emissions created by:

- a. Collections - containers used for collections (bins, bags, boxes)
- b. Transportation - vehicles for both collections and bulk transport
- c. Intermediate facilities - waste transfer stations and material recovery facilities to cover the bulking and processing of recyclable materials.

28. Avoided emissions through:

- a. Recycling - the benefits gained from the recycling of materials.

29. The assessment will provide estimates of both the emissions and the avoided emissions associated with our current and future service.

### **Increasing recycling**

30. Considering our current service baseline data and using a waste collection service-modelling tool, we will be able to establish what is required to increase the district's recycling rate to 50%, in line with government targets for 2025.

### **Reducing waste**

31. Modelling work should also indicate the extent of reduction in general waste levels collected at the kerbside. This is echoed in the WRAP independent report from 2021 and the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) report of 2023.

32. In the Sevenoaks district, we collected 26,500 tonnes of household waste during 2022/23. Using the WRAP baseline figure, we estimate general waste could reduce by 3,500 tonnes to 23,000 tonnes if the new Strategy is adopted and actions are taken to deliver a revised collection system.

33. If the government include all expected materials in their forthcoming consistency legislation, the new collection service will enable residents to recycle a further 4.35 kg (51%) of their general waste.

34. This includes 3.37 kg of food waste and 0.98kg of additional materials such as plastics, cartons and foil packaging.

### **Legislative and regulatory compliance**

35. A collection service that prioritises waste prevention is compliant with our primary legislative driver, as set out in the waste hierarchy. Reviewing general waste capacity and collections is proven to elicit behaviour change and prevent waste.

36. The inclusion of a food waste collection service, a wider range of dry recyclable materials, means our new collection service is compliant with the Environment Act 2021.

### **Domestic Waste & Recycling – The way ahead**

37. It is recommended that Members give their comments on the draft Strategy and recommend through Cabinet and Council, that it is adopted.

38. As recommended by the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee Working Group, it is proposed that a public consultation exercise is held to collect views on the delivery of the Strategy and to understand residents' priorities for the waste and recycling collection service.

39. To identify the actions that will need to be taken to deliver the Strategy, taking in to account the outcome of the public consultation, detailed reports will be progressed through the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee and Cabinet for approval.

## **Key Implications**

### Financial

All financial costs or savings are detailed within this report.

Our rating for the Government funding formula is of great concern as we have a high cost, low performing service for recycling. The result of this would mean that our funding settlement will be penalised and reduced, meaning that we potentially not cover the full costs of providing additional domestic waste collection services.

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

Under section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Sevenoaks District Council are the Waste Collection Authority. This statutory duty requires the council to arrange for the collection of household domestic waste in its area except waste, placed, in the opinion of the authority in isolated or inaccessible places that the cost of collecting would be unreasonably high.

### Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

### Climate Change Implications

The decisions recommended in this paper directly impact our climate change ambition. This is because

the Strategy aims to reduce waste and increase recycling rates. The impact has been reviewed and there will be a decrease in carbon emissions produced in the district if the Strategy is adopted and action is taken towards its delivery.



## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Waste & Recycling Strategy

## **Background Papers**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/contents>

<https://oflog.data.gov.uk/>

**Adrian Rowbotham**

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