

**WASTE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY PANEL
9TH NOVEMBER 2021**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Ward)

Councillors Boldrin, Forrest, Howe, Needham and Parton

Councillor Harper-Davies (Cabinet Lead Member for Community Support and Equalities)

Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces
Democratic Services Officer (EB)
Democratic Services Officer (LS)

APOLOGIES: None

The Chair stated that the meeting would be livestreamed and recorded and the recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. She also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

1. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

2. DECLARATIONS - THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

3. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 11.16

No questions had been submitted.

Councillor Needham arrived at the meeting at 6.09pm.

4. SCRUTINY SCOPE DOCUMENT

Considered and discussed, the scrutiny scope document for the Panel, agreed by Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on 11th October 2021 and updated to list Panel membership and meeting dates.

Matters suggested to look at/list on the scrutiny scope document were confirmed as matters for the County Council decision as waste disposal authority (provision of recycling and household waste sites, use of incinerator). These were excluded from scrutiny by the Panel, but this did not preclude making representations to other bodies. Confirmed that parties worked together, illustrated by forthcoming draft Leicestershire Waste and Recycling Strategy. Whether the Council's fleet would be

suitable given the changes proposed by Environment Bill was appropriate for consideration under item 7 in the agenda.

AGREED

1. Scrutiny scope document be noted;
2. Panel to consider forthcoming draft Leicestershire Waste and Recycling Strategy at a later meeting. This included modelling of performance/carbon impact of different recycling arrangements/options and would be useful to Panel's scrutiny.

5. COUNCIL'S WASTE AND RECYCLING DATA AND COMPARISONS

In accordance with the scrutiny scope document (key tasks), considered and discussed, a breakdown and analysis of the Council's waste and recycling data, benchmarked against similar local authorities, via a presentation of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces.

Key points of discussion:

- (i) Noted, downward trend in percentage recycled, particularly in 2016, reason not known, could be affected by change in regulations/categories.
- (ii) Increase in Charnwood garden waste charge over time had not adversely affected subscriber numbers.
- (iii) Current 50% recycling target set by EU Waste Directive in 2009. New Environment Bill proposed 65% (by 2035).
- (iv) Composition of waste important. Reference to significant effect of garden waste on percentage recycled.
- (v) Noted, peak performance in percentage recycled in 2011/12 for all authorities listed, reason not known. Reference to dry summers affecting garden waste tonnage. Some fluctuations could be due to factors not within Council's control.
- (vi) Noted, percentage recycled excluding garden waste, NWLDC significantly lower, only authority listed that did not have co-mingled collection (separation/sorting by residents required). Concern that the latter system being proposed in Environment Bill.
- (vii) Noted, gradual decline waste sent for composting since 2016/17. Difficult to know whether that had been impacted by any increase in home composting. NWLDC performed best, only authority listed with free of charge garden waste service.
- (viii) Noted, Charnwood collected most tonnage residual waste due to being biggest district and uptick of 10% due to Covid, but residual waste per household comparatively low in Charnwood, positive.
- (ix) Noted, comparatively, Charnwood recycling rates reasonably good, concern that 65% proposed by Environment Bill would be difficult to achieve.

AGREED

The presentation and discussion be noted.

6. ENVIRONMENT BILL - WASTE MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS AND CHANGES REQUIRED

In accordance with the scrutiny scope document (key tasks), considered and discussed, the proposals in Environment Bill regarding waste management and changes this would necessitate, via a presentation of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces.

In advance of the meeting, members of the Panel had been asked to read: DEFRA – Consultation on Consistency in Household and Business Recycling in England May 2021 (included at item 7 on the agenda).

Key points of discussion:

- (i) Noted, likely to have considerable impact, including in respect of costs.
- (ii) Noted, problem of over-consumption increasing, importance of establishing a more circular economy, better that was done, less new raw materials needed.
- (iii) Reference to Council being in the middle, between manufacturers/Government and waste disposal authority (County Council). Limited impact Charnwood as waste collection authority could have. Unable to decide type of packaging being produced or disposal facilities. Noted, this Council could have influence, work to play its part, ensure residents had opportunity to manage waste in a responsible way.
- (iv) Noted, effect of waste and how it was managed on carbon emissions.
- (v) Noted, Environment Bill included proposals to encourage packaging that was easier to recycle, Extended Producer Responsibility, to be explained later in presentation.
- (vi) Difficult to find out how much recycled material was being used in packaging.
- (vii) Waste hierarchy outlined, better to prevent waste or reuse items than to recycle, including in respect of carbon footprint. Recovery of, for example, energy from waste better than disposal. Noted, around 70% Leicestershire's residual waste incinerated for energy/heat recovery. No revenue to Charnwood from that, cost to County Council.
- (viii) Noted, Environment Bill expectation/legal obligation was improved recycling rates despite the ideal being prevention or reuse of items first, difficult for waste collection authority. Better to consider how much waste a household produced than how much was being recycled? View that correct to consider prevention and reuse of items, even if that adversely affected recycling rates.
- (ix) Currently, Charnwood recycling at around 43%, step change would be needed to achieve 65% proposed in Environment Bill. Significant change had been affected in the past, had started with one bin that all waste went in.
- (x) Proposed Deposit Return Scheme and likely issues for Council outlined. Hopefully assist people in understanding value of packaging. Understood that promised burden funding from Government would not cover loss of revenue from receiving less materials via household waste collection. Noted, this was more a risk for the County Council. View that proposal was good idea, despite likely impact on Charnwood's recycling rates, better that recycled than not.
- (xi) Proposed Extended Producer Responsibility outlined, "polluter pays". Levy for hard to recycle items. Noted, most of recycling collected was packaging, could be significant source of income to Council, offset increased costs anticipated

from other elements of Bill. Not much detail yet on how payments would be decided/made, possibly based on what collected and its composition. Confirmed that Council already recorded this information via sample checks. Unclear how what manufacturers were producing would be recorded.

- (xii) How much recyclable material was within the residual waste was known, although not monitored as frequently/not required by DEFRA. Done every few years, wagon of residual waste examined, was cost involved. Results of last exercise (about 2 years ago) could be shared with Panel. Better prevention of that could assist recycling rates. Noted that residual waste, 30-40% by weight was food, did get small amount of recyclable materials, garden waste, nappies. Concern that charging for garden waste meant it ended up in residual waste, this was not the case based on analysis of its composition.
- (xiii) Noted, Environmental Bill did not support co-mingled collection of recyclables, rather sorting/separation by residents. Reason, prevention of fragments of glass causing problem for paper mills. Exemption would be possible (TEEP). View that proposal was more complicated for residents and would result in lower recycling rates, however considered that materials would be cleaner/better quality. Considerable debate on issue. Better to address paper mill issue than change way 100s local authorities collected recycling in a significantly more resource efficient way (co-mingled). Re: burden funding, understood that would be for food waste/garden waste, not this proposal, so Council likely to have to meet cost of new receptacles, vehicles, training. Concern that cost would be considerable, must be case for economic exemption. Noted, significant waste likely in form of existing bins that may no longer be fit for purpose. Concern that harder system was, less likely that residents would do. Twin stream option easier than multi stream.
- (xiv) Re: when Bill would be effective, some elements would require secondary legislation, contact with DEFRA had suggested 2023/24 originally, anticipated may get pushed back to 2025, but that was an assumption/not certain. Considerable work needed to introduce.
- (xv) Re: core set of recyclables that would need to be collected, Council already collected all of those. Positive, but did mean the task to increase recycling was more difficult. Some scope if materials were added to collection, those would be counted in recycling performance, for example textiles, batteries, small electricals, specialist items such as toothbrushes. Noted, worth considering potential to do this.
- (xvi) Proposed weekly separate collection of food waste outlined. Already stated, 30-40% of residual waste. Considerable cost for the Council, both revenue and capital estimated in presentation. Burden funding would apply, but unclear if in full and ongoing. Concern that proposal might legitimise food waste when progress had been made in people considering the matter more. Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces' previous experience with food waste collection suggested the opposite, that seeing food waste separately increased awareness and resulted in action to reduce it. Important that any food waste collection was accompanied by information campaign, principal aim should be to prevent. Concern that food waste might be transported some distance for processing.
- (xvii) Re: whether residual waste collection could be reduced if 30-40% food waste was collected separately and those resources transferred, may not be an option, achieving all of that 30-40% in the food waste collection rather than residual

would be difficult and number of households not static. Food waste collection would required separate/new fleet.

- (xviii) Reference to NWLDC food waste collection trial, taken to plant in Warwickshire. Were capacity issues in respect of anaerobic digestion facilities. Re: transport distances, local transfer stations may be needed. Government wanted food waste collection due to methane it generated in landfill, but waste in Leicestershire mostly incinerated.
- (xix) Confirmed, Charnwood had responded to consultation on Bill proposals, Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces happy to share those responses with the Panel. Many questions had required yes/no answers, but concern expressed regarding costs and inability of Council to fund if Government didn't fully cover costs long-term.
- (xx) Proposed free of charge garden waste collection outlined. Substantial loss of income given Council currently charged. Government had indicated contribution to costs, but not for loss of income, adverse effect on those already providing. Re: concern that county councils already in difficult funding position for higher priority services such as adult social care, clarified that for food and garden waste proposals, costs would be to collection authority, disposal authorities likely cost saving as disposal of residual waste most expensive and should be less of this. Financial benefit to recycling more, but this would not be shared by collection authorities. Question as to whether the Government understood the financial position of local authorities? Likely costs to Council of implementing proposals was a significant concern. The Cabinet Lead Member for Community Support and Equalities advised that Jane Hunt MP for Loughborough was a member of a Government Waste Management Panel, it might be useful to raise the concern on this with her. It was understood that representations to MP had been made, also reiterated that Council had made its views known. Reference to forthright response of LGA on the matter.
- (xxi) Discussion regarding use of sanctions, encouragement, information to improve recycling rates, whether evidence of effectiveness elsewhere. Noted, Fixed Penalty Notices no longer available to Council, increasing awareness, effective communication, incentives such as competitions were options, could be cost effective, particularly social media. Council did refuse to collect bin if aware contaminated. Noted, important to explore this, not sure residents always aware of all the items that could be recycled via co-mingled collection, for example various soft plastics. Important to communicate a positive message. Related to key task for Panel, "identifying barriers and ways to overcome them".

AGREED

1. The presentation and discussion be noted.
2. The Council's responses to the consultation on the Environment Bill be sent to members of the Panel.
3. Further to (xii) above, results of the most recent examination of a wagon of residual waste be sent to members of the Panel.

4. Further to (xx) above, Jane Hunt MP for Loughborough be invited to attend a meeting of the Panel to discuss the concerns regarding the Environment Bill outlined above, particularly the cost implications for the Council.

7. **FURTHER PANEL MEETINGS AND KEY TASK PLANNING**

Considered and discussed, the key tasks in the scrutiny scope document to be considered at the next meeting of the Panel and any work members of the Panel would undertake in advance of that meeting.

AGREED

1. Key tasks to be considered at next Panel meeting on 14th December 2021:

“Investigate other local authorities that are considered to be leaders in waste management and look at ways to apply to Charnwood Borough Council, taking into account demographics” – via a presentation of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces.

“Investigate new research, technology and methods that could help improve our recycling rates” – via investigation by members of the Panel prior to the meeting, the Chair would provide guidance on what was required in this respect.

2. A visit by members of the Panel to the Casepak Materials Recycling Facility be arranged as soon as possible.
3. Draft Leicestershire Waste and Recycling Strategy be scheduled for consideration at Panel’s meeting on 2nd February 2022 – via presentation of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces.
4. Further scheduled meetings of the Panel, as set out on the agenda, be noted.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the next available Ordinary Council meeting unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Waste Management Scrutiny Panel.