

## **ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 10 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
Report Subject	Waste Strategy Review
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy
Report Author	Chief Officer, Streetscene and Transportation
Type of Report	Strategic

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Over the last five years, we have reviewed our waste strategy three times with the most recent review being the 'Target 70' report in July 2021. These reviews have allowed us to implement major service changes, which have contributed to improving the way we deliver our waste and recycling services.

The reviews have always ensured that the Council aligns and operates to Welsh Government policy and strategy, and as an authority, we currently follow the collections blueprint as set out in the Municipal Waste Sector Plan. In its current waste strategy 'Beyond Recycling', the Welsh Government set statutory targets for local authorities in Wales to reuse, recycle or compost a minimum of 64% of waste by 2022-23, and 70% of waste by 2024-25.

However, from being at a peak in performance in 2018-19 at 69.16%, our recycling performance levels in Flintshire have progressively decreased, year on year. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions have had a significant impact.

Following two all-Member workshops in November 2022, this report outlines how we propose to minimise waste and maximise recycling in order to improve our recycling performance and achieve the statutory recycling targets.

REC	OMMENDATIONS
1	That the Scrutiny Committee notes the Council's current recycling performance against statutory targets.
2	That the Scrutiny Committee considers the options for alternative waste collection delivery models in order to achieve the statutory recycling targets set by Welsh Government.
3	That the Scrutiny Committee considers the proposal for increasing the garden waste subscription fee to recover increasing operational costs.

## **REPORT DETAILS**

1.00	Review of the Council's Collection Waste Strategy			
1.01	In 2010, Welsh Government (WG) published its policy for dealing with municipal waste in Wales 'Towards Zero Waste' (TZW). The policy set out statutory recycling targets for all Councils in Wales to meet.			
	In June 2010, the Council adopted its own Municipal Waste Strategy. The strategy contained a number of key actions, which were required to meet the challenging targets set out in TZW.			
	In 2011, WG published its Municipal Sector Plan, a partnering document to TZW, which provided guidance to Welsh Councils in the form of a Collections Blueprint, which outlines WG's recommended service profile for the collection of waste from households. The Blueprint provides a system that, if adopted across the whole of Wales by all local authorities, would result in high rates of high quality recycling, significant cost savings and improved sustainable development outcomes. The Blueprint aims to help local authorities achieve the recycling targets set in the Waste (Wales) Measure 2010 and ensure that we provide the best overall service for the people of Wales and future generations.			
1.02	In 2021, WG published its strategy 'Beyond Recycling: Making the Circular Economy a Reality in Wales', which aims to create an economy where we value resources and materials by keeping them in use for as long as possible and avoid all waste.			
	The Waste (Wales) Measure 2010 sets out the progressive annual targets for Welsh local authorities in relation to recycling, preparation for re-use and composting and The Recycling, Preparation for Re-use and Composting Targets (Definitions) (Wales) Order 2011 and The Recycling, Preparation for Re-use and Composting Targets (Monitoring and Penalties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 set out the obligations for local authorities in Wales to comply with the requirements.			
	The targets set in the Waste (Wales) Measure 2010 are minimum recovery (i.e. recycling, preparation for re-use and composting) targets. Which are detailed in the table below: -			
	2012-2013 2015-2016 2019-2020 2024-2025			
	Recovery Target % At least 52% At least 58% At least 64% At least 70%			
1.03	In response to these challenging targets, over the last five years alone, we have reviewed our waste strategy three times with the most recent review being the 'Target 70' report in July 2021. These reviews have allowed us to implement major service changes, which have contributed to improving the way we deliver our waste and recycling services. The reviews have always ensured that the Council aligns and operates to Welsh Government policy and strategy. As an authority, we currently follow the Collections Blueprint as set out in the Municipal Waste Sector Plan for the delivery of domestic waste and recycling collections.			

However, from being at a peak in performance in 2018-19 at 69.16%, our recycling performance levels in Flintshire have progressively decreased, year on year. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions have had a significant impact.

The table below details our actual performance levels over the last 4 years against the statutory recycling targets set by Welsh Government: -

Year	Target	Actual Performance
2018-19	58%	69.16%
2019-20	64%	65.85%
2020-21	64%	63.98%
2021-22	64%	60.08%

1.05 Under the legislation, Welsh Government has the powers to levy fines, which are known as infraction fines. The amount of financial penalty to which a local authority is liable under section 3(7) of the Measure is £200 per tonne by which a local authority falls short of the target amount.

Where a local authority is liable to a penalty under section 3(7) of the Measure or under the Regulations, the Welsh Ministers may either waive the penalty, or assess the amount due by way of penalty and notify the local authority accordingly.

1.06 In 2020-21, in Flintshire we missed the recycling target by just 17 tonnes, which, had Welsh Government chosen to use their powers, could have resulted in infraction fines of £3.400.

In 2021-22, the recycling target has been missed by 3,314 tonnes, which could equate to a potential infraction fine of £662,888 if Welsh Government chose to levy a financial penalty.

The table below outlines current overall waste arising, recycling performance and potential fines that could levied by Welsh Government to Flintshire for failing to achieve the statutory recycling targets: -

Year	Total MSW	Total Recycling, Reuse, Composting Actual Performance		Tar	get	Difference to Target	Penalty liable
	(t)	(%)	(t)	(%)	(t)	(t)	(£)
2020/21	81,333	63.98	52,036	64	52,053	-17	3,400
2021/22	84,496	60.08	50,763	64	54,077	-3,314	662,800

For the first two quarters of 2022/23 reported municipal waste arrisings have showed an improvement in our recycling performance to 63.17%. If this performance was to be sustained to the end of the reporting year then the estimated shortfall in tonnage is estimated be circa 622 tonnes, which could result in a potential infraction fine of £124,428. However, since September 2022 we have seen increases in the amount of residual waste collected following a sustained decrease in the months April-August. This, along with the seasonal decreases in tonnage of recyclable waste, such as garden waste, means that the performance of 63.17% is unlikely to be sustained to the end of the reporting year thus decreasing recycling performance against the statutory target and increasing potential fines.

1.07 Since the implementation of our managed weekly collection we have seen a year on year decrease in the amount of residual waste collected at the kerbside. This had been progressive and demonstrated our continual improvement in reducing residual waste sent for final disposal.

However, in the year 2020/21 we had observed that this trend has been reversed and we saw an unprecedented increase in residual waste tonnages of over 9% due to the pandemic and people's lifestyle changes. This change in trend meant that the level of residual waste collected had returned to that last seen in 2016/17.

Since 2021/22, we have begun to see decreasing residual waste tonnages year on year. The following table outlines the total residual waste tonnages collected: -

Residual Waste	Residual Waste	Percentage
Collected (Year)	Collected (Tonnage)	Decrease/Increase from
		Previous year
2016/17	33,733.74	-4.45%
2017/18	32,846.37	-2.63%
2018/19	31,300.74	-4.71%
2019/20	30,843.96	-1.46%
2020/21	33,728.65	+9.35%
2021/22	32,963.27	-2.27%
2022/23	31,010.78*	-5.92%

\*estimated tonnage for Dec 2022 to March 2023, which could increase if current trend continues.

1.08 For the year 2021/22, whilst Flintshire did not meet the statutory target, three Welsh local authorities did exceed the minimum target of 70% for 2024/25 and twelve authorities surpassed the target of 64%.

As a result, it has been key for us to understand why our performance has progressively decreased and consequently, a recent compositional analysis has been undertaken in partnership with Welsh Government. This involves a physical waste compositional analysis where samples are collected from kerbside collections, including residual waste, food waste and recycling.

1.09 Whilst work is still underway to verify the analysis, the initial results have shown that up to 50% of what is placed in the residual waste (black) bins by residents in Flintshire is recyclable material. Furthermore, 27% of the black bin contents was found to be food waste, a significant amount of which was considered to be in an edible condition.

With a separate weekly kerbside collection service available for food waste and weekly collection for recycling, the current situation is not sustainable and remains a significant risk to the local authority.

1.10 With the Welsh Government target of 70% approaching in 2024-25, further consideration has to be given as to how this target will be achieved.

In response, two all-Members workshops were held on 9 November 2022 (10am and 5pm) in order to explore the options. The agenda for those workshops is detailed in **Appendix 1.** 

The workshops were delivered in two parts: first, a presentation was provided by officers to give an overview of the current recycling and waste collection operations, the legislative background, current policy and procedures, statutory targets and the council's recycling performance.

The second part was allocated for members to consider a number of questions and provide their comments, suggestions and ideas as to how as a local authority we could achieve the statutory targets. The questions asked of members included:

- How are we going to achieve the 70% recycling target by 2024-2025?
- How are we going to reduce the amount of residual waste produced by residents?
- How are we going to ensure that we do not receive substantial infraction fines?
- What more can we do?

A copy of the slide deck presented to members at the workshop is detailed in **Appendix 2.** 

- 1.11 The feedback received by members was comprehensive and some of the general themes included:
  - Improving education and engagement to change behaviours;
  - Members sharing information in newsletters to residents
  - Improving engagement with schools to promote recycling to children
  - Learning from those local authorities that are already achieving the targets
  - Appealing to Welsh Government for support on achieving the targets
  - Improving availability of replacement bags and boxes for recycling
  - Promoting repair and reuse as well as schemes like reusable nappies to reduce waste
  - Using information from the crews and enforcement teams to focus campaigns in areas where there is low participation in recycling
  - Taking robust enforcement action if residents do not recycle or comply
  - Expanding the use of RFID technology to monitor participation and performance
  - Introducing a chargeable trade waste collection service to improve recycling vields
  - Changing waste collection frequencies or reducing the capacity of the black bin, which would require financial investment.
- The individual comments, suggestions and questions gathered from elected members during the workshops are being collated into an action plan and will be used to produce a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) to assist with information and understanding. Where possible, any changes will be considered in line with current policy and within available resources.
- 1.13 Given that it has been demonstrated that nearly 50% of the contents of the residual waste bin is filled with materials that could have been recycled and that the current target of 64% is not being achieved, the risk of not achieving the 70% target by 2024-25 remains significant and has been documented as a red risk on the portfolio's risk register.

The Welsh Government's priorities for collection are stipulated as the provision of kerbside collection services that reduce residual waste arisings, collect high levels of clean recyclables in ways that can be recycled 'closed loop' and locally (preferably in Wales or elsewhere in the UK) and at lowest overall financial cost, and in ways that help elicit the desired behavioural changes amongst householders, whilst at the same time providing convenience. A key measure introduced by a number of other local authorities across Wales is to limit how much waste households can throw away. By restricting the capacity of the residual waste bin, people are encouraged to make more use of the recycling kerbside collection service.

1.14 As a result of the deteriorating recycling performance levels and increasing residual waste tonnages, consideration now needs to be given to changing the provision of kerbside collections with a view to reducing residual waste arisings by either changing the capacity of the residual waste bin or by changing the frequency of waste collections.

In order to maximise financial efficiency and sustainability outcomes, as well as increase recycling performance, a comparative assessment of service delivery options has been undertaken of local authorities across Wales, the findings for which are detailed as follows: -

- Four weekly collections with a 240 litre bin (60 litres/week)
- Three weekly collections with 180 litre bin (60 litres/week)
- Two weekly collections with a 140 litre bin (70 litres/week)
   Or
- Four weekly collections with 4 waste sacks (60 litres/week)
- Three weekly collections with 3 waste sacks (60 litres/week)
- Two weekly collections with 2 waste sacks (60 litres/week)
- 1.15 A comparison of a number of waste collection models across Wales has taken place previously and it was clear that restricting residual waste improves recycling levels, which in turn has a significant impact on recycling performance.

Looking across the different types of models, the average improvement was found to be as follows: -

- Overall reduction in household residual waste (incl. HWRCs) of 18%
- Increase in kerbside dry recycling of 13%
- Increase in food waste capture of 21%

However, it has been determined that a 60 litres/week residual waste restriction has the highest impact on reducing residual waste and improving recycling performance. Reducing residual waste capacity to 60 litres/week has seen the following average improvements: -

- Overall reduction in household residual waste (incl. HRC) of 30%.
- Increase in kerbside dry recycling of 17%
- Increase in food waste capture of 28%

To demonstrate what this would mean in relation to the waste arising seen in Flintshire for the two-year period during which we have not achieved target, **Appendix 3** provides an indication of the potential improvement in recycling performance using the previously observed improvements.

1.16 As well as ensuring that we meet the statutory targets set by Welsh Government, a reduction in waste arising and increased recycling performance would bring financial savings, as the cost of disposing residual waste is significantly higher than that of recyclable waste, which can bring an income for recyclable materials.

For the two options highlighted in 1.11 **Appendix 4** details the potential savings associated with recycling residual waste and increasing recycling.

## 1.17 Considerations

If the collection frequency changed from the current fortnightly model, this would have an impact on required resources to deliver the collection services.

The following table outlines the estimated operational costs for the provision of the current model and those for a three or four-weekly collection cycle: -

	2 Weekly Collections	3 Weekly Collections	4 Weekly Collections
Properties per Week	36,210	27,176	18,124
Vehicles per Day	5	4	3
Operatives per Week	22	16	13
Labour Cost per Year	£770,000	£560,000	£455,000

Operational savings are realised by a reduction in the number of operatives required per week on residual waste rounds. These operatives would be allocated to alternative areas of the Service Delivery team to reduce the reliance on agency staff. The reductions above could potentially save up to £210,000 (three-weekly collections) or £315,000 (four-weekly collections) per year.

1.18 A change in collection frequency may require consideration of changes to the container size or container types, which would involve further considerations, including funding, health and safety impact on crews, compatibility with vehicles and storage for residents.

Capital funding would be required to procure alternative sized residual waste containers should a change in container size be required. This is estimated to be in the region of £1million. Consideration would need to be given to what happens to the old bins/containers and whether these should collected and provision made for their resale or disposal. Changing to a sack collection could present health and safety risks to the workforce in terms of manual handling, sharps/needle stick injuries, slips, trips and falls, personal injury and hygiene. There would be a need for our residents to control and contain the waste securely and safely on their own properties, which if contained within sacks which could attract vermin and produce odour. This option would also present the need to collect all existing containers and make provision for their resale or disposal.

1.19	Regardless of any changes to collection frequencies or container sizes, side waste enforcement would need to continue to ensure that only residual waste is presented for collection in the residual waste (black) bin and that residents are fully participating in recycling.
	As approved by Cabinet in the 2021 'Target 70' report, an option was included to introduce enhanced enforcement to address the issue of those residents who habitually do not present any, or some of the recycling, expected on the weekly collection. This would require the contents of the black bin to be inspected and, if recyclable materials were to be found in the residual waste bin, such as food waste, then the enforcement process would begin.
1.20	In addition to the above options, it is proposed that an increase in the charge for garden waste collections is considered as part of the review. One of the main reasons for including this as an option is due to the fact that portfolio currently has a budget pressure of £50k due to increasing operational costs, which come about as a result of not increasing the garden waste subscription fee since 2018-19.
	The current fees are detailed below: -
	<ul> <li>£32.00 for ALL online payments</li> <li>£32.00 for payments made on or before 28th February</li> <li>£35.00 for payments made after 1st March 2022*</li> </ul>
	*This fee applies to residents paying over the phone and using payment kiosks at Flintshire Connects
	On average, the Council receives approximately 32,000 garden waste subscriptions per year. An option for consideration would be to increase the rate from £32/subscription (online/early payments) to £33/subscription, which could deliver an additional income of £32k/year.
1.21	In addition to the above options, it is intended that work would continue to raise awareness and educate residents about what can and can't be recycled. Although a significant amount of work has taken place over the last three years to improve the information available on the Flintshire website and carry out education campaigns, such as food waste / recycling wrapping paper at Christmas time, more targeted campaigns will be explored around the use of RFID technology to monitor participation levels or where take-up of the kerbside recycling collection service is low, subject to available resources and funding.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There would be an impact on resources and the operational workforce if the policy was changed, such as reduced frequency residual waste collections.
2.02	Capital funding would be required to procure alternative sized residual waste containers should collection frequencies or container change.
2.03	Implementing a significant service change on this scale would require additional service project management support.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND	D RISK MANAGEMENT		
3.01	Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact			
	Long-term	The proposals will drive improvements to		
		recycling performance and achieving a Circular		
		Economy.		
	Prevention	The proposals will help prevent the increasing		
		amounts of waste generated and therefore		
		reduce the Council carbon footprint.		
	Integration	No impact		
	Collaboration	The proposal requires further work with Welsh Government, and partners, to find sustainable solutions for none recyclable materials.		
	Involvement	Improved engagement with Flintshire residents to ensure they understand their responsibilities and ensure waste minimisation, reuse and recycling before disposal		
	Well-being Goals Impact			
	Prosperous Wales	Positive – improving waste minimisation, reuse and recycling of recycling materials resulting in world leaders in recycling performance		
	Resilient Wales	Positive – Less demand for raw materials, promoting circular economy		
	Healthier Wales	Positive – reducing vehicle movements and emissions and allowing for the responsible management of controlled waste		
	More equal Wales	No impact		
	Cohesive Wales	No impact		
	Vibrant Wales	Positive – improving waste minimisation, reuse and recycling of recycling materials and working towards carbon reduction		
	Globally responsible Wales	Reducing the reliance on the extraction of raw materials and destruction of natural habitats and ecosystems by the reprocessing of recyclable materials.		
3.02	significant changes to improvi amount of waste presented in			
3.03	significant financial penalty fo	statutory recycling targets could result in a retail the Council (£200 for every tonne not recycled) if hoose to levy the infraction fines.		
3.04	resulted in increased expendi waste to recycling would redu	me of residual waste at the current rates has ture on disposal costs (£103/tonne). Diverting this ace the gate fee on some recycling streams (e.g. come for others (e.g. paper/glass/metal/plastic).		

3.05	The lack of appetite to improve recycling performance and implement changes for reducing waste could result in the loss of grant funding and confidence from Welsh Government to invest in Flintshire.
3.06	Changing to a sack collection would present health and safety risks to the workforce in terms of manual handling, sharps/needle stick injuries, slips, trips and falls, personal injury and hygiene.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy
4.02	Elected Members - Two workshops held on 9 November 2022

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 Workshop Agenda
5.02	Appendix 2 Workshop Presentation
5.03	Appendix 3 Potential improvement in recycling performance
5.04	Appendix 4 Potential improvement in financial savings on disposal costs

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Stats Wales - Recycling Information WasteDataFlow - Waste Tonnages My Recycle Wales - Waste data and end destinations Towards Zero Waste Municipal Waste Sector Plan - Collections blueprint Beyond Recycling Strategy

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Ruth Tulley, Regulatory Services Manager Telephone: 01352 704796 E-mail: ruth.tulley@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Residual Waste = non-recyclable waste placed in the black bin, which is not sent for recycling thus has no future benefits  Statutory Recycling Targets = Targets set in legislation, which all local authorities must reach for waste reused, composted or recycled.  WG = Welsh Government  TZW = Towards Zero Waste (Policy document)