

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 14th September 2021
Report Subject	Target 70 – A Review of Flintshire County Council's Waste Strategy
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Streetscene
Report Author	Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2011, Flintshire County Council introduced a Managed Weekly Collection waste service (MWC), which changed waste collections in the County from a weekly, black sack and backdoor service to weekly recycling and food waste collections with fortnightly collections of non-recyclable waste, alternating with garden waste and all of the waste streams being pre-sorted by residents and collected at the kerb-side.

This change significantly improved the Council's recycling performance and, due to the engagement and efforts of residents, the Council continues to perform well with the recycling performance for 2019/20 confirmed at 65.58% meeting the statutory target of 64%.

The impact of COVID has resulted in significant changes in the volumes of waste and recycling collected from residential properties and deposited at the Household Recycling Centre (HRCs), which has resulted in a downturn in performance to 64.04% for 2020/21. This change has come about as a result of increased working from home, restrictions on movement and the closure of hospitality venues, along with the periodic closures of the HRCs

Whilst the current waste strategy does not come to an end until 2025, the next national target to be achieved is 70% by 2024/25. It is now important that the Council starts to plan for the future, assess the ongoing impact on waste volumes post-COVID and consider what more could be done to increase recycling rates to ensure that we achieve the national targets.

In July 2021, following a report to the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee, two all-member workshops/seminars were held to update elected members on the current recycling performance position, provide an overview of the impact of the COVID pandemic on services and discuss what changes the Council could implement to achieve the national recycling target of 70%.

This report provides feedback from the seminars and provides recommendations on future recycling and waste service provisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	That Scrutiny welcomes the feedback from the member seminars and supports the work undertaken to date to increase recycling rates.
2	That Scrutiny approves the recommendations on future recycling and waste service provisions.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	RECYCLING AND WASTE PERFORMANCE AND CONSULTATION															
1.01	<p>Recycling Targets and Performance</p> <p>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 Council's in Wales to meet.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In 2011, WG published its Municipal Sector Plan which was a partnering document to TZW and provided guidance to Welsh Councils in the form of a blueprint describing WG's recommended service delivery for Councils to follow.</p> <p>In 2020, WG published its 'Beyond Recycling' strategy to make the circular economy in Wales a reality.</p>															
1.02	<p>Working to the Council Municipal Waste Strategy, recycling performance in Flintshire has consistently exceeded the statutory targets: -</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Recycling Target</th> <th>FCC's Recycling Performance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2013/14</td> <td>52%</td> <td>54.92%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016/17</td> <td>58%</td> <td>68.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20</td> <td>64%</td> <td>65.58%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2024/25</td> <td>70%</td> <td>???</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The Council's recycling success is to be celebrated; however, with changes to the classifications of what waste can be categorised as recycled and the changing behaviours of our residents in response to the pandemic, which have both impacted on our recycling performance, we now need to look at additional measures to ensure that we achieve the target of 70% by 2024/25.</p>	Year	Recycling Target	FCC's Recycling Performance	2013/14	52%	54.92%	2016/17	58%	68.2%	2019/20	64%	65.58%	2024/25	70%	???
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1.03	Waste compositional analysis has shown that items such as steel cans, plastic bottles and food waste are still ending up in the residual waste bin and then inevitably in landfill or being incinerated, rather than being recycled.															
1.04	It is widely recognised that not recycling our waste has substantial environmental implications, which must be addressed to mitigate future impact on the planet.															

	<p>Some of the most significant effects are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The continued use of raw materials for the manufacture of new products destroys natural habitats and ecosystems. • Increased carbon emissions from the mining, transport and manufacture of new products. • Increased pollution as non-recycled items enter the waste stream and pollute the natural environment. Plastic waste, specifically, has recently been highlighted as polluting our sea and oceans.
1.05	<p>There is also a lost financial opportunity by not recycling our waste. There is a cost for every tonne of waste that is treated or landfilled, whilst the sale of the recycled products raises a small amount of income for the Council.</p>
1.06	<p>In 2019, a waste and recycling consultation took place to identify further measures that could be introduced to improve our recycling performance.</p> <p>The Council's Cabinet agreed that the changes should be implemented from March 2020; however, due to the national pandemic and the need to focus on service delivery in a COVID compliant manner, these changes were put on hold. The changes approved by Cabinet are outlined in a report from September 2019 (see Appendix 1).</p> <p>As the current Municipal Waste Strategy comes to an end in 2025, there is a need to implement these changes and further review the current service provision to identify how recycling performance could be increased further.</p> <p>Subsequently, the Council's Cabinet approved that all-member seminars should be held over the summer 2021 to consider our current recycling service and performance and explore what further options could be implemented to improve recycling performance.</p>
1.07	<p>All-members seminars were held online on 6th and 20th July 2021. The sessions were well attended by members and the seminars were split into three sessions, as follows: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Context/Background to current arrangements and strategy and where are we now – Presentations were given to members by the waste operations and strategy teams (see attached slides Appendix 2). ➤ Achieving 70% - Waste and Recycling Collections – An informing overview of the collection service with breakout sessions for members to provide feedback, suggestions and comments. ➤ Achieving 70% - Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) – An informing overview of the HRCs with breakout session for members to provide feedback, suggestions and comments.
1.08	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>Improved Education and Information.</p> <p>Members continued support for improved education and engagement with residents to improve awareness and understanding of what can and cannot be</p>

	<p>recycled. This will include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear information on why we provide our services in the current format (pre-sorted and separated waste at kerbside) • clear information on what can and cannot go in each recycling container • clear information on what waste can and cannot be recycled, and why • focused community engagement in low participation areas • increased engagement with schools, including use of the new Parc Adfer education facility • attendance at local events, markets, shopping centres to increase awareness of recycling • engagement with estate agents, landlords and our housing department to share information on waste collection arrangements for new properties and residents • increased use of social media and website • engagement with organised and community groups to raise awareness
1.09	<p>Side waste and Enhanced Enforcement.</p> <p>In July 2021, Cabinet approved the reintroduction of side waste enforcement following its suspension in March 2020 due to the pandemic and it has been agreed that enforcement will be reintroduced from 6th September using the same three staged approach: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education and engagement with warning/improvement letter (informal) 2. A Section 46 Notice served on the offending property (formal) 3. Issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice (formal) <p>At the seminars, Members requested that, before side waste enforcement is reintroduced, an education and engagement campaign takes place to inform residents of their responsibilities when placing waste out for collection.</p> <p>This will be done via press releases, improved website information, email to all registered Flintshire residents, social media campaigns, briefings to all Members, Town/Community Councils and Members of Parliament/Members of the Senedd.</p> <p>Members continued their support for an enhanced approach to side waste enforcement for those residents who habitually do not recycle their waste.</p> <p>However, this will only be implemented once side waste enforcement has been fully implemented and there is clear demonstrable evidence that residents have not changed their waste disposal habits.</p>
1.10	<p>Absorbent Hygiene Product (AHP) – Disposable Nappy Collections</p> <p>Members continued their support for the introduction of an AHP (disposable nappy collection service) for those who request a service, which will complement the current medical waste collection service and assist with removing this waste stream from the black wheeled bin.</p> <p>The Council has already been awarded £282k of funding by the Welsh Government to deliver this service (for up to 20% of all properties), which has provided support for the purchase of a vehicle to deliver the service, appropriate containers and bags to provide to residents for storage, and also make any</p>

	<p>necessary depot improvements to bulk and store the waste prior to disposal.</p> <p>Again, the implementation of the disposable nappy / AHP collection service was put on hold in March 2020 due to the pandemic. It is now proposed that this collection service should be introduced from 1st November 2021, which will offer: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A weekly collection service (these collections may not take place on the same day as the scheduled waste and recycling collection day) • Provision of a 75L orange box (with lid) and plastic storage bags • Applications for the service online or by telephone through our Contact Centre (Monday to Friday) • Expectation that up to 20% of residents will require the service • A reduction in requests for larger bins as a result <p>Communications for this new service will commence following approval and applications for the service will open from 1st October 2021, which is intended to allow sufficient time for assessment, distribution of the bags and containers, and setting up the collections.</p> <p>The service will be for households who use a large amount of nappies or incontinence products and find that they do not have enough space for these items in their black wheeled bin. Sanitary waste and infectious clinical waste will not be collected as part of this service, and alternative collections are available for the disposal of these waste streams.</p>
1.11	<p>Christmas Waste and Recycling Collections / HRC Opening Dates</p> <p>At the seminars, members were presented with a proposed calendar for waste and recycling collections over the Christmas period. This proposal would see waste and recycling collections for Saturday 25th December 2021 and Saturday 1st January 2022 moved to Sunday 2nd January 2022.</p> <p>The calendar was broadly support with the only request being the inclusion of a food waste collection the week after Christmas Day and Boxing Day.</p> <p>This has now been accommodated and additional food waste collections will take place on Monday 27th December for those residents whose collections would have fallen on Christmas Day and will move to Sunday 2nd January.</p> <p>The proposed collection schedule for the Christmas and New Year period is detailed in Appendix 3</p> <p>Discussions also took place in relation to the opening times of the Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) over the Christmas and New Year period.</p> <p>It was explained that it has been common practice to open the sites on Boxing Day and New Year's Day in the past; however, footfall is always low and there is little benefit in opening them.</p> <p>It was suggested that the sites remain closed on these two days, as well as Christmas Day, which would ensure that working patterns are consistent with the waste and recycling collection crews and that service provision is consistent with our neighbouring local authorities. Members supported this approach.</p>

1.12	<p>Household Recycling Centres (HRCs)</p> <p>A number of proposals were discussed at the seminars in relation to HRC sites, which are outlined as follows: -</p> <p>Booking Systems: Throughout the pandemic, a number of Welsh Authorities introduced and continue to operate a booking system for residents wanting to use the HRCs. Members discussed the option of introducing such a system; however, the proposal was not supported as it was felt that it could lead to a potential increase in fly tipping, inconvenience to service users and limit the amount of recyclable materials presented. However, the proposal for a booking system for hazardous wastes such as asbestos was supported by Members. Such a system would allow HRC staff to control when hazardous waste is coming to site and make preparations for its acceptance, by allowing for the correct bags to be issued for transportation of the materials and ensure that the containers are available before residents transport their waste to the site.</p> <p>Bag Splitting: Members supported the reintroduction of black bag splitting at the HRC sites to ensure that all recyclable materials brought to site are pre-sorted and separated correctly. With the reintroduction of side waste enforcement, it is expected that residents who avoid recycling may take the easy option and potentially take waste to the HRC instead. Prior to this being re-introduced a full risk assessment will take place and bag splitting will only be implemented when safe to do so.</p> <p>Van Permit System: Members expressed their concerns that the van permit criteria is not clear and can be left to interpretation. It has also been noted by the HRC staff that the current system does allow for traders to exploit the system. It is proposed that the permitting criteria is reviewed in order to make it clearer to service users what type and size of vehicles will or will not be issued a permit. It is also proposed that those vehicles that are registered to a business could be offered a 'one-off permit' if it can be demonstrated that the waste they are disposing of has no relation to the business to which they are registered e.g. allow a vehicle registered to a plumber to dispose of garden waste.</p> <p>Charging for Bulky Waste Items: It is becoming more common for Local Authorities to charge for the disposal of bulky waste items received at HRC sites, such as wood or soil and rubble. Members did not support this proposal, as it was felt that it could lead to a potential increase in fly tipping and therefore it is not proposed for this to be introduced at this time.</p>
1.13	<p>Repair and Reuse</p> <p>Members supported the Council's commitment to prioritising repair and reuse of items that could be deemed as waste but can be fixed, repurposed or reused, thereby keeping items in circulation longer and reducing the demand for new products.</p> <p>Members welcomed news of the new Repair and Reuse Centre in Buckley, which is being developed in partnership with Groundworks NW and Refurbs Flintshire. With funding granted by Welsh Government through the Circular Economy, the aim of the project is to promote education and behavioural change on waste and recycling initiatives, provide volunteering opportunities and employment for local people and create an attractive and unique venue in the heart of the town centre,</p>

	<p>whilst supporting the strategic regeneration plan of the town and creating a hub for the community to come together. Once this facility is fully established, the model may be replicated in other town centres and areas of the County (subject to funding).</p> <p>Members also supported the continued aspiration to partner with local charities to adopt a Household Recycling Centre. The aim of this is to change residents' behaviours of disposing reusable items, which could be sold through charity shops to raise income to support the charity and reduce waste. Each HRC would be sponsored with the respective charities branding and, if savings could be made to the Council for reducing waste disposal costs and improving reuse rates, this could be shared with the charity.</p>
1.14	<p>Local Targets / Local Benefits</p> <p>Members have suggested having a process whereby, if a local community were to improve its recycling performance (e.g. achieve the 70% target or more), then the benefits, such as financial savings, could be provided back to the community to support local environmental groups to continue their good work. This proposal is quite complex to put into practice, as waste collection rounds do not operate solely in one community/ward and, due to the nature of the containers to collect, the waste rounds do not mirror the recycling rounds to calculate an improvement.</p> <p>Therefore, it is proposed that this idea be progressed as a pilot project, but only in a controlled sample area, where the measurement of success is feasible. Options need to be explored further to identify where this pilot scheme could be organised and how it would work operationally and how the community be engaged in the project.</p>
1.15	<p>RFID Tags for Garden Waste and Assisted Collections</p> <p>The service has been piloting an electronic tag system for brown bin collections, known as RFID (radio frequency identification). This is as an alternative option to the sticker/tag that is manually issued each year once a resident has subscribed to the garden waste collection service.</p> <p>Currently, each year the Council manually sends out 33,000+ stickers or tags to attach to the brown bins, an operation that is time consuming, labour intensive and costly to administer and distribute year on year. The purpose of the pilot scheme was to reduce the administrative burden on the service and find a more cost effective way of issuing tags and identifying which bin is registered and subscribed to the collection service, whilst also offering improved back office reporting information on the collections and operational services.</p> <p>Additionally, the Council provides an assisted collection service for anyone who is physically unable to move the wheeled bin to the kerbside and where an able bodied person is not available to assist in presenting the bins at the kerbside for collection. The issue of missed collections for residents who are registered for the assisted collection service can be very emotive, as they rely on the collection crews to collect the bins from a location on their property instead of the kerbside. Currently, there is no way of knowing whether an assisted collection has taken place, other than the driver confirming the collection on return to the depot. The use of RFID tags on black bins registered to receive assisted collections would enable us to identify immediately whether a collection has been missed, record</p>

	<p>the emptying of the bins and confirm that all bins on the round have been processed.</p> <p>The pilot has been successful with a read rate of 99.2% and the capability of the system for monitoring the progress of collection rounds and demonstrating that bins have been collected has also proven effective.</p> <p>It is now proposed that this system is rolled out countywide and implemented for all subscriptions to the 2022 garden waste collection service and also those residents who are registered to receive assisted black bin collections.</p> <p>To enable the service to do this, grant funding of £122k has been awarded via Innovate UK as part of a wider project to promote carbon reduction through the use of electric vehicles and intelligence based route planning. The funding will pay for all of the RFID tags and the back office system to support the collection service. Further funding will be required for the tag readers for each vehicle and ongoing maintenance of the new back office system, which is intended to be sourced from the savings generated by not having to manually issue annual stickers or tags to households.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS								
2.01	£5,000 required for education/information literature. This is accounted for in the revenue budget								
2.02	Enforcement will be delivered by the existing in-house Civil Parking and Environmental Enforcement team. Approval was given to employ two additional officers to deliver enhanced enforcement. One officer has been employed and a review of the success of the project will be undertaken before employing the second post. The posts will be funded by the saving from waste disposal costs.								
2.03	£282,200 of grant funding has been awarded for the delivery of the AHP and disposable nappy collections. No additional workforce resource will be required as this will mirror the existing medical waste collection service								
2.04	<p>£122k Innovate UK funding to implement the RFID tag system for garden waste collections and assisted black bin collections</p> <p>Additional funding will be required to fund the vehicle readers and future maintenance costs for the back office software system. It is intended that this will be funded from the savings generated by not having to manually issue annual stickers or tags to households.</p> <p>The costs for manually issuing the tags during 2020-2021 were broken down as follows:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Materials & Printing</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£5,379.74</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Postage</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£26,185.56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Admin Support</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£25,574.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£57,139.51</td> </tr> </table>	Materials & Printing	£5,379.74	Postage	£26,185.56	Admin Support	£25,574.21	Total	£57,139.51
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3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT																								
3.01	<p>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Long-term</td> <td>The proposals will drive improvements to recycling performance.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prevention</td> <td>The proposals will help prevent the disposal of recyclable resources reducing the need for raw materials</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integration</td> <td>No impact</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collaboration</td> <td>The proposals will provide an opportunity for the County Council to work with community groups to promote recycling awareness</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Involvement</td> <td>Improved engagement with Flintshire residents, schools, community groups</td> </tr> </table> <p>Well-being Goals Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Prosperous Wales</td> <td>Positive – improving reuse and recycling of recycling materials resulting in world leaders in recycling performance</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resilient Wales</td> <td>Positive – Less demand for raw materials, promoting circular economy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Healthier Wales</td> <td>Positive – reducing vehicle movements and emissions</td> </tr> <tr> <td>More equal Wales</td> <td>No impact</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cohesive Wales</td> <td>No impact</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vibrant Wales</td> <td>Positive – Promoting reuse and recycling of waste, and working towards carbon reduction</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Globally responsible Wales</td> <td>Reducing the reliance on the extraction of raw materials and destruction of natural habitats and ecosystems by the reprocessing of recyclable materials.</td> </tr> </table>	Long-term	The proposals will drive improvements to recycling performance.	Prevention	The proposals will help prevent the disposal of recyclable resources reducing the need for raw materials	Integration	No impact	Collaboration	The proposals will provide an opportunity for the County Council to work with community groups to promote recycling awareness	Involvement	Improved engagement with Flintshire residents, schools, community groups	Prosperous Wales	Positive – improving 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	More equal Wales	No impact	Cohesive Wales	No impact	Vibrant Wales	Positive – Promoting reuse and recycling of waste, 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.
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3.02	Only those residents not complying with the waste collection policy will be accountable for their actions. There will be no impact to those residents who continually present their waste correctly																								
3.03	Improved recycling knowledge and understanding, promoting better engagement with Council services																								
3.04	Reduction in single use items, repairing and reusing items and waste minimisation will contribute to the carbon reduction agenda and reduce climate change.																								
3.05	<p>An integrated impact assessment has been completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) The impact assessment has identified there may be a potential positive impact on Equality and Human rights, Welsh Language, Environment and Biodiversity and Health. <li>ii) There may be potential negative impacts on Equality and Diversity with respect of digital communications with older people, but these will be mitigated by ensuring that communications will be offered by face-to-face 																								

	<p>contact or written, paper based literature.</p> <p>There may be potential negative impacts on Equality and Diversity with respect of the ability of disabled persons to sort and separate waste streams to ensure that the correct recycling containers are used. This will be mitigated by ensuring the assisted waste collection service is offered when appropriate.</p> <p>There may be potential negative impacts on Equality and Diversity with respect of those with learning difficulties understanding the waste and recycling collection service and collection schedule. This will be mitigated by making documentation and information in easy read format.</p> <p>iii) There will be a neutral impact on service from the introduction of this policy across all aspects of the assessment.</p>
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4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
4.01	Cabinet Member for Streetscene
4.02	Elected Members – all-member seminars held online in July 2021
4.03	Workforce and Trade Unions – workforce briefing sessions and meetings with the Trade Unions were held in August 2021 to gain feedback on the proposals
4.04	A communications plan will be required following approval of the recommendations put forward in this report to ensure that wider stakeholders are consulted on any proposed changes to waste and recycling services.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 – Waste Strategy Review Consultation Report to Cabinet from September 2019</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Presentation Slides from All-Member Seminar held in July 2021</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Proposed Christmas Waste and Recycling Collection Schedule for 2021/2022</p>

6.0	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.1	<p>Integrated Impact Assessment</p> <p>Towards Zero Waste https://gweddill.gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/waste_recycling/zerowaste/?lang=en</p> <p>Beyond Recycling strategy https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/beyond-recycling-strategy-document.pdf</p>

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

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	WG – the Welsh Government TZW – Towards Zero Waste MWC – Managed Weekly Collections AHP – Absorbent Hygiene Products – this can include disposable nappies, nappy changing waste such as wet wipes, nappy sacks and cotton wool Incontinence products (pads, pants and bedding). RFID