

4 July 2019

ITEM: 5

Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Waste Strategy for Thurrock

Wards and communities affected:

All

Key Decision:

Key

Report of: Andy Kelly, Interim Strategic Lead for Waste

Accountable Assistant Director: Daren Spring, Assistant Director for Street Scene and Leisure

Accountable Director: Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways

This report is Public

Executive Summary

The direction of travel implied in Central Government's Waste Strategy for England¹ (December 2018), the need to increase recycling rates and any potential growth in Thurrock will have considerable impact on the councils' policies, waste collections and treatment and disposal decisions, over the medium and long term.

The Central Government Waste Strategy aims to increase recycling figures to meet and exceed the national target of 50% by 2020 and reduce the impact on the environment, by introducing a number of measures. Such measures include consideration of free garden waste collections; the potential for food waste collected separately and key recyclable materials including paper and glass collected separately at kerbside.

The current Waste collection regime reflects the council's waste strategy, which comes to term next year. Disposal contracts that were re-tendered in late 2017 expire at the end of 2020, with an option to extend for a further two years. The councils' recycling performance has stagnated at around 37%, which falls below the national target of 50% by 2020. Potential impact of changes to recycling collections and any growth within the borough could require an increase in the number of vehicles and staff, in turn providing capacity issues within the depot, which is already at capacity.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765914/resources-waste-strategy-dec-2018.pdf

An opportunity exists to align these elements and create a waste strategy that can address these issues and drive the recycling figures to within, or potentially exceed national targets.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to a cross-party working group being formed. The purpose of the group to review current Waste arrangements from collection through to disposal and potential commercial operating solutions for Thurrock. The group tasked with producing a vision statement by December 2019, with a new waste strategy/policy to be drafted in the last quarter of the financial year and for agreement and adoption in June 2020.**
- 1.2 That Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree that the working group be a sub-group of Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a minimum of two members from each political party.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Central Government have recently launched a number of consultation papers designed to gauge opinion around a number of issues considered for inclusion within the Strategy for England policy.
- New provisions for extended producer responsibility (EPR) on packaging waste
 - New provisions on a deposit return scheme (DRS) for some (drinks) packaging
 - Introduction of a tax on the recycled content levels in plastic packaging
 - The requirement to provide consistent collection schemes, to include a core set of recyclable materials
 - Proposals on improving quality by source-separating dry recycling materials (especially glass and paper)
 - The introduction of mandatory weekly food waste collections and free fortnightly garden waste collections.
- 2.2 The outcome of these consultations have the potential for wide-ranging impact on the council's policies, waste collection activities and treatment & disposal decisions moving forward. Thurrock, like many Councils is anticipated to increase property numbers in the coming years. This growth will require additional resources to provide waste collections if the existing collection regime is maintained.
- 2.3 The Government commitment under the Waste Strategy for England for councils to provide separate food-waste collections from 2023 will add further resource requirements, as could the potential for the introduction of more source-separation of recyclable materials.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Current Collection Regime:

3.1.1 Thurrock council currently provide a weekly collection of refuse, dry-recyclables and combined food/garden waste to around 63,000 properties across the borough, delivered by in-house collection teams since 2010. A fleet of 29 collection vehicles and crews are required to provide these services on a weekly basis. Crews are presently employed on a standard 'five-day / 37 hours per week' contract basis.

3.1.2 Residual waste or 'refuse' is collected weekly in 180/240 litre bins for residential properties, large bulk containers for flats and communal locations and is delivered locally to a waste transfer station near Oliver Close Depot, for onward transportation and treatment. In addition to this two 'Combined' Rounds that collect from both communal and commercial trade customers around the borough. A 'no side-waste' policy is in place and is supplemented by local enforcement where deemed necessary. In addition, a weekly collection and composting of kitchen organic waste and garden waste from all suitable properties using wheeled bins.

3.1.3 The recycling service collects a wide range of dry recyclable materials from kerbside, comingled in 240 litre wheeled bins, and transported to the 'Bywaters Materials Treatment Facility' in Bow, London. These journeys, presently being carried out during the evening period to minimise traffic delay, are transported some 36 miles round trip to and from Bow, and restrict collection rounds to one load of material per day, unless supplemented with a replacement vehicle with which to continue working.

3.1.4 The recycling rate reported over the last five years has shown a steady decline from 40.93% in 2013/14 to 36.97% in 2017/18. Defra publish annual performance tables² measuring recycling performance and for the period 2017/18 Thurrock were ranked 250th with 36% recycling rate, out of 345 local authorities in England. By comparison, the highest performing authorities are reaching over 60% recycling rates, with the highest at 64.5%.

3.1.5 Thurrock has set a target of 41% of all household waste to be recycled, re-used and composted in 2018/19. The table below shows the monthly recycling performance to December 2018, including previous year's performance.

	2016/17 Outturn	2017/18 Outturn	Apr 18	May 18	Jun 18	Jul 18	Aug 18	Sep 18	Oct 18	Nov 18	Dec 18
% of household waste, reused, recycled & composted	37.62 %	36.97 %	43.25 %	46.39 %	40.24 %	45.52 %	39.40 %	39.86 %	38.46 %	33.63 %	39.88%

² <https://www.letsrecycle.com/councils/league-tables/2017-18-overall-performance/>

3.1.6 Seasonal factors including weather, the holiday periods and Christmas influence recycling rates throughout the year.

3.2 Disposal:

3.2.1 Thurrock council have existing disposal contracts through a number of suppliers. These contracts have been in place a number of years and were re-tendered for commencement in December 2017. The contracts now run until the end of 2020, with residual waste disposal to March 2024. Existing disposal options are dependent on third party support and involve considerable onward transportation to various treatment options.

3.2.2 There are a number of factors that the Council will need to address, prior to procurement of new waste disposal contracts. These are as follows:

- Current performance of service against the Council's waste strategy objectives;
- Current performance against national waste recycling target of 50% by 2020 and likely subsequent national targets;
- Compliance of waste collection service with the Revised Waste Regulations 2011;
- Aspirations of the public and elected Members for waste services up to 2027;
- The impact of proposed new housing developments; and associated infrastructure;
- Any future financial pressures;
- Consideration of growth in relation to vehicles and existing depot provision;
- Aspirations for commercial opportunities;
- Consideration of waste disposal provision both within the borough and in neighbouring authorities, where similar growth may be in plan, rendering existing options under further pressures.

3.2.3 With a combined waste collection and disposal cost of £12.2m p.a. and as a service received by all residents, waste disposal is a significant service for the borough and can incur a significant cost. Thurrock has an excellent opportunity to design and procure new waste disposal contracts that will be fit for purpose in the borough for the longer term.

3.3 Oliver Close Depot

3.3.1 The current depot site at Oliver Close is at capacity and any further increases in vehicles and staff will require consideration. Should facilitation of a provision of separate food-waste collections and source-separated dry-recyclables, following government consultations, come to fruition this will further impact the site and its ability to maintain safe ways of working. There is no option for expansion at the current site and any increase in vehicle and staff would require an additional or alternate site.

3.4 Alternate Delivery Models:

- 3.4.1 This increase in resource-needs will require consideration through exploring alternate delivery models for waste collections to reduce the impact on future budgets. Such models may include for example, changes to collection days, different shift-times or changing material collections through use of multi-compartment vehicles. This increase in resource-needs will have an effect on disposal contracts through the increase in material tonnages for all waste streams.
- 3.4.2 While recycling tonnages would increase as the number of properties increase, this would be pro-rata with the increase in residual tonnages and would not produce an increase in percentage of waste recycled. This will require a radical rethink in terms of service delivery.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The current Waste Strategy document is nearing its end. The Government has set out its vision for national strategy for waste. Thurrock's waste disposal contracts are coming to a close in the next 18 months. There is an opportunity to bring together all of the elements to create a new vision for Thurrock's Waste Strategy and by forming a cross-party working group to drive this forward will secure a consolidated view of how this will happen.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 The sub-working group of Cleaner, Greener, Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee will propose possible consultation options

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 N/A

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Senior Management Accountant

Any change to waste collections will have an impact on costs of waste collection and disposal. A strategy that looks to provide an efficient and cost effective service is essential. The review will consider options and financial implications.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Waste collection and disposal are regulated services and relevant legislation must be adhered to when considering a future strategy document. The Council also needs to have regard to relevant Government policy including the Resources and Waste Strategy for England (December 2018) and the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

The waste service is one that impacts every property in the borough, it is essential that a consistent service is provided giving all residents an equitable service provision. Any communication in respect to the service needs to reflect the borough's diversity and ensure visual representation to provide clear guidance on service provision.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Health and safety is essential for these services and ensuring that our residents aren't adversely impacted by any potential changes in relation to collection. Should split shifting be considered, lighting will be a key consideration to safe working.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Municipal Waste Strategy 2008 – 2020
- Waste Disposal Contracts (10/02/16 – Decision 01104353)

9. Appendices to the report

None

Report Author:

Andy Kelly

Interim Strategic Lead for Waste, Environment and Highways