

TORFAEN WASTE STRATEGY

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Report Summary

Recycling and Waste assist in delivering one of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities, Clean and Green. Matters relating to Recycling and Waste have been regularly reported to this Committee over a period of time, the last substantive report being related to helping develop Torfaen's Strategy to ensure delivery and achievement of the statutory recycling targets.

This report builds on the work previously considered by the Committee, and presents the Draft Waste Strategy for consideration.

The production of a single Strategy has been undertaken as a result of the recommendations made as part of the Wales Audit Office Inspection, where it was considered that the production of a single strategy replacing the Council's existing strategic documents would assist the Council in focussing its actions in delivering a sustainable Recycling and Waste Service.

This report will provide a brief background, and will discuss the Draft Strategy in more detail.

1. Introduction and Scrutiny Activity

1.1 The Key Question asked by the Committee is:

"Does the Waste Strategy effectively address the long term needs of the service area not only in meeting Welsh Government Targets but by achieving sustainable improvements?"

1.2 The Council's strategic direction for Recycling and Waste has historically been contained within a number of documents and reports focussed on specific matters. A review undertaken by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) in November/December 2014 led to the development of an Action Plan one of the actions being that the Council should develop a new Waste Strategy.

1.3 The paper before Committee is in specific response to that agreed action. Committee is invited to consider the Draft Strategy and offer views on whether it effectively answers the Key Question highlighted in 1.1.

1.4 Additionally, Committee is invited to comment on any other matters that could be included or expanded upon.

1.5 Finally, we ask Committee to consider whether there is a need for further public consultation on the Draft Strategy.

2. Information/Results

2.1 The review carried out by the WAO in 2014 noted that the Council's strategic intent for Waste Services was contained within a number of documents and reports and recommended that a single strategy be produced to guide and inform the future direction of the Council's Waste Service. This recommendation was included in a subsequent Action Plan which was agreed by the Committee in December 2015.

2.2 Significant work then commenced to develop and undertake a comprehensive public consultation exercise during summer 2016 to identify what the public wished to include in a new strategy. A report was presented to Scrutiny on the 21st September 2016 detailing the feedback on the consultation. The main themes identified included education and awareness, enforcement action against those residents who do not currently recycle and the consideration of incentives to encourage recycling. Other themes included the type of recycling receptacles, frequency of collections and expanding the range of materials collected. These themes have been considered, together with the views of the Committee, that education and awareness should be the key theme in the new Strategy.

2.3 Following the consultation and the initial work undertaken on the Strategy by Officers of the Council, it is acknowledged that progress on the production of the Strategy stalled. The reasons for this are primarily staff resource, and these reasons have been discussed and included in the WAO's follow up review undertaken in 2018. Within their report they note that since Autumn 2017 there had been renewed vigour, commitment and pace to the development of a long-term single integrated strategy for the waste service

2.4 Due to ongoing sickness absence of senior staff within the Strategic and Operations Waste Group it was decided that external resources be utilised to ensure progress was made on the Strategy. This decision led to collaboration with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to produce the Draft Strategy.

2.5 WRAP is a not for profit organisation who, within Wales, work with both Welsh Government and Local Authorities. Their services include assisting in a number of ways by providing subject experts in matters related to recycling and waste services, assistance in operational matters such as route optimisation or infrastructure development and the production of waste strategies.

2.6 The focus of the Strategy Brief to WRAP was that the Strategy would be resident focussed and would not simply focus on targets in accordance with the WAO's recommendations. WRAP have responded to this brief, and there has been continuous interaction between WRAP and the Council to produce the draft Strategy. Working with WRAP has given the Council the advantage of being able to access the wider knowledge base WRAP has as a national organisation working with multiple partners, together with utilising our own Officers knowledge.

2.7 At the outset of Strategy development, both Officers and WRAP reflected on the

2016 public consultation. Following this assessment it was felt that given a relatively short time frame had elapsed and that there had been no significant service changes over the period that the results of the 2016 consultation could still be considered valid. It was considered that the focus of attention should be on prioritising the production of the Strategy, rather than delay that further by carrying out further consultation.

2.8 The Council is acutely aware of its performance within the Waste and Recycling Service area. Welsh Governments target for recycling rates in Wales for the current year is 58% and it is anticipated that the Council will meet this target with a rate of 61%. Welsh Governments target for recycling rates increases next year to 64% and will remain at that level until 2024-25 when it will increase to 70%. Ahead of the Draft Strategy being approved actions have already been initiated to improve the current recycling rate in the coming months to meet this new target.

2.9 These actions include:-

- a new outlet for wood recycling which provides a higher recycling performance than the previous outlet
- engagement with the community related to food waste participation and recycling
- the introduction of bag sorting at the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) from March 2019.

These actions should result in increased recycling rate above the Welsh Governments target of 64%.

2.10 It should be noted that the Draft Strategy does not aim to address all operational issues such as workforce planning and performance management. Such matters sit outside the Strategy and form part of the usual service planning and activity as appropriate.

3. Discussion

3.1 The Draft Strategy has been prepared for the period 2018 - 2025 and is presented as Appendix 2a The structure of the Strategy is in two parts. The Strategy itself provides the vision, context, objectives and methods of delivery and an Action Plan populated with actions and timeline which reflect the objectives and delivery requirements. The Strategy is not envisaged to change significantly over the seven year life of the Plan as its timeframe reflects that of Welsh Government current target focus. The Action Plan however will be reviewed and updated as actions are completed, and/or new opportunities arise.

3.2 The content of the Strategy is summarised as follows.

Section 1 – Executive Summary

This provides all stakeholders with a clear but brief summary of the Council's Strategy.

Section 2 – Introduction

National Context

Within this section, we highlight the appropriate national context including national policy and drivers such as the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh National Waste Strategy – Toward Zero Waste.

Local Context

Within this section, we expand further on the local context, considering local policy and drivers such as the Council's Well-being Plan (2018 – 2023) and Corporate Plan 3 (2016 – 2021).

Section 3 – Vision and Strategy

Vision

This section sets out the vision for the Council's waste services.

Key Objectives

The Strategy highlights the six key objectives as follows:

Objective 1: Engagement First – Torfaen will invest in a programme of communications and resources to support its Waste Strategy. Underpinning all activities will be Engagement First.

Objective 2: Recycling for Everyone – Torfaen will seek to extend the coverage of full recycling services so that all households have either a regular collection service or convenient alternative arrangements available to them.

Objective 3: Collaboration – Torfaen will continue to work with its contractors, community groups and the third sector to increase the range of materials able to be recycled, maximise recycling and value and increase the opportunity for re-use.

Objective 4: Minimise Waste – Torfaen will ensure opportunities to increase the levels of reuse, recycling and composting to minimise waste

Objective 5: Continuous Improvement – Torfaen will continually review its services and seek stakeholder feedback to ensure best practice is implemented and new developments are adopted wherever practical

Objective 6: Fair Enforcement – Torfaen will invest in an enforcement policy that is both fair and equitable to enable those residents who are not participating in the recycling schemes to participate.

Each of these objectives is underpinned by the Council's values of bring Fair, Effective and Supportive.

Section 4 – Delivering the Strategy

This section further expands on each of the six objectives highlighted above outlining the actions that the Strategy will deliver to achieve its Vision and stated Objectives. These may be summarised as follows -

Objective 1: Engagement First

Residents – This part of the Strategy expands on how we intend to engage with our residents, and highlights that we will work to assist behaviour change and make the Service as easy as possible for people to use. We will endeavour to encourage more residents to recycle more of the right things more frequently, maximise awareness of the benefits of recycling, seek to increase food waste participation and remain alive to new opportunities for improvement and change.

Business – The Council provides a trade waste service and offers recycling services to our customers. During 2019 it is intended that we will carry out a review of these services and investigate how behavioural changes made at home can be transferred to the workplace.

Schools – Education is provided to schools via the curriculum and the Council's Recycling and Waste Officers will seek to augment this by continuing to provide educational interventions.

Stakeholders and Interest Groups – We will identify and seek to work with other Stakeholders in order to work together to deliver the Strategy.

Objective 2: Recycling for Everyone

The Council's Recycling and Waste Services closely follows the Welsh Government blueprint and aims to maximise recycling, produce high quality materials for reprocessing and to minimise the disposal of waste, all in ways which are convenient for our residents and customers.

The need for collaboration and engagement is recognised, and we will work with key stakeholder groups to develop our services.

Objective 3: Collaboration

Torfaen has a history of working in collaboration with neighbouring authorities having undertaken joint procurement with other Local Authorities and works with its Contractors including those who manage the HWRC to ensure benefits of collaborative working are achieved.

The Council will also engage with Housing Associations, businesses and other stakeholders to promote reuse and recycling where possible.

Objective 4: Minimise Waste

The Council has a role to play in the overall waste minimisation agenda. The Council will, as part of its education agenda, seek to minimise waste in areas where it has more control, in particular food waste.

Objective 5: Continuous Improvement

As part of its activities, the Council will carry out evaluation of its interventions, in order for us to improve future activities. Interventions will seek to minimise waste

and increase recycling.

Objective 6: Fair Enforcement

When all communication and engagement routes have been exhausted the Council acknowledges that it may need to use the powers invested in it under S46 of the Environmental Protection Act (1990). Should the Council wish to progress this element of the Strategy, then a clear policy and process would be produced and communicated to residents and would be aimed toward those who continue to choose not to recycle.

Section 5 - Investment

The Action Plan within the Strategy notes a number of actions for the Service that will require investment. Any action requiring investment will be considered as part of overall service delivery, and appropriate funding identified. This could be from a number of sources including the Council's own revenue funding, prudential borrowing, or applications for grant funding.

Appendix 2b - Action Plan and Timeline

The strategic intent of the document is translated into actions by virtue of the Action Plan included within the Strategy. The Plan includes actions that we currently undertake together with new actions aimed at achieving delivery of the Strategy. The Plan is presented in such a way as to reference such things as the objectives and timescales.

4. Implications

- 4.1 It is anticipated that there will be a significant increase in demand for waste recycling services over the next decade particularly having regard to the targets being set by the Welsh Government. The Draft Strategy seeks to address these issues through an integrated approach. Through involving service users and stakeholders with our education and engagement activities we can help them have a clearer understanding of current and future Council waste services. This will encourage more sustainable management of waste, and help us achieve future statutory recycling targets and avoid Welsh Government fines.
- 4.2 The Draft Strategy has been prepared in response to the public consultation carried out in 2016 and governing legislation for the waste sector. It reflects the Council's commitment to protect and sustain the environment and provide all residents and local businesses with a quality waste management service.
- 4.3 In Policy terms, the Strategy is closely aligned with both National Policy as contained in the Welsh Governments overarching Waste Strategy for Wales document - Towards Zero Waste and the Council's Clean and Green priority as contained in Corporate Plan 3 (2016 – 2021). The Strategy provides a long term vision and objectives together with an action plan to ensure Objectives are achieved.
- 4.4 The way in which we manage waste can have a significant impact upon the environment, our communities and their well-being. The requirements of the Well

Being and Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 and Torfaen's Well-being Plan (2018 – 2023) have therefore been a fundamental consideration in the production of this Strategy, and are embedded throughout the document. The Strategy aims to ensure that the Vision, Objectives and actions for waste management contribute to economic, social, environmental and cultural Wellbeing and sustainable development goals. It demonstrates that sustainable waste management is an integral part of delivering a sustainable future for our communities.

- 4.5 There are no immediate financial implications resulting from the Draft Strategy, but the works detailed in the action plan will have costs associated with them. The financial implications of individual actions will be considered at the appropriate time, and factored into the budget for the service area.
- 4.6 The Draft Strategy is inclusive, having as an example an objective of recycling for all. A plan for the communication of the Strategy and actions to support will be undertaken as part of the implementation of the Strategy as a whole, and as part of individual actions.
- 4.7 In terms of any strategic risk, the risk is more around not having a strategic direction, or action plan. Failure to meet the targets will not only be detrimental environmentally, but will also have strategic, financial and reputational risks associated with that failure.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 A Draft Waste Strategy has been prepared for the period 2018 – 2025. The Strategy ensures that the Council has its strategic direction for Recycling and Waste Services in one document and will deliver actions that will ensure that the Waste Service is resident focused and remains sustainable. The production of the Strategy also ensures compliance with one of the WAO's recommendations resulting from its service review in 2014 and follow up review in 2018.
- 5.2 The Draft Strategy identifies an overall vision and 6 Objectives for the provision of sustainable Waste Services in Torfaen together with actions that support delivery. The Draft Strategy reflects Welsh Governments National Waste Strategy and on a local level the Council's Corporate Plan 3 "Clean and Green" priority and the objectives of the Well-Being Plan (2018 – 2023). It addresses the long term needs of the service area both in terms of meeting Welsh Government targets and achieving sustainable improvements for Torfaen's residents.

6. Scrutiny activity

- 6.1 Scrutiny is invited to consider and comment on the Draft Strategy and offer views on whether it effectively addresses the long term needs of the service area by achieving sustainable improvements and comment on any matters that could be included or expanded upon.
- 6.2 Scrutiny is also invited to offer a view on the need for a further public consultation on the Draft Strategy.

Appendices	Appendix 1 Well Being Assessment Template Appendix 2a Draft Strategy 2018-2025 Appendix 2b Strategy Action Plan and Timeline Appendix 2c Current Service Appendix 2d Integrated Communication Package Appendix 2e School Communications Package Appendix 2f Well Being Goals
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Background Papers	Note: Members of the public are entitled, under the Local Government Act 1972, to inspect background papers to reports. The following is a list of the background papers used in the production of this report.
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For a copy of the background papers or for further information about this report, please telephone: Cynon Edwards, Group Leader Strategic Waste and Operations 01495 766789, cynon.edwards@torfaen.gov.uk