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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday 30th August 2023

Present: Councillor Will Simpson (Chair)
Councillor Timothy Bamford
Councillor Matthew McLoughlin
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Hannah McKerchar
Gary Kitchen (Co-optee)

Councillor Elizabeth Smaje
Councillor Gwen Lowe
Councillor Yusra Hussain

In attendance: Graham West, Service Director - Highways and Streetscene
Will Acornley, Head of Operations
Natalie Clark, Programme Manager - Environmental Strategy and Climate Change (Operational Services)
Nick Jenkin, Business Development Manager.

Apologies: N/a

1 Membership of the Panel

In the absence of the Chair, nominations to appoint a Chair for the meeting were invited from members of the Panel.

RESOLVED: It was agreed that Councillor Will Simpson be appointed to stand as Chair for the meeting and it was noted that no apologies were received.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Panel considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 4 July 2023.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be approved.

3 Interests

No Interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

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All items were considered in the public session.

5 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

7 Re-Profile of Kirklees Resource and Waste Strategy 2021-2030

The Panel considered the report, Re-profile of the Kirklees Resource and Waste Strategy 2021- 30, which was presented by Natalie Clark, Programme Manager - Environmental Strategy and Climate Change (Operational Services) and Will Acornley - Head of Operations. It was advised that:

- The Kirklees Resource and Waste Strategy 2021-30 was approved and adopted at full Council in September 2021.
- The Strategy set out how the Council aimed to achieve its vision of “a clean, green, sustainable future for Kirklees with zero waste to landfill and where waste was valued as a resource through re-use, recycling, and recovery.”
- The key aims were to:
 - Use a Place-based approach which was engaging, straightforward and visible.
 - Achieve 70% recycling at the Household Waste and Recycling Centres by 2025 (as of 22-23 the position was 49-50% average).
 - Achieve 55% Recycling of municipal waste by 2025 (as of 22-23 the position was around 26.3% provisionally).
 - Achieve 90% diversion from landfill and this target had been met and exceeded at 91%.
 - Reuse or recycle as much bulky waste collections as possible.
 - Deliver a clean, green, sustainable future for Kirklees, set a precedent of good practice.
- There had been many positive initiatives delivered as part of the strategy such as the:
 - Introduction of a recycling service to schools and businesses via the trade waste service.
 - Introduction of the ‘Recycling Hero’s’, a scheme which was launched to recognise those in the community who were recycling and reusing.
 - Addition of plastic pots, tubs and trays (PTTs) to the kerbside recycling collection service.
 - Composting Subsidy Scheme, which had been offered to residents.
 - New bookable bulky waste collection service and the launch of a Reuse Shop in Huddersfield town centre.
- Since the strategy was adopted in 2021 the financial climate had changed considerably.
- The strategy assumed that promised reforms and funding streams from central Government would allow the development and investment noted in the strategy.

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- Due to delays and uncertainty from central Government, there were some elements that now needed to be reprofiled to meet the new timeframes provided and to allow time to understand what funding would be available.
- The strategy required significant investment to implement however the re-profiling sought to reduce this cost.
- It was proposed to revise the strategy's key targets as follows:
 - Achieve a recycling rate of at least 70% at Household Waste and Recycling Centres by 2030.
 - Recycle at least 65% of municipal waste by 2035.
 - Achieve a 95% diversion from landfill rate by 2030.
- The forecasted spend under the original action plan was £2.9m capital spend and the revised initiatives estimated to decrease spend to around £800k.
- Included within the presentation was a timeline for the revised strategy approval, initial delivery milestones and a list of overarching risks and dependencies.
- This was scheduled to be presented to Cabinet on 17th October 2023, where approval for the revision would be sought.

The Panel noted the presentation and expressed gratitude to the team for their work and ambition within the challenging financial context. In the discussion to follow the Panel asked several questions which were responded to as follows.

In response to a question from the Panel around 'Tetra packs and capacity for collection, Will Acornley advised that was linked into collection consistency work, but this was a difficult material to recycle. Discussions were ongoing with the current contractor (SUEZ) to address the issue, but Will agreed that it was important that recycling bins were available for use at all times (not full) and agreed to investigate the frequency of which they were emptied.

In response to a question from the Panel in relation to the potential impact the Reuse shop may have on local charities (i.e.- reducing donations), Will Acornley agreed that it was important to obtain some data in relation to this but reassured the Panel that engagement was held regularly with third sector leaders with the ambition of creating a supportive network of charity organisations instead of a competitive environment.

In response to the Panel's questions around contamination, the impact of this, and targets for addressing this, Graham West, Service Director - Highways and Streetscene advised that work undertaken to provide additional facilities was significant but there had to be a culture change to reduce contamination. The diversion of loads that had been contaminated was costly and unsustainable and recycling facilities would have to be removed if they continued to be abused to avoid the diversion and loss of loads going forwards.

Will Acornley highlighted that it had been a difficult 2-3 years for Kirklees's communities, (i.e.- the Covid-19 pandemic, the increases in cost-of-living etc...) and in being understanding of this the Council had introduced a trial which aimed to encourage culture change through education rather than taking an approach of strict enforcement. The trial outcomes were to be reviewed to assess if this had encouraged behaviour change towards the end of the year. In terms of targets, it

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was advised that there was a lot of uncertainty around larger decisions which made it difficult to set targets and it was a risk to invest in services which may not be taken forward following legislative changes. The Panel noted the response and further requested that information in respect of the projected impact of contamination be provided.

In response to the Panel's concerns around the year-on-year recycling rate projections in comparison with the national average, Will Acornley explained the data set out in the presentation in more detail and it was noted that in comparison with other local authorities, the biggest differences between Kirklees and the top performers were the types of materials that could be recycled such as free garden waste services, and food waste recycling. There were plans to introduce these facilities, but this would require significant investments. Graham West, Service Director - Highways and Streetscene highlighted the ambition around the enforcement and agreed that comparison be undertaken between Kirklees and other Local Authorities with a similar demographic.

In response to a question from the Panel in respect of the detail in the report Graham West agreed that more information such as the impact on net zero targets and the presentation slides be provided to the Panel prior to the meeting going forward. In response to a question from the Panel around enforcement in relation to contamination Graham West advised that detailed assessment of the content of bins had been undertaken to identify the sources of contamination.

In response to the Panel's question around business recycling, Will Acornley advised that the offer of access to the recycling service had been expanded to trade customers. It was agreed that a mechanism to allow businesses to express their interest in this would be investigated. In response to the Panel's question around Vape collection and engaging with businesses, Will Acornley agreed that it was important to ensure that engagement with local businesses around collection points, and ideas to provide advice to customers on sale be explored further.

In response to a question from Councillor Smaje, Chair of Scrutiny around how residents whom were unable to travel to dispose garden waste be supported, Will Acornley advised that free bulky waste collections were offered to a limited number of people on the assisted collections list and that it may be possible to link this with vulnerable residents who could no longer access the garden waste site to support residents who were vulnerable/become vulnerable and reduce the risk of contamination. It was also agreed that the 5-year time frame for the period dignity scheme would be investigated further.

In response to further questions from the Panel with regards to contamination, the impacts of this and other mitigating measures (such as sorting contaminated items at the recycling facility or recovering damaged materials) Will Acornley advised that complex and costly facilities were required to sort on site, which the Kirklees site did not have and as a result the current approach was to reduce the contamination at the kerbside. In response to a question from the Panel around the possibility of recovering damaged material, Will Acornley advised that contaminated waste could not be recovered under normal operation.

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In response to a question from the Panel around the Reuse shop, and the potential for future expansion to more rural areas in Kirklees, Will Acornley advised that the focus was currently on household waste sites but some initial concerns in rural areas included the risk of fly-tipping.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the Re-profile of the Kirklees Resource and Waste Strategy 2021- 30, and it was recommended that:

- (1) Work be undertaken around increasing capacity for the emptying of community recycling points.
- (2) Data be obtained to understand any potential impacts the reuse shop may have on local charities.
- (3) Data be provided to the Panel in respect of the projected impact of contamination.
- (4) Comparison between Kirklees and other Local Authorities with a similar demographic be undertaken in respect of contamination rates.
- (5) Information in respect of any impact on net zero targets be included in scrutiny reports going forwards.
- (6) The presentation material be provided to the Panel in advance of the meeting.
- (7) A mechanism to allow businesses to express their interest in the recycling service be investigated further.
- (8) Engagement with local businesses around collection points be implemented.
- (9) The possibility of (i) enabling vulnerable residents to dispose of garden waste through assisted bulky waste collections and (ii) the 5-year timeframe for the 'Period Dignity Scheme' be investigated.

8 Snow Wardens Volunteer Scheme

The Panel considered a report on the Snow Wardens Volunteer Scheme presented by Nick Jenkin, Business Development Manager. It was advised that:

- The Snow Warden Scheme was a volunteer scheme which ran across Kirklees.
- It enabled the Council to equip residents with grit, equipment and PPE which would allow them to clear snow from residential areas that gritters would not cover.
- The Scheme was flexible, where residents were able to decide how much time they would like to dedicate to the scheme, allowing them to choose their own hours and locations of work.
- The first year of the trial attracted 27 volunteers to the scheme across 9 wards.
- There was a cost of £39.77 per grit kit and there was 1 grit delivery for each warden, with no further requests due to a mild winter.
- Kit delivery times were up to a week during the holiday period.
- The scheme adopted a Cllr first application process through ward meetings.
- Positive feedback had been received from wardens, with recommendations given on changes to equipment for implementation in year 2.
- The Year 2 recommendations were to:

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- Begin direct communications to residents in addition to communicating via elected members, to attract more residents into the scheme.
- Lift the volunteer limit to 100 across the district, to allow for the bulk order of stock and in turn reducing costs by a third.
- Remove the shaker from the resident kit and replace with a scoop as identified through resident feedback.
- Increase the initial grit volume from 10kg to 30kg.
- Move to a collection first model to decrease delivery costs and allow more training with volunteers.

The Panel noted the presentation and welcomed the scheme. In the discussion to follow the Panel raised key points around communications, and it was agreed that a consistent approach be taken to communications and raising awareness of the scheme across the Council, including the provision of social media guidance, and the use of handouts to be provided to members to share with residents and help to promote the scheme within communities. It was also agreed that the idea of promoting the scheme in rural areas through community events such as agricultural shows be explored further.

In response to a question around how many volunteers used their kit and how this might have impacted on the outcomes of the trial, Nick Jenkin advised that 20 volunteers had confirmed that they had used their kits. In response to the Panel's comment about the lack of financial detail in the report it was advised that there was not enough information at this stage of the trial to provide approximate financial implications.

In response to a question from the Panel around direct communication with residents and the suggestion of use of email, Nick Jenkin advised the key methods of communication were through 'Gritter Twitter,' the website and community networks. Nick further noted that email would not be used at this stage as the number of volunteers was currently capped at 100 during the trial period. Graham West Service Director - Highways and Streetscene added that increasing the number of volunteers would be introduced upon completion of the trial in a gradual and managed way. Graham also highlighted the ambition to engage more community groups and Parish Councils in the scheme.

Cllr Gwen Lowe, (Cabinet Portfolio Holder) also expressed support for the Snow Warden Scheme and noted agreement with the Panel's comments around the promotion of the scheme at community events.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the Snow Wardens Volunteer Scheme and recommended that a consistent approach be taken to communications and raising awareness of the scheme across the Council through the provision of (i) social media guidance, (ii) handouts for elected members to share with residents and (iii) the promotion of the scheme through community events.

9 Work Programme 2023/24

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The Panel considered its Work Programme for the 2023/24 municipal year. It was noted that the Fleet Replacement item and the Waste procurement items be coupled in the same meeting if timescales allow.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the work programme.