

Forward Plan reference number: FP/194/08/23

Report title: Launch of Public Consultation on draft Waste Strategy for Essex	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Councillor Peter Schwier, Climate Czar and Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste Reduction and Recycling	
Date: 12 September 2023	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 The way Essex collects and disposes of waste is an issue that affects every resident in the county. We all produce waste which is collected, treated, and disposed of by the Borough, City and District Councils, and Essex County Council working in partnership. The way we do this going forward is now being presented to the public for their view. It is important for our environment and our aim to hit net zero that we reduce our waste and increase recycling. Every person plays a part in this important issue.
- 1.2 It is not feasible to continue to landfill waste in the future because it is not good for the environment and is also cost prohibitive. We also need to look carefully at how we collect and treat waste so we can maximise reuse and recycling. Therefore, all Councils in Essex, called the Essex Waste Partnership, have come together to discuss this very carefully to put together a strategy for decades to come. It is a vital decision and therefore it is important to consult with people to gain their view.
- 1.3 For ECC this is part of our ambitious 'Everyone's Essex' plan and this is an issue that absolutely affects everyone.
- 1.4 The Essex Waste Partnership have undertaken a great deal of work to ensure greater access to reuse and recycling opportunities and to improve sustainability and this has led to giant steps being taken towards our goal. We are extremely proud of our record and the response of the public for this achievement so far but recognise more needs to be done.
- 1.5 Essex councils have jointly developed the updated Waste Strategy for Essex to reset and reinvigorate our waste ambition, priorities, and targets for the next 30 years. Our commitment to tackling waste growth and enhancing recycling opportunities, while protecting the environment, remain at the forefront of our strategic plan. This is borne out by proposals to work to recycling and waste reduction ambitions that exceed national targets.

- 1.6 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to undertake this consultation on the draft joint Waste Strategy for Essex on behalf of the Essex Waste Partnership. Seeking the view of residents, business and local communities on this ambition and approach will ensure a fully rounded and robust final strategy is developed which draws on a wide range of views and expertise.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to launch a 10-week public consultation commencing in September 2023 on the draft Waste Strategy for Essex on behalf of the Essex Waste Partnership. ECC will facilitate the consultation asking for views and feedback from Essex residents, communities, businesses, and councils that use waste services or are affected by the proposals in the draft strategy.
- 2.2 To note that an independent organisation will be appointed to collate and analyse consultation responses and produce a report for publication on Citizen space.
- 2.3 Note that a revised version of the draft strategy will be prepared by the Essex Waste Partnership following the consultation process which will then be considered for adoption by ECC. The adoption of a Waste Strategy for Essex will be subject to a separate formal decision which will be taken independently by each Essex Waste Partnership member authority.

3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 ECC has a statutory duty to maintain, with the twelve borough, city, and district councils of Essex, a joint strategy for the management of local authority collected waste.
- 3.2 The thirteen councils have formed the Essex Waste Partnership ('EWP') which has developed a new draft Waste Strategy for Essex (WSfE) to comply with this duty.
- 3.3 The councils wish to seek the views of Essex residents and others as part of the development of a final strategy for adoption. The EWP has jointly agreed the contents of the draft WSfE consultation documents and the consultation approach to be followed. ECC will manage the consultation on behalf of the EWP, with the support of all Essex Councils. A future decision on adoption of a WSfE will be taken separately and independently by each Council.
- 3.4 Development of the current adopted waste strategy for Essex (the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex 2007-2032) started almost 20 years ago. Whilst much of it remains relevant, a great deal has changed since it was adopted. The updated WSfE, covering the period 2024 to 2055, provides an updated strategic framework for how ECC manages waste to meet corporate ambitions to reduce the environmental impact of waste management and deliver high quality services. It will also ensure alignment with national waste policy and new and emerging legislative requirements.

- 3.5 The draft WSfE and supporting background information accompanying the WSfE detail the reasons for our proposed approach; the principles of what we will do; and the targets that we will strive to meet. The draft WSfE can be seen in full in Appendix 2.
- 3.6 The draft WSfE contains the priorities areas of focus for the EWP and associated targets to deliver a shared vision where waste is reduced, the environment protected, and resources are conserved. To achieve the strategy aims it is critical that the EWP works closely with all sectors of society in adopting the principles of the Circular Economy, where finite natural resources are used efficiently. The strategy also seeks to further embed the Waste Hierarchy into the design and delivery of waste services. The Waste Hierarchy is a legal framework which ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment.
- 3.7 To deliver the overarching strategy vision, the EWP has identified the following priorities:

Move to a Circular Economy:

- Realise the opportunities arising from the circular economy model that will bring wider benefits to Essex.

Deliver the Waste Hierarchy:

- Deliver a system that puts waste reduction at its centre.
- Work together to encourage and support reuse and repair initiatives.
- Increase recycling by delivering comprehensive services and supporting residents to recycle as much as possible.
- Use technologies for the treatment of food and non-recyclable waste that aim to minimise the environmental impact of waste and maximise energy and material recovery.

Collaborate and Innovate:

- Innovate and work collaboratively with each other and with the Government, business, and institutions to create a more sustainable waste system.

Educate and Engage:

- Listen to residents and deliver information and initiatives to encourage changes in attitudes and behaviour to reduce waste and recycle more.

- 3.8 Within the draft WSfE, the EWP propose to adopt the government's national targets as a minimum standard together with stretch ambitions and aspirations to deliver greater change and impact more quickly:

Net Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions:

- We will contribute to reducing the county's greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

Waste Reduction

- We will halve the amount of residual waste produced per person by 2042.

- We aim to reduce waste by 10% by 2030.
- We aspire that Essex will be a zero-waste county by 2055.

Recycling

- We will reuse, recycle, or compost 65% of waste by 2035.
- We aim to reuse, recycle or compost at least 70% of waste by 2030.

Waste Disposal

- We will send no more than 10% of waste to landfill by 2035.
- We aim to send zero waste to landfill by 2030.

Collection Services

- We will ensure that all Essex residents have access to separate food waste collections by 2026.
- We will ensure that all Essex residents have access to comprehensive recycling services for plastic, paper and card, metal, glass, food, and garden waste, by 2026.

3.9 The draft WSfE has been developed to align with current and emerging legislation, national policy and local targets and considers climate challenges, deliverability, and behaviour change. The draft WSfE allows the EWP to work together to minimise the impact that waste management has on the environment, whilst offering value for money to the taxpayer. Through this draft WSfE, the members of the EWP will coordinate the design and delivery of services to achieve the vision and aspiration to be a zero-waste county. By working together, we will reduce waste, protect the environment, and conserve resources. By setting ambitious and measurable targets, residents will be able to hold the EWP to account for achieving its aims.

3.10 In developing this draft WSfE, the EWP has considered a range of research to help inform priorities and to assess deliverability of the vision, targets, and ambitions. The EWP has used national and local research on current attitudes and behaviours towards recycling and considered different approaches to waste management.

3.11 The key findings of this research and analysis are:

- Following the waste hierarchy and embracing a circular economy is the best approach to minimising the environmental impact of managing Essex's waste.
- The partnership needs to support residents and businesses to reduce and reuse.
- Collecting a comprehensive range of recyclables from all households and businesses is necessary if we are to reach our recycling targets.
- Recovering energy is likely to be the best option available for waste that cannot be recycled.
- The EWP needs to innovate to take opportunities to decarbonise waste management operations.

- 3.12 The EWP has completed some system modelling activity to look at the type and volume of waste currently in Essex, how this may change in future and some different scenarios for managing the waste. The systems modelling has examined waste collection and disposal methods, and the environmental and deliverability implications of alternative scenarios. The system modelling shows that although the EWP's draft WSfE is ambitious, the targets are achievable.
- 3.13 Prior to adoption, the WSfE will be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment ('SEA') in consultation with statutory consultees and the public in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. A scoping approach for this SEA has been agreed with the statutory consultees and is attached at Appendix 4. This assessment ensures a high level of protection for the environment and sustainability is at the forefront of the draft WSfE.
- 3.14 The public consultation process is designed to gather the views of the public and other interested parties on the draft WSfE. These findings will be considered by the EWP in the development of a final strategy before adoption and future action planning. The consultation will take the form of a survey which will ask respondents to indicate to what degree they agree with the vision, aims, proposals and targets contained in the draft WSfE. The consultation will also provide respondents the opportunity to provide comment on any additional areas of focus they believe need to be included in any adopted WSfE.
- 3.15 The consultation methodology has been designed in line with the HM Government code of practice, and the Gunning principles. It will be promoted through a robust and strong communications plan to ensure all residents and organisations are aware of the draft WSfE and have the opportunity to participate in the consultation process. The consultation will be facilitated by ECC on behalf of the EWP and will be available for a 10-week period.
- 3.16 The draft consultation questions can be seen in Appendix 3.
- 3.17 Following the completion of the consultation, all responses will be analysed by an independent external body and a full analysis and consultation report produced. The EWP will use this consultation report to consider any revisions necessary to the strategy prior to decisions being taken on adoption.
- 3.18 It is anticipated that the completion of the consultation process will lead to the development of a final WSfE that will be suitable to recommend for adoption. Each partner organisation of the EWP, including ECC, will independently consider the post consultation strategy document for adoption. A formal decision on adoption of a final WSfE will be taken separately by each of the 13 councils in accordance with their decision-making procedures.

4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision:

- Strengthen communities through participation.
 - Develop our County sustainably.
 - Connect us to each other and the world.
- 4.2 Approving the recommendations in this report will enable residents and stakeholders to fully participate in the development of our future plans and proposals for the delivery of sustainable waste management practices in Essex.
- 4.3 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':
- A strong, inclusive, and sustainable economy
 - A high-quality environment

5 Options

5.1 **Option 1: The Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex 2007-2032 is retained and is not subject to any significant update.**

5.1.1 This option is not recommended as the current waste strategy is outdated, with the waste environment changing significantly since its adoption. A strong policy framework is needed to support future decisions and system design within waste management to ensure opportunities are embraced. The current waste strategy is no longer aligned to national waste policy, nor does it reflect ECC's or the EWP's targets and ambitions.

5.2 **Option 2: (Recommended) Launch a public consultation in September 2023 to seek feedback on the draft Waste Strategy for Essex for the purpose of informing the development of a final strategy.**

5.2.1 ECC has a statutory responsibility with the Borough, City and District Councils to maintain a joint waste strategy for the management of local authority collected waste. The updated draft strategy allows the EWP to drive significant change to reach ambitious targets and ensure alignment with national policy.

5.2.2 Consulting on the draft strategy will ensure the proposals that are contained within any adopted strategy are robust and has allowed residents to have their say. The draft strategy will form part of the journey to delivering key commitments published in Everyone's Essex: Zero waste to landfill by 2030 and contributing to the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2050.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The costs associated with the consultation have already been approved to be funded from the Waste Reserve in a Cabinet Member Action dated 14 October 2022. There are no further financial implications from this decision requesting to

launch the consultation and analyse the responses. Any financial implications resulting from adopting the strategy will be included in a future decision.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 In two-tier areas, the Waste Disposal Authorities and the Waste Collection Authorities are required by section 32 of the Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003 (the “2003 Act”) to produce and agree a Joint Municipal Waste Strategy (JMWS).

6.2.2 The JMWS should outline the management of waste from households, and other waste similar to waste from households, in accordance with the National Waste Strategy.

6.2.3 Section 32(3) of the 2003 Act, requires authorities in a two-tier area to undertake consultation in such a manner as they consider appropriate before formulating a JMWS. The publication of the draft strategy and the consultation of the same enables ECC to discharge its duties under this section of the 2003 Act.

6.2.4 The draft strategy seeks to improve performance within the legal framework governing ECC as Waste Disposal Authority.

6.2.5 This decision relates to the draft strategy being consulted on. A separate decision will be taken to adopt any post consultation strategy.

7. Equality and Diversity Considerations

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that ‘marriage and civil partnership’ is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

8. List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 – Draft Waste Strategy for Essex

Appendix 3 – Waste Strategy for Essex Consultation Survey

Appendix 4 – Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report

Appendix 5 – Strategic Environmental Assessment Environment Report

9. List of Background Papers

None