

Report to Place Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 19th September 2023

**Portfolio: Contracts, Service Delivery, and Improvements
(Councillor Ray Balcombe)**

Subject: Waste Strategy for Essex

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To note the draft waste strategy for Essex (Appendix 1) and consultation survey (Appendix 2).
- (2) To note and respond to the 10-week public consultation that will take place on the draft waste strategy for Essex.

Report:

1. The Waste Strategy for Essex sets out the vision and objectives of the Essex Waste Partnership (EWP), which consists of the 12 District/Borough/City and County Council in Essex. It provides a framework detailing how we will manage the waste that is produced by homes and businesses in the county for the next 30 years. The draft strategy has been developed collectively by all 13 councils of the EWP. The draft strategy is a consultative document, no decisions have been made; the EWP wishes to seek the views of others before developing a final strategy.
2. The previous waste strategy for Essex was developed in 2007 and whilst much of it is relevant today, a great deal has changed since then. It is important we refresh and review our plans to ensure we have the right approaches to deliver the best outcomes for Essex.
3. This new strategy, covering the period up to 2055, brings a new focus on how we will deliver an effective, efficient, and sustainable service for the future. Following the Environment Act 2021, national policy and the findings of the Essex Climate Action Commission 2020, the new strategy updates the EWP's approach to reducing the impact that waste management has on climate change. The strategy is research based and sets out the reasons for our approach; the principles of what we will do; and the targets that we will strive to meet.
4. The Waste Strategy for Essex (WSfE) is the first step on delivering better waste outcomes for Essex. It is a high-level general framework for waste. It will help shape services in Essex over the next 30 years to achieve higher performance and more joined up working to deliver a shared vision, targets, and ambitions. The WSfE is a joint strategy for Essex County Council (ECC) and the 12 Borough, City and District Councils and is being jointly developed. The WSfE does not prescribe the adoption of operational services or require partner authorities to make service changes. The WSfE is not a timed or costed action plan for delivery and does not identify

infrastructure requirements.

5. The WSfE's strategic vision is to aspire to be a zero-waste county. By working together, we will reduce waste to protect the environment and conserve resources. Zero waste in Essex means maximising the reuse, recycling, and recovery of resources, rather than treating them as waste. Targets and ambitions are jointly owned rather than needing to be individually achieved.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. The proposed WSfE targets have been transposed from the national strategy targets. The principle behind this is that as a minimum Essex (ECC together with the 12 Borough, City and District Councils) should collectively achieve the national targets set for England/UK. Some of these target dates remain in draft as they are dependent on the publication of regulations/Statutory guidance. Stretch targets are ambitions and look to move Essex further and/or faster than national policy. Achieving these targets and ambitions will place Essex as one of the leading waste authorities in the UK and a world class exemplar.

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.

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.

11. Essex County Council will facilitate public consultation on the strategy on behalf of all members of the Essex waste partnership. The consultation will be delivered in line with Gunning Principles and HM Government Code of Practice. The Consultation questions will test the level of agreement with vision, proposals, targets, and ambitions through a mix of non-mandatory multiple-choice and free text questions. The consultation will be Online by default with paper versions and supported survey completion available. ECC will support the consultation with robust communications plans. Communications will be augmented with engagement plans for key audiences and special interest groups.

12. Essex County Council will take a report to Cabinet on 12th September to seek approval to undertake 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.

13. The consultation period will open on Wednesday 13 September 2023 and closes on Wednesday 22 November 2023. Paper copies will be accepted by post for a further five working days, closing on Wednesday 29 November 2023.

14. ECC will appoint an independent organisation to collate and analyse consultation responses and produce a report for publication on Citizen space. The 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.

Reason for decision:

N/A

Options considered and rejected:

N/A

Consultation undertaken:

10-week public consultation will commence in September facilitated by Essex County Council.

Resource implications:

N/A – Consultation is being lead and run by Essex County Council.

Legal and Governance Implications, Relevant Statutory Powers:

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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.

Corporate Plan Implications:

N/A

Background Papers:

Draft waste strategy for Essex (Appendix 1)
Consultation survey (Appendix 2)

Risk Management:

N/A

Equality:

An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out and there was no significant impact.

Key Decision: (if required):

N/A