##

##### Economy and Environment Policy Committee

**Minutes of a remote meeting of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee of South Norfolk Council held on Friday 16 October 2020 at 2.00 pm**

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| **Committee Members Present:** | Councillors: | A Dearnley (Chairman), B Bernard, C Brown, F Curson, G Francis, K Hurn, J Knight (Vice Chairmen) and R Savage.  |
| **Other Members in Attendance:** | Councillor: | M Edney  |
| **Officers in Attendance:** | Assistant Director Community Services (S Phelan), Recycling and Partnerships Officer (M Beaumont), Recycling and Partnerships Officer (L Fountain) Recycling and Partnerships Officer (N Noorani)Policy and Partnerships Officer (V Parsons)Contracts, Policy and Partnerships Manager (P Leggett) and Democratic Services Officer (L Arthurton).  |

**5 MINUTES**

 The Minutes of the meeting of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee, held on Friday 7 August 2020, were agreed as a correct record.

**6 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman advised the Committee that the adopted Environmental Strategy was now more prominently featured on the Council website. Links to the webpage were also to be sent to parish and town councils. He added that over the coming months ‘bite size’ chunks of the Strategy would be published to reinforce the Council’s message on protecting and preserving the environment in South Norfolk.

The Chairman noted the ongoing environmental agenda, including the delayed Environment Bill, which recognised the essential role of local government, as well as the UN Climate Change Conference to be held in the UK next autumn.

He also confirmed that South Norfolk had a graduate apprentice starting next week, who would be drafting a Delivery Plan for the Environmental Strategy.

**7 RECYCLING INITIATIVES SCOPING REPORT**

The Policy and Partnerships Officer (V Parsons) introduced the report, which presented high level options and project proposals for reaching a 60 percent recycling rate by 2025, which was an ambition set out in the Environmental Strategy that was adopted by the Council in July 2020.

The following aims were set out in the Strategy in relation to recycling:

* A 2% increase in the recycling rate by Q4 2020/21 across the District. With a further aspiration to achieve 60% within the five year life of the Strategy
* To explore the provision of food waste collections across the District.
* To minimise the use of single-use wet wipes

The aims were in line with national strategies, which had set a 65 percent recycling target by 2035, as well as household food waste collections from 2023 and non-chargeable garden waste collections.

In terms of resources, the Recycling Team for Broadland and South Norfolk currently consisted of 1.2 FTE Recycling and Partnership Officers, as well as one temporary FTE officer funded until the beginning of March 2021.

The Team covered approximately 120,000 properties across Broadland and South Norfolk with the potential for approximately 228,000 recycling collections to take place per fortnight.

Work within the Team was split between implementing projects to improve recycling rates and to reduce contamination, whilst 40 percent of officer time was the preparation of data and completing statutory returns for both Broadland and South Norfolk, which impacted on capacity to manage large recycling initiatives.

The waste collection services currently offered by South Norfolk Council were:

* Fortnightly co-mingled kerbside collection service for dry recyclables
* Fortnightly residual waste collection
* Fortnightly paid garden waste collection
* Textile banks
* Glass banks
* Paper banks
* Paid bulky waste collections
* Side waste collection

South Norfolk and Norwich were top in terms of dry recycling rates in Norfolk for both 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. Broadland District Council had the highest total recycling in Norfolk (49.6%) although this included a significant amount of green waste from brown bins.

Research into the top recycling authorities in England had been undertaken in order to better understand the drivers for success. The main trends identified included smaller residual waste bins (140L or 180L compared to the 240L used by the Council), widespread food and garden waste services and collection of additional materials at the kerbside. All of which could promote residents behaviour change to increase the recycling rate.

In order to achieve the 60 percent recycling target a number of options that had been found to have the greatest impact on reducing waste production and increasing recycling were proposed for consideration.

These were:

* weekly food waste collections
* three weekly collections for general waste
* smaller bins for general waste and improvements kerbside recycling.

However, Members were asked to note that the adoption of any of the proposals would have significant financial implications that would need careful consideration.

For example, providing a weekly food waste service to all households in the District would have a net cost of £453,437 and an initial capital cost of £1,165,959. Moreover, the current depot was not big enough to handle the predicted 42 percent increase in collection vehicles that the service would require.

Similarly a free garden waste service would increase use, but the cost would be £249,448 per year and result in a loss of £1,352,637 in revenue. The Government were potentially looking at a free service, but had confirmed that they would cover the cost of funding it.

A Member suggested that food waste collection was an area that should be looked at, although he expressed concern about an increase in carbon emissions from collection vehicles, if rolled out across the whole District.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that food waste collected in Broadland went to an anaerobic digester to generate fuel gas. It was also confirmed that all residual waste collected was incinerated to generate electricity and none went to landfill.

The Portfolio Holder for Clean and Safe Environment advised the meeting that he did not consider food waste collection to be financially, environmentally or logistically viable, as it would cost £1.5m to set up, would increase vehicle carbon emissions and the current depot could not accommodate the 42 percent increase in collection vehicles.

Members were advised that a possible alternative would be to co-mingle food waste with garden waste. Food waste disposed of in this way would then not be able to go to an anaerobic digester, but would be composted instead. It was noted that the garden waste service currently brought revenue to the Council of around £1m per annum.

The Committee was informed that the food waste collection service in Broadland cost around £400,000 per year and served about 30,000 households.

The Vice-Chairman agreed with the Portfolio Holder that a food waste collection service would not work in a rural District like South Norfolk. Instead, he suggested an emphasis should be placed on behavioural change to reduce food waste.

A point was also made about the importance of educating young people about recycling and it was confirmed that South Norfolk Youth Advisory Board could be consulted on some of the proposals as they were developed.

The report was proposing the option of the removal of side waste collection, as South Norfolk was one of the few local authorities to still collect side waste. It was noted that more side waste was left out in areas of denser population. A more detailed study of why this was would be carried out if the proposal was recommended for further development. The Portfolio Holder for Clean and Safe Environment suggested that side waste could be made to pay by only collecting it from residents in bags purchased from the Council.

The Chairman noted that the Recycling Team was under-resourced and needed more staff to address these issues. He also stated that he was against the collection of side waste, as it appeared to be self-defeating in relation to the overall objective of reducing total waste.  But some concern was expressed by other members that not collecting side waste could lead to an increase in fly tipping.

Another initiative proposed was to reduce the size of residual bins from 240L to 180L, which would lower residual waste, as more would be recycled. However, replacing the bins would cost £1,012,500 along with £202,500 for their delivery. Consideration would also need to be given to how the old bins were disposed of.

A further proposal was to collect residual waste on a three-weekly basis, which had also been shown to produce cost savings, decreased residual waste and increased recycling rates. However, as with smaller bins, residents had proved resistant to such proposals and a separate nappy collection service might be necessary. It was emphasised that it was not proposed to both reduce the size of bins and collect them on a three weekly basis.

Other proposals to reach 60 percent waste recycling were:

* A kerbside collection service for textiles, batteries and small electrical items. This would increase recycling and be convenient for residents.
* Consistent communications campaigns would keep recycling fresh in residents’ minds, and could take advantage of the lessons learned during the behavioural change project by the Recycling Team Texting residents was also an idea that had successfully been used elsewhere.

The Committee was requested to consider and identify any of the proposals that should be taken forward to include a full assessment of opportunities and risks, detailed costings and resource requirements, in addition to timescales for delivery.

Following further discussion of the proposals before the Committee it was:

**RESOLVED**

That a report be drafted for Cabinet recommending an increase in resources for the Recycling Team to help the Council deliver a 60 percent recycling rate by 2025; and

To note the report and agree that the following proposals should be taken forward for further development, before being brought back to the Committee for consideration:

1. A food waste collection service in suitable areas of the District;
2. Explore rolling out smaller residual waste bins;
3. Investigate a three weekly collection of residual waste;
4. Consider the implications of no longer accepting side waste in line with UK best practice;
5. Encourage the expansion of the garden waste collection service;
6. Developing a behavior change campaign through clear and consistent communications;

**8 CONSULTATION ON THE WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR ENGLAND**

The report presented the Council’s response to the Government’s Consultation on the Waste Management Plan for England, which was required to be reviewed every six years. The Committee was advised that the Plan being consulted upon did not include any new policies or announcements.

The questions asked were:

1. If the Waste Management Plan for England met the requirements of Schedule 1 of the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011?
2. If the Council’s agrees with the conclusions of the Environmental Report (which supported the Waste Management Plan)?
3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘There will be no additional burdens for businesses, consumers and local authorities arising directly from the adoption of the Plan’

The Council’s had originally responded yes to all three question as set out in the paper attached to the Agenda, but following receipt of the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) response, which had raised additional concerns regarding possible additional burdens and responsibilities on local authorities, it had been decided to amend the response to question 3 to include these issues.

It was confirmed that the updated response would be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.

**9 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was

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| RESOLVED: | To exclude the press and public from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following item of business on the grounds that it involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended) |

**10 WASTE SERVICES REVIEW**

The Committee received the exempt Minutes from the 7 August 2020 and agreed them as a correct record.

(The meeting concluded at 4.53pm.)

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Chairman