

Environment, Development and Transport Committee

Item No.....

Report title:	Norfolk Waste Partnership and Waste Services
Date of meeting:	15 September 2017
Responsible Chief Officer:	Tom McCabe (Executive Director – Community & Environmental Services)
Strategic impact The combined value of waste services provided by the authorities in the Norfolk Waste Partnership is around £50m a year. Services provided by the individual authorities include collection services provided by the district, city and borough councils as well as residual waste treatment and recycling centres provided by the County Council. All authorities in the Partnership have an interest in working together to reduce waste and increase recycling.	

Executive summary

<p>This report provides a summary of recent and planned activities of the Norfolk Waste Partnership.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That Members support the continuing work of the Norfolk Waste Partnership and the County Council's active involvement and ongoing commitment to its activities to reduce waste, increase recycling and deliver service improvements.2. That Members advise whether or not there is a need to establish a successor to the Waste Advisory Group.3. To explore within the Norfolk Waste Partnership the merits of different approaches to helping fund recycling and waste reduction initiatives.

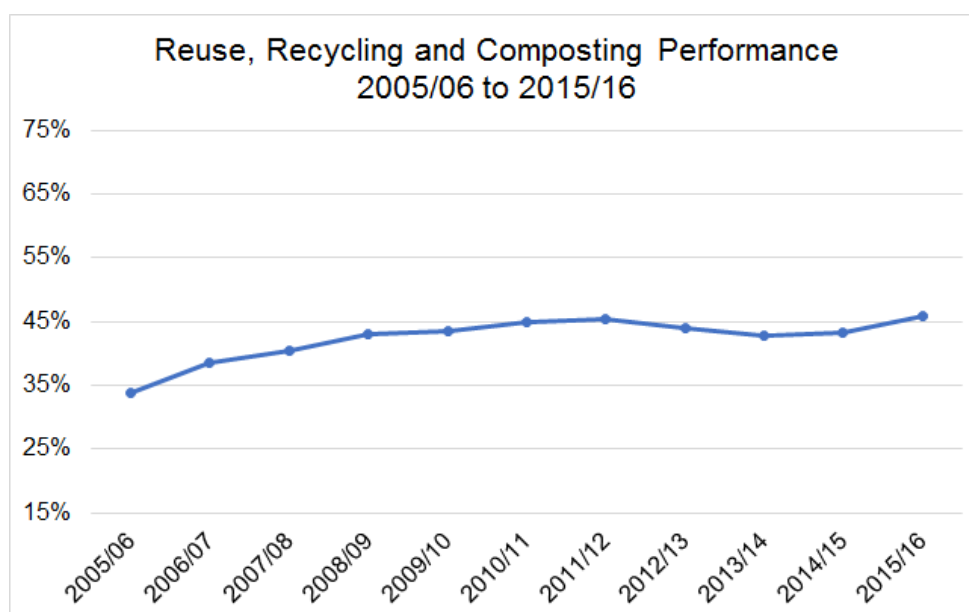
1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Norfolk Waste Partnership Board is a member body with no decision making powers that oversees the waste services provided by all the local authorities in Norfolk. It gives guidance and recommendations and establishes directions for the individual local authorities to consider in their decision making processes.
- 1.2 In 2015/16 the Partnership achieved Norfolk's highest ever recycling rate of 45.8%.
- 1.3 The Partnership cost of managing all household waste is currently around £50m a year and the cost is expected to rise in line with housing growth. The main driver is currently increasing efficiency, as there are no performance targets for individual authorities despite a national recycling target of 50% by 2020.
- 1.4 The separation of functions between the County Council and the district, city and borough councils is a consequence of legislation and to overcome this and enable a total system view to be taken in Norfolk we have created the Norfolk Waste Partnership which is an alternative to establishing a single waste authority.

- 1.5 The County Council’s role as a Waste Disposal Authority includes requiring it to provide Recycling Centres, make payments called ‘recycling credits’ to the Waste Collection Authorities and to make arrangements for dealing with left over waste. Recycling credits are paid in line with legislative requirements – no alternative funding model has been adopted in Norfolk.

2. Progress Update

- 2.1 There is a shared interest within the Partnership to improve efficiencies, increase recycling and reduce waste. This is in step with the County Council’s waste policies. The Council’s ‘Moving Towards Zero Waste’ strategy document and seeks to mitigate the effects of growth in demand by reducing the amount of waste each household generates each week.
- 2.2 As mentioned above and shown in the graph below the Partnership achieved its highest ever recycling rate of 45.8% in 2015/16. This was higher than the UK recycling rate of 44.3% and higher than the English recycling rate of 43.9%. In the same year the amount of left over rubbish each household in Norfolk throws away each week decreased to 9.99kg per household.



A breakdown of the Partnership’s performance for 2015/16 is shown in the table below:

Recycling	Reuse	Dry recyclables	Garden waste	Food waste	Residual waste per household per week	Residual waste	Households
45.8%	1,188t	101,101t	69,370t	7,030t	9.99kg	212,818t	409,250

In 2015/16 the County Council’s Recycling Centres processed around 64,483t of which 63.55% was recycled. Of this 927t were reused, 18,518t were dry recyclables and 21,699t was garden waste (these figures are included in the table above).

3. Partnership Activities

3.1 Key Work Streams

The four key areas agreed by the Partnership are listed below. The thrust of its entire agenda are in step with the County Council's waste policies and approach of 'Moving Towards Zero Waste'.

1. Developing reuse, repair and recycling systems	Projects have been developed to reuse, repair and recycle across a wide range of areas including household collection, community facilities, businesses and third sector organisations.
2. Assessing food waste collections and collection frequency	The Partnership secured a grant from Wrap to appoint consultants Eunomia to assess experiences from authorities in other parts of the country that have changed the frequency of their waste collection services. This assessment led the Partnership to conclude that for a number of practical considerations, including the increased cost of some solutions such as a rollout of food collections to all areas, there was currently not the appetite to deliver such a change in Norfolk.
3. Developing a communications strategy for the NWP	A joint funded Partnership Communication Officer has been appointed to develop and oversee a programme of activities including developing a communications strategy.
4. Reviewing infrastructure need for depots, transfer stations and recycling facilities	This project aims to rationalise depots for waste collection services, waste transfer stations, recycling centres where possible, and the link with other services is being made as a part of the 'One Public Estate' approach.

3.2 **Partnership Website**

The Partnership's website (www.recyclefornorfolk.com) has been overhauled to give it a more accessible look – it is the information hub about Norfolk's waste reduction, reuse and recycling services. The website is signposted from individual council websites where appropriate and includes an events calendar and user 'subscribe' option to a Partnership newsletter that is issued three times per year.

3.3 **Communications Strategy**

The Partnership has established a communication and marketing strategy to ensure a clear and co-ordinated approach to waste and resource management communications so that residents, constituent local authorities and other key stakeholders are provided with necessary information to fully engage and take part in correct waste and resource management practices.

The costs of campaigns and a Partnership Communications Officer are being shared by authorities and campaigns are all being delivered under variations on the 'Recycle for Norfolk' mark:



3.4 **An External View of the Partnership**

A recent report titled 'Delivering Efficiencies in Waste Services in the East of England' by Local Partnerships (a joint venture between Treasury and the Local Government Association) highlighted recent work by the Partnership as a case study (Case Study 1, page 11).

3.5 **UEA – Behavioural Change Research**

A PhD has been joint funded with the University of East Anglia (UEA) that will focus on behavioural change and demand management issues around waste and recycling to help inform the design of successful waste reduction and recycling schemes. This complements the wider Partnership work on systems change and this direct link with the UEA has also opened up a flow of project concepts from the Partnership to the same team at the UEA with a current focus on relevant issues such as on food waste and nappies.

4. Partnership Developments

4.1 **Partnership Communication**

A series of campaigns is planned between now and spring 2018, each with a different focus agreed by the Partnership:

4.1.1 **Contamination of Recycling**

The first campaign is to reinforce a '*Clean, Dry, Loose (not bagged)*' message to residents and at the same time remind householders what can and cannot be recycling at home, this is to reduce contamination levels which are currently around 13%.

The first phase is messaging to Norfolk households using leaflets, guidance stickers for the home, digital and social media campaigns, vehicle livery, event displays and other media approaches.

The second phase is more targeted messaging, using digital TV to around 20,000 households (around 5% of households) most likely to benefit from additional support based on research and socio-demographic information.

4.1.2 **Waste Prevention / Reduction**

A £49,750 grant has been secured from Sainsbury's to deliver seven 'Waste Prevention Communities' in Norfolk as part of its national 'Waste less, Save more' programme. The programme focuses on food waste prevention at a householder and community level with approximately 7,000 households in each district area by engaging with residents, social housing landlords, schools and community groups and providing information and practical assistance. This will centre on food waste reduction and at the same time promote food waste collection services where relevant, garden waste services and home composting.

4.1.3 **Nappies as a Recycling Contaminant**

A targeted nappy campaign, i.e. disposable nappies cannot be recycled, will be delivered to support parents-to-be and new parents.

4.1.4 **Plastic Packaging**

An extensive list of plastics are accepted for collection. Clear and simple messaging will be used to direct residents to place any rigid plastic bottle, pot, tub or tray in their recycling bin – as long as it is not in a bag, is empty, clean and dry and regardless of whether it is from the kitchen or bathroom.

4.1.5 Textile repair, reuse & recycling

A campaign will be delivered that focuses on up-cycling, re-loved and retro clothing repair and reuse.

4.2 Behavior Change

Research by Wrap has established tools to predict recycling levels in different types of neighbourhoods. This approach is being used as a tool alongside detailed local knowledge and research (eg surveys, focus groups, working knowledge and feedback from frontline service providers). The aim is to help develop targeted communications, activities and messages to address what types of support different parts of the community may find most helpful when we are looking to improve performance.

5. Financial Update

5.1 The proposed £1.85m reduction to the costs of the County Council's waste services are now not deliverable in 2018/19.

5.2 The Partnership worked with consultants Eunomia using a grant from Wrap to assess experiences from authorities in other parts of the country to help establish what changes could be appropriate for Norfolk. This suggested systems change to local authority waste services could deliver savings of this scale.

The Partnership concluded that for a number of practical considerations, including the increased cost of some solutions such as a roll out of food collections to all areas, there was currently not the appetite or ability to deliver such a change across Norfolk.

5.3 The position may change as the Partnership continues to review arrangements and if Government imposes recycling targets in the future this could lead to a similar effect. On that basis this savings proposal could remain but start delivering in 2021/22, classed as at a high risk, and subject to an annual review to establish the prospects for change, ie that it is either on track or should be rolled back or its scale amended.

In the meantime the focus will be on reducing the costs through smaller scale efficiencies and service changes for services directly in the County Council's control and driving co-ordinated behavioural change on waste reduction and recycling with the Partnership whilst further assessments of system scale change are made.

5.4 In terms of directly controllable spend the County Council's scope is limited to only a part of its overall waste services budget. It can determine the service standards at its Recycling Centres and it can determine the unit cost of dealing with residual waste. However the amount of recycling that leads to recycling credit payments and the amount of residual waste collected is outside its direct control.

5.5 The County Council's main area of more directly controllable spend, the provision of Recycling Centres, has already delivered significant cost reductions in recent years as shown in the table below.

Year	Recycling Centres		Residual Waste		Recycling Credits	
	Cost	Tonnage	Cost	Tonnage	Cost	Tonnage
2013/14	£6.8m	71,766t	£22.7m	210,895t	£6.8m	127,819t

2014/15	£5.1m	72,422t	£24.5m	211,676t	£7.6m	137,549t
2015/16	£5.1m	71,480t	£24.0m	212,156t	£7.9m	142,781t
2016/17	£5.3m	75,869t	£22.8m	216,047t	£8.4m	148,047t

This is mainly linked to a move from a contracted out service to an open book account approach for 19 of the 20 sites operated by News, with other refinements to service also delivering efficiencies after a Committee review in 2015.

- 5.6 The size of the County Council's other two main areas of spend on waste services relate to services which are not entirely in its direct control, ie residual waste and recycling credits as shown in the table above. This is because decisions by the district, city and borough councils are the main determining factor in both these service areas. In recent years, reducing the unit costs for residual waste by securing more competitive arrangements and ending a reliance on landfill has delivered a unit cost reduction but the number of units (or tonnes) is increasing as also shown in the table above.
- 5.7 Recycling credits are paid to the district, city and borough councils in line with legislative requirements – no alternative funding model has been adopted in Norfolk and therefore payment is prescribed by legislation to increase by 3% each year on all materials collected, ie dry recyclables, garden waste and collected food. Recent year costs in the table above also show an additional stepped increase in 2014/15 linked to a mid-year change in kerbside recycling services, and in particular the approach to include glass in all collections.

6. Issues and Risks

6.1 Growth Effect on Costs

The main issue is that with no change, or delayed change, the impact of increased household numbers and the effects of economic growth will combine to drive the cost of waste services up. For example, the need for around 48,500 new homes identified in the Greater Norwich area over the next twenty years would add over 10% to the total service volume and costs.

In front of the long term trend in any one year the volume of waste is linked to a variety of factors, including the actual number of new builds (for example in 2016/17 there were around 3,200), the effects of economic growth and consumer confidence, weather patterns affecting garden waste generation, legislation change or amendment to services offered to householders. The increasingly volatile and sometimes harsh market conditions for recyclable materials is also a risk that cannot be ignored.

6.2 Scope for Reducing Costs

The scope for reducing the cost of the County Council's responsibilities in isolation as a Waste Disposal Authority is increasingly limited, as many unit cost improvements and other efficiencies have been delivered in recent years or are not replicable.

The quantum of savings possible is increased by taking an approach that involves the whole Partnership by optimising the services offered where it makes commercial sense, with the goal of increasing efficiency, reducing residual waste per household and increasing the proportion of waste that is recycled or reused.

A key risk is actually that due to market conditions and exchange rates unit costs for future contracts could actually be considerably higher than they are now. For

example, although Norfolk's unit costs of exporting waste as a fuel have remained fixed the wider market has been affected by the effects of exchange rates with the Euro.

6.3 Partnership Model

The Partnership has been very innovative in using a total systems approach across authorities to establish how to deliver improved performance and reduce costs. However, it remains the case that legislation splits the remit of the individual authorities and that as the Partnership is not a single waste authority it has no decision making powers and no dedicated budget. To help in this regard the merits of different approaches to helping fund recycling and waste reduction initiatives could be explored within the Partnership.

6.4 Recycling Centre Service

Existing arrangements at Mile Cross Recycling Centre in Norwich extend to September 2021. As a consequence a new site or sites for the Norwich area need to be identified and approved in 2017/18 to allow time for design and planning in time for construction to be undertaken during 2019/20. The search for a suitable location is well advanced and the findings will be presented to Committee at a future meeting before any decisions have been made.

6.5 Residual Waste Beyond 2020

National waste policy and local service changes could occur in coming years which would affect how much left over rubbish we might have and what its composition might be. It therefore appears that for the medium to longer term a flexible and mixed approach to securing services is merited. Before any decision about that approach is considered it is intended to undertake a market testing process in 2018 to help inform a range of options for Committee to consider about services beyond 2020 which could include using the ability to extend existing contracts, delegations, procuring services by contract or establishing direct agreements with other municipality owned waste companies in the UK or abroad.

6.6 Future National Policy

A key consideration is the timetable and outcome of the process to leave the EU which may or may not mean that the UK adopts the yet to be ratified Circular Economy Directive which is expected to mandate recycling targets of up to 70% by 2030. Government intentions for its '25 Year Environment Plan' are not yet clear, however it has stated that in 2017 it plans to provide an updated litter strategy which may offer guidance on charging in relation to service provision at Recycling Centres.

7. Background

7.1 Norfolk Waste Partnership

The County Council's membership is in its role as a Waste Disposal Authority and the district, city and borough council membership is in their roles as Waste Collection Authorities.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of this Committee are the County Council's representatives on the Board and the seven other authorities are represented by one Councillor each.

7.2 Waste Advisory Group

The Waste Advisory Group was formed at the request of Committee on 08 July 2014 in response to a recognised need by Full Council to draft strategy and policy on waste for the County Council.

During the period from the Group's first meeting on 30 July 2014, to its last meeting on 04 November 2016, this approach helped towards the Full Council adopting 20 waste policies in December 2014 and Committee agreeing the 'Moving Towards Zero Waste' delivery plan in September 2015. Furthermore the Group oversaw the procurement of residual waste contracts for services that started in April 2016 which led to the end of a reliance on landfill for the first time. These were important developments for the County Council and the valuable input from the Group in this process is widely recognised.

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