

Committee: Council

Date: Tuesday, 16
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Title: Adoption of the Waste Strategy for Essex

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Neil Reeve, Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Climate Change

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Summary

1. The Waste Strategy for Essex (WSfE) sets a clear ambition and commitment to reduce the impact on our environment of dealing with the things we throw away. It is a shared 30-year strategy for the county of Essex that has been jointly developed by the Borough, City and District Councils with Essex County Council.
2. The strategy document reflects what people have told us is important to them
 - accessible and extensive recycling services for everyone,
 - a circular economy where manufacturers reduce waste at source,
 - and the need to protect our environment by reducing rubbish, increasing recycling and stop using landfill.
3. The strategy identifies the things we need to do, the challenges we need to address and will shape our future work.

Recommendations

4. Agree to the adoption of the Waste Strategy for Essex 2024-2054 in the form appended to this report APPENDIX 1.
5. To note the Post Adoption Statement on the Strategic Environmental Assessment appended to this report as APPENDIX 2.

Financial Implications

6. The agreement to the Waste Strategy for Essex has no immediate direct financial implications for Uttlesford District Council, however by working together there will be longer term benefits for all taxpayers in Essex.
7. Adoption of the strategy does not commit the Council to any service changes, and we will retain responsibility for determining how waste is collected across the district.

Background and Proposal

8. Essex County Council (ECC), together with the borough, city and district councils, has a legal duty to maintain a joint strategy for the management of waste. The thirteen councils have worked together, as the Essex Waste Partnership (EWP), to jointly develop a new Waste Strategy for Essex to comply with this duty.
9. A draft Waste Strategy for Essex was developed and endorsed by the EWP for public consultation in June 2023. The consultation methodology was designed in line with the HM Government code of practice and the Gunning principles and externally validated by The Consultation Institute (TCI).
10. The public consultation commenced on 13 September 2023 for 10 weeks. Respondents were able to have their say on the priorities and approaches proposed in the draft strategy and provide feedback on the Strategic Environmental Assessment published alongside the draft strategy.
11. Over the consultation period 4,545 consultation questionnaire responses were received. The findings of the consultation exercise have been independently analysed and used by the EWP to develop a final strategy. A summary of the consultation findings is detailed below.

Quantitative Findings Summary

12. At a county wide level there were very good levels of support for all the elements of the strategy. The level of agreement for each distinct element of the strategy ranged from between 61% and 86% with the levels of disagreement between 11% and 26%. Although views differed across the county, the level of agreement exceeded the levels of disagreement in all cases. A full breakdown of responses by a range of demographic factors such as location, age and gender are contained in the Final Consultation Report
13. The consultation also provided respondents with an opportunity to indicate their views on the proposed targets and level of ambition. 48%, nearly half of respondents thought the targets were about right. 28% of respondents indicated a preference for more ambitious targets.

Qualitative Findings Summary

14. Respondents to the questionnaire were able to provide additional contextual information in the form of comments on all aspects of the draft strategy. Over 16,000 comments were made by those responding to the consultation. These

comments were grouped into common themes by the independent evaluator to enable analysis and to inform the development of the final strategy. The detailed analysis of comments is contained in the Final Consultation Report

15. The comments made by respondents included broad support for the strategy, suggestions for action planning, and raised some areas that respondents felt needed to be addressed in the final strategy or action planning. Similar comments and themes were identified across the different sections of the strategy and are summarised below.

- General support for the strategy proposals, aims and ambitions
- A suggestion to include clear actions and commitments from the partnership to deliver the necessary change and to enable progress to be monitored
- Respondents are supportive of strategy proposals to provide further information and guidance on how to reduce waste
- Respondents are supportive of the strategy proposals to provide accessible and expanded reuse and recycling services
- Questioning whether the strategy aims were achievable and affordable
- Respondents wanted to understand more about the environmental and local impacts of waste infrastructure, particularly EfW facilities, and where such facilities may be located
- Suggestion that the partnership should be more active in lobbying government and ensuring businesses reduce waste and packaging
- Asking for the final version of the strategy to be clear and easy to understand, avoiding the use of jargon

Post Consultation Strategy Amendments

16. The consultation response, insight and government policy updates have been fully considered by the Essex Waste Partnership when reviewing what revisions to apply to the Waste Strategy for Essex prior to a decision on adoption. As the public have been broadly supportive of the strategy it has not been necessary to make any substantive changes to the final version proposed for adoption. However, the insight obtained via the consultation has highlighted several areas requiring minor amendment, update or enhancement. The strategy document appended to this report is the output of the post-consultation consideration process and is the version of the Waste Strategy for Essex 2024-2054 proposed for adoption.

17. Details of how consultation response, insight and government policy updates have been considered and reflected in the Waste Strategy for Essex are detailed in the EWP Response to Consultation. Detailed below are the key changes that have been made in response to the feedback received.

- Language has been simplified and unnecessary technical terms or jargon have been removed to ensure the strategy is easy to understand.
- The vision statement has been updated to ensure it more strongly aligns with the strategy focus on waste reduction, reuse and recycling.
- The commitments and high-level actions proposed by the partnership have been updated to make them easier to understand. These will be used by the partnership as the basis for the development of detailed action plans.
- The targets and ambitions have been updated and consolidated to ensure only things which can be quantified and measured are included.
- The strategy position on landfill has been strengthened by committing to ceasing the use of landfill by 2030.
- Interim steps to achieve a target have been removed from the strategy. These will be incorporated into future action plans to ensure progress can be consistently measured.
- A commitment has been added to regularly review the strategy to ensure it is fit for purpose and to publish progress reports to ensure continued transparency.
- A commitment has been added to work together to increase recycling in public spaces, reduce litter and fly tipping.
- The strategy now includes an enhanced commitment by the partnership to lobby government for better regulation to tackle waste at source, ensuring manufacturers and retailers play their part to reduce waste.
- The strategy has been updated to better reflect the role of business and communities and the need for the partnership to support them to reduce the impact of waste.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

18. A Strategic Environmental Assessment ('SEA') was undertaken in accordance with the SEA regulations and is attached as Appendix 2. This assessment considers the environmental impacts of the strategy and the approaches proposed to ensure a high level of protection for the environment and that sustainability is at the forefront of the draft strategy.
19. In accordance with the SEA regulations statutory consultees were invited to give responses to the SEA. Responses were received from Natural England and the Environment Agency. Natural England confirmed that, in their view, the proposals contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that it has a statutory duty to protect. The Environment Agency had no comment to make on the documents.
20. Feedback on the Strategic Environmental Assessment was also received from 288 respondents via the public consultation. Of those that responded to the SEA, 54% thought the Environmental Report correctly identified the likely significant effects of the draft strategy. Full details of consultation response to

the SEA is included the Final Consultation Report.

Next steps

21. A decision on the strategy will be taken individually by each council that is a member of the Essex Waste Partnership. Following agreement on the strategy, the partnership will work together to develop and deliver the necessary action plans required to achieve the strategy ambitions. Progress and performance against the strategy targets will be published on an annual basis.

Impact

Communication/Consultation	As set out, the WSfE has been developed with significant input from stakeholders and has been the subject of public consultation. Feedback from that process has been built into the version attached as APPENDIX 1.
Community Safety	There are no direct impacts associated with this report.
Equalities	In time the implementation plan that will deliver the new strategy will consider the needs of all groups in the community.
Health and Safety	There are no direct impacts associated with this report.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	There are no direct impacts associated with this report.
Sustainability	The key drivers of the WSfE is the need to improve environmental performance and maximise resource usage. The strategy focuses efforts on reducing and maximising recycling before considering disposal options, noting that it is critical that reliable technology should be used for treatment options.
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Risk Analysis

22. The Waste Strategy for Essex has been developed with careful consideration of the views, ambitions and aspirations across all partners. Working together at a strategic level reduces longer term risks for all.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The Waste Strategy for Essex is not adopted by all partners	1	3	Significant efforts have been made to ensure that the strategy aligns with partner aspirations but there remains a risk that changes in political ambitions impact on individual partners.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.