



Buckinghamshire County Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Community and Environmental Services

Title: Waste Strategy: Member Briefing Note

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Relevant Portfolio: Strategic Planning

Context

1. The County Council is responsible for disposing of domestic waste that is collected by the four district councils. The County is also the waste planning authority and so prepares the Waste Plan and determines planning applications for waste management facilities.
2. Government has set a 2020 target to cut by 65% the amount of waste being landfilled and also requires more waste to be recycled and recovered. Authorities that don't meet tougher targets will be fined £150 per tonne on top of existing landfill tax that will escalate to £35 per tonne by 2011. The cost of landfilling waste will therefore make this option financially unsustainable. In addition the amount of household waste is growing at a rate of about three percent per annum and the County is also faced with population growth around Aylesbury, which will increase the amount of residents waste we have to manage.
3. The counties recycling and composting rate was 29.4% in 2004/05, but even if recycling and composting are maximised this will still leave about 50 percent of household waste that has to be managed. A decreasing proportion of this waste is going to be permitted to be disposed of at landfill sites and so alternative technologies for managing and treating the waste will be required.

Waste Strategy Public Questionnaire

4. The Waste Strategy sets out how the County Council with the District Councils proposes to manage Buckinghamshire's waste. Public consultation on the Waste Strategy document is planned for Spring 2006 with a view to its adoption in late 2006. In November a public questionnaire on waste issues will be sent out to every household in the county (via Buckinghamshire Times) asking for peoples views on what direction the Strategy should take. The leaflet will provide residents with information about waste issues and why things need to change. For example the waste hierarchy of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle/ Recovery will be explained as the principle that will guide Council's on how waste should be managed. Residents will also be asked if they want to be more actively involved in future consultation on waste issues through, for example, an e-mail discussion group.

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5. A poster campaign will run alongside the questionnaire with the strap line 'Your Waste, Your Choice'. Posters will be placed in supermarkets, schools, stations and other public locations including Council offices to encourage people to think about their waste and to complete the questionnaire.
6. In advance of the campaign the Joint Waste Committee intend to provide County and District Councillors with a concise guide to the waste issues that face Buckinghamshire. I understand that this will provide some summary facts about waste as well as answers for Members to some commonly asked questions. It will also set out a protocol on communication with the press, seeking to deliver consistent factual messages on waste issues.

Buckinghamshire's Options

7. Work is continuing on developing the waste management strategy and this is governed by the Joint Waste Committee, chaired by Councillor John Warder. As the strategy progresses it is being independently assessed by consultants to check that it is in accordance with national and European legislation. This Strategic Environmental Assessment draws upon existing regional and county plans such as the South East Plan and the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. These plans promote the principle that waste should be managed as close as practicable to the point of its production – known as the proximity principle.
8. Buckinghamshire essentially has two options to divert waste away from landfill. These are:
 - a. A recycling led strategy to maximise recycling first and then introduce new technology to recover value from the remaining waste
 - b. A recovery led strategy to set a lower target for recycling and to prioritise investment in new facilities to recover more value from waste.

Currently about 30% of waste is recycled and composted and 70% is managed at landfills. Recycling rates could be increased to 40 or 50%.

9. The issues questionnaire and other consultations are essentially asking the public which of these two options they prefer. It will then be a matter for the County and District Councils to jointly decide which option they prefer for the final Waste Strategy. The adopted Strategy will then guide the development of the Waste Document in the Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework (MWLDF). The MWLDF will set out the likely locations of waste facilities that could be acceptable under planning development controls. The initial consultation on the MWLDF is programmed for December 2006.
10. The choice of option in the Strategy will mean that a certain number of facilities are needed to bring collected waste to, sort it and manage it. This could be one single centralised facility serving all the County where sorting, recycling, composting and recovery takes place or it be a greater number of facilities that are located closer to where the majority of waste is collected. Currently waste is sent to facilities for recycling and composting (two of which are owned and operated by the partnership) and the remaining waste is sent directly to two landfill sites.

Timetable

11. Cabinet is due to consider the Waste Strategy on 24 October and Waste Procurement on 14 November. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is to have an update on the Strategy at the January 2006 meeting.