

# Report to the Council

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 25 September 2008

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Mrs M Sartin

**Item:** 11

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## 1. ESSEX JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - ADOPTION

### Recommending:

... That the attached Essex Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy be adopted.

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1. The draft Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy has been developed by the thirteen Waste Authorities of Essex comprising Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority and the twelve District and Borough Councils, as the Waste Collection Authorities in Essex. It constitutes a 25-year plan for the future of recycling and waste management in Essex.
2. In 2002 the County Council, the District and Borough Councils together with the Unitary Authorities of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council set up an Advisory Board to examine how to deal with municipal waste in these areas over the next two decades. This Waste Management Advisory Board has looked at the current and future challenges regarding waste and has examined a range of ways of dealing with it. The Board has always believed strongly in the importance of involving the people of Essex in the development of this strategy and consequently extensive public consultation has been undertaken.
3. The attached strategy which has already been adopted by the County Council brings together the views of the public, key stakeholders and the Essex Authorities and sets out options for how waste should be managed in the future. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council has published its own Municipal Waste Management Strategy for the Borough of Southend-on-Sea and the strategy identifies joint working with other Essex Local Authorities as highly desirable. Thurrock Council is also in the process of developing and publishing its own Waste Strategy.
4. Consultation was undertaken between 18 February and 5 May 2008 and the draft Strategy was considered in detail by this Council's Environmental and Planning Services Standing Scrutiny Panel in April of this year. The Panel recommended broad acceptance of the strategy including:
  - (a) continued high levels of recycling, with an aspirational target of 60% by 2020;
  - (b) mechanical and biological treatment of residual waste;
  - (c) anaerobic digestion of separated organic wastes; and
  - (d) possible use of solid recovered fuel from the mechanical and biological treatment plant to provide energy.

5. These views were endorsed by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet and a formal response was submitted to the County Council.
6. Approximately 4,500 questionnaires were returned by the public as part of the consultation exercise undertaken by the County Council. The key responses were as follows:
  - (a) 83% stated that they recycled as much as possible (higher than in previous surveys);
  - (b) 80% thought that it would be "very easy" or "fairly easy" to assist the Partnership in attaining its 60% aspirational recycling target;
  - (c) 84% agreed strongly or tended to agree with the use of mechanical biological treatment technology to treat residual waste rather than sending it to landfill; and
  - (d) 88% stated a preference of using solid recovered fuel to produce energy rather than sending it to landfill.
7. Some concerns were raised during the consultation exercise, particularly regarding the reliance upon technology to provide solutions rather than continuing to encourage household participation through the provision of more recycling facilities. In addition, the possible use of energy from waste plants burning the output from the mechanical biological treatment plants raised concerns due to peoples' perception that this was no different to mass burn incineration of waste with all of its associated problems.
8. The strategy aligns with this Council's current Waste Management Service and its future plans such as continued high recycling levels, the collection of food waste, increasing public education and information and providing more recycling facilities in flats and other communal buildings.
9. The Council is required by statute (Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003) to join with the County Council in the production of adoption of a joint Waste Strategy. The requirement to have a strategy has been reinforced through the recent Audit Commission inspection of the Waste Management Service.
10. It is a key component of the Council's "safer, cleaner, greener" initiative to continue to increase its recycling performance and provide enhanced recycling services to its residents. It is critical that these service developments are delivered within an overarching Waste Management Strategy.
11. Adoption of the strategy has no direct resource implications, however, its adoption clearly requires the Council to develop its own services in accordance with it, and this has potential resource implications. These will be clearly identified in the reports which will be coming to the Cabinet in advance of the 2009/2010 budget cycle.
12. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.