

# **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference: C/025/2007-8.**  
**Date of meeting: 16 July 2007.**



**Portfolio: Environmental Protection.**

**Subject: Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy – Letter of Support**

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## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**To agree the “Letter of Support” and to endorse its signature by the Chairman of the West Essex Waste Management Joint Committee;**

1. At the meeting of Cabinet in June members agreed that the Environment Portfolio Holder should sign the “Memorandum of Understanding” with the County Council, which established the basis behind partnership working to take the agreed Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) forwards.
2. In that report mention was made of the next step of the request that the Council approve the signing of a “Letter of Support” by the Chairman of the West Essex Waste Management Joint Committee. That letter of support is attached.
3. This letter will form a crucial part of the County Council’s application for PFI credit to fund the significant infrastructure, which will be needed to underpin the JMWMS. Members are referred particularly to that part of the letter headed “Support and Commitment” since this is the key component; the introduction really only reiterates the partnership working which has been taking place in the recent past.
4. In that final part the constituent members of the West Essex Joint Committee confirm their support and commitment to the following:
  - (a) meeting statutory targets for recycling and diversion; and
  - (b) the “Reference Project”
5. The “Reference Project” is the waste infrastructure project put forward to Government in support of the PFI bid. The County Council Portfolio Holder has recently written to district and borough Leaders, Cabinet Members and Chief Executives providing a briefing note on the Reference Project. The letter and the briefing note are attached and members are requested to read the briefing note since it sets out the key features of the Reference Project and the underpinning principles behind it and the JMWMS. Members will also have received a presentation on the revised JMWMS from the County Portfolio Holder and County waste Management Officers at the Council meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June.

## **Statement in Support of Recommended Action:**

6. As with the Memorandum of Understanding, the “Letter of Support” is a key component of the JMWMS and is crucial to a successful bid to Government for PFI. Without PFI credits the costs of the infrastructure necessary to deliver the strategy are unlikely to be met. Even with the PFI credit of £90 million there remains an affordability gap, which the County Council will have to manage.

7. Government will not provide PFI funding unless there is a clear commitment on behalf of the districts and boroughs to meeting and managing their part of the waste stream, through meeting their statutory recycling targets and working with their colleague waste collection authorities and the County in delivering the jointly agreed waste management strategy.

**Other Options for Action:**

8. Doing nothing is not an option if all Councils are to avoid significant financial penalties for failure to divert biological municipal waste away from landfill, and the JMWMS has been agreed by all as being the most effective route to achieving the diversion required.

9. There is no option other than the one recommended. If the Council were not to sign it could potentially damage the entire strategy, which has previously been supported and endorsed. Whilst it may be possible to seek amendments to the wording of the letter and even the strategy itself, this would require all the (3) Joint Committees to accept the changes and the delays would seriously prejudice the likely success of the application for PFI funding.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

10. None directly but the JMWMS is based upon the "War on Waste" consultation when all residents within Essex were requested to comment upon options for a future waste management strategy. Residents clearly indicated a wish for a high recycling, high diversion strategy thereby avoiding the need for mass burn incineration of municipal waste. Whilst the reference case now includes a reference to the burning of "Solid Refuse Fuel" (SRF) this involves the burning of the residue from the mechanical and biological treatment plant (MBT), which then produces useable electrical energy. If not handled in this way the residues from the MBT plant would have to be landfilled which is contrary to the strategy of reducing landfill and the environmental and financial effects associated with it.

**Resource Implications:**

**Budget Provision:** Nil at this stage.

**Personnel:** Nil.

**Land:** Nil.

**Council Plan 2006-10/BVPP Reference:** In partnership with the County and other Districts and Boroughs to support the agreed Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the Council's policy of high recycling and reducing waste to landfill.

**Relevant Statutory Powers:** N/A.

**Background Papers:** Previous Cabinet reports on the JMWMS and the Council's arrangements for recycling etc.

**Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:** As set out in the report relating to reducing the reliance upon landfill and the need to recycle and divert waste.

**Key Decision Reference (if required):** N/A.