

12 February 2019

## **Resources and Waste Strategy Update**

### **Purpose of report**

For information.

### **Summary**

In December 2018 the government published its Resources and Waste Strategy. This update report outlines the key issues for local government raised in the strategy, and the next steps for our lobbying work.

### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to note the key issues outlined in the paper, and the next steps.

### **Action**

Officers to take forward comments from members for work in the consultations.

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## **Resources and Waste Strategy Update**

### **Background**

1. On 18th December 2018 the government published its Resources and Waste Strategy. Following on from the 25 Year Environment Plan launched in January 2018 – the Resources and Waste Strategy is the government’s key document providing strategic national direction for the future of waste management.
2. The LGA issued a press release welcoming the strategy for identifying the need for producers to pay the full cost of recycling packaging. It also highlighted that additional funding would be needed to deliver the government’s vision to standardise collections and offer weekly food collections. A briefing was produced which is attached in appendix A.
3. The Resources and Waste Strategy is a document which the sector has been anticipating for some time. With recycling rates stalling at 43 per cent clear direction is needed as to how the government is planning to achieve the ambitious future recycling targets set by the EU. The strategy has two overarching objectives:
  - 3.1. To maximise the value of resource use and
  - 3.2. To minimise waste and its impact on the environment
4. It is focussed around delivering five strategic ambitions:
  - 4.1. All plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025
  - 4.2. Eliminating food waste to landfill by 2030
  - 4.3. Eliminate avoidable plastic waste over the lifetime of the 25 Year Environment Plan
  - 4.4. Double resource productivity by 2050
  - 4.5. Eliminate avoidable waste of all kinds by 2050

### **Issues**

5. The Resources and Waste Strategy is a document which addresses the life cycle of a product and its packaging. It therefore has a broad audience of producers, local government, consumers and industry. As a sector there are a number of key issues within the document which we will need to work through over the next few months.

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6. The Resources and Waste Strategy has recognised our key ask about producers paying the cost for the recycling of the packaging they produce. This is long overdue. The strategy commits to “*net up front transition costs and net ongoing operational costs*” being paid to councils. The strategy assumes councils delivering a significant amount of the change required. In order to deliver this councils need to be **fully** funded (not just at the net level) for all changes and their impact.
7. The strategy outlines the government’s desire to deliver more standardised waste services. Where councils are able to do this the delivery of greater standardisation will have to account for regional differences in the available waste infrastructure. Government will need to recognise the true cost of this and fully fund councils to transition and deliver whatever new services may be needed in their area.
8. Collection of a core set of dry materials as outlined in the strategy is something that councils have naturally been moving towards. 99 per cent of councils collect plastic at the kerbside, most collect paper and glass. In a recent LGA survey of councils 64 per cent of respondents reported that they currently collect and sort their waste in line with one of the 3 models recommended by government and WRAP<sup>1</sup>. The sector will work with government to establish what a core set of materials could look like, and what quality and quantity is needed at a national level. However, we will continue to lobby that councils should retain control over how they collect these materials at a local level.
9. The government wants to introduce compulsory weekly food waste collections. This will have a significant cost implication and will need a major national behavioural change programme to ensure successful delivery. LGA figures indicate that around 50 per cent councils currently collect food waste. Weekly collection of food waste could be a big challenge for some councils due to the upfront investment required. When combined with the government’s desire to offer free garden waste collections this could be a costly package which would need to be fully funded.
10. District and county councils should be aware that the strategy outlines government’s interest in looking at how to improve working arrangements and performance between local authorities, especially in two-tier areas. Joint working will come under greater scrutiny as will the recycling credit system used by two-tier authorities. It’s essential that district and county councils are involved in any two tier discussions.
11. The government also plans to consult on whether introducing non-binding performance indicators for the quantity of materials collected for recycling and minimum service standards for recycling will support higher levels of recycling. In addition to this there will

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<sup>1</sup> A Framework for Greater Consistency – WRAP

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be a consultation on deposit return schemes and a review of Household Waste Recycling Centres to ensure that they are delivering value for money.

### **Implications for Wales**

12. Waste is a devolved issue in Wales. We will be working with the Welsh LGA to share learning.

### **Financial Implications**

13. There could be significant financial implications of this strategy. LGA officers have started working with DEFRA officials to flag up the financial issues. Members will receive an update on this at a future meeting.

### **Next steps**

14. The Resources and Waste Strategy provides a framework from within which a range of consultations will be launched. It is anticipated that the first set of these consultations will focus on extended producer responsibility, deposit return schemes and standardisation. Once these have been formally published the EEHT Board will be involved in shaping the LGA's response. We will be running our own consultation event to ensure we get the views of a wide range of councils. We will also consult through the Chief Executive and Chairman's weekly bulletins. Officers have also begun working with the political group offices to ensure maximum involvement by members. The consultations are expected by the end of February 2019.