



Committee and Date

Place Overview Committee

29<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Item

Public

## **Creating and Delivering a Waste Minimisation Strategy in Shropshire**

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### **1. Synopsis**

This report sets out the need for a new waste minimisation strategy and the resources required to research, develop, publicly consult upon and subsequently implement the strategy across Shropshire.

The purpose of the strategy will be to seek to reduce the quantity of waste that is produced by households within Shropshire. Reducing waste is the best option for the environment and will reduce the council's expenditure on waste, meaning that more of the council's funds can be spent on delivering other essential services.

### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1. The Council is responsible for collecting and disposing of household waste which includes kerbside collections of recycled material, garden waste, food waste and residual waste. The council also provides Household Waste Recycling Centres for waste that is not suited to kerbside collection and highway bins. The council also collects flytipping on highway or council land.
- 2.2. The Council is not responsible for the collection of business waste.
- 2.3. Shropshire's residents can justifiably be proud of how they have responded to the call to recycle during the last two decades. From a countywide performance that was in single figures, to now consistently recycling and composting well over half of Shropshire's household waste is a fantastic achievement.
- 2.4. However, Shropshire has one of the highest quantities of waste per household in the country costing the council over £33.5m per year to collect and dispose of, which equates to 6% of the council's entire budget.
- 2.5. Recycling and composting performance has also plateaued in recent years, with outturns regularly being between 50 to 55% of waste being diverted from incineration or landfill. Performance gains are becoming increasingly difficult to achieve. Of the remaining waste 44% is incinerated and 2% is taken to landfill.

- 2.6. With the level of housing anticipated to grow over the next decade the cost of disposing of waste is only likely to increase without intervention to change behaviours. However, diversion of small percentages of waste from collection or household waste recycling centres can achieve a significant revenue saving and as such the delivery of a waste minimisation strategy is often cost neutral once fully established.
- 2.7. Many other authorities have used waste minimisation strategies successfully to reduce the level of waste being produced through a mix of education, campaigns, enforcement and charges.
- 2.8. Many waste minimisation initiatives such as the national campaign 'Love food hate waste' and home composting of organic wastes help participating households save money. Other initiatives are encouraging people to donate unwanted items to charities or reuse workshops to enable waste to be reused rather than disposed of in waste collection or household waste recycling centres. Adopting new waste reduction behaviours can also help households with the challenges of rising living costs.
- 2.9. There is a significant cost to collecting and processing household waste regardless of whether it is composted, recycled, or sent for energy recovery. The development of a waste minimisation strategy and a small team dedicated to delivering it will support households to reduce the quantity of waste they generate, in turn helping to reduce the council's waste management costs.

### **3. Recommendations**

#### **3.1. Place Overview Scrutiny Committee is requested to;**

**A.** Support the development of a waste minimisation strategy for Shropshire to realise the budget savings and environmental benefits that such a strategy has the potential to achieve.

**B.** Support progress towards the creation of a waste minimisation team to deliver a waste minimisation strategy within Shropshire and ensure the strategy is regularly reviewed to reflect national good practice and local opportunities.

## **REPORT**

### **4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 4.1. The Councils Local Plan proposes significant growth within the county over the coming decades and therefore the revenue cost of collecting and disposing of waste will rise proportionately without intervention.
- 4.2. The development and implementation of a waste minimisation strategy will positively impact on the environment, reduce the council's waste management

costs and in many cases, if advocated behaviours are adopted, save households money too.

- 4.3. With the anticipated acceleration in population growth in the county, the launch of waste minimisation initiatives at this time could enable positive behaviours being established as new residents come into the county, whilst also seeking to change existing behaviours of established residents, many of whom have indicated a desire to make positive change to help create and promote a more healthy environment in Shropshire.
- 4.4. A majority of authorities have introduced garden waste charges which has seen a reduction in overall garden waste being collected in those areas without a reciprocal increase in green waste elsewhere in the system such as at HWRC centres or flytipping. Whilst it is recognised that any such proposal for Shropshire would impact on households, it should also be recognised that those properties without gardens are currently subsidising the garden waste collection service for those that have.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1. An initial cost to develop the strategy and recruitment of 2 officers to implement the strategy would be required, however it is anticipated that this can be accommodated within existing budgets.
- 5.2. Once established, even a small percentage reduction in total waste produced has a significant impact on council budgets and as such a waste minimisation approach should become self-sustaining.

## **6. Climate Change Appraisal**

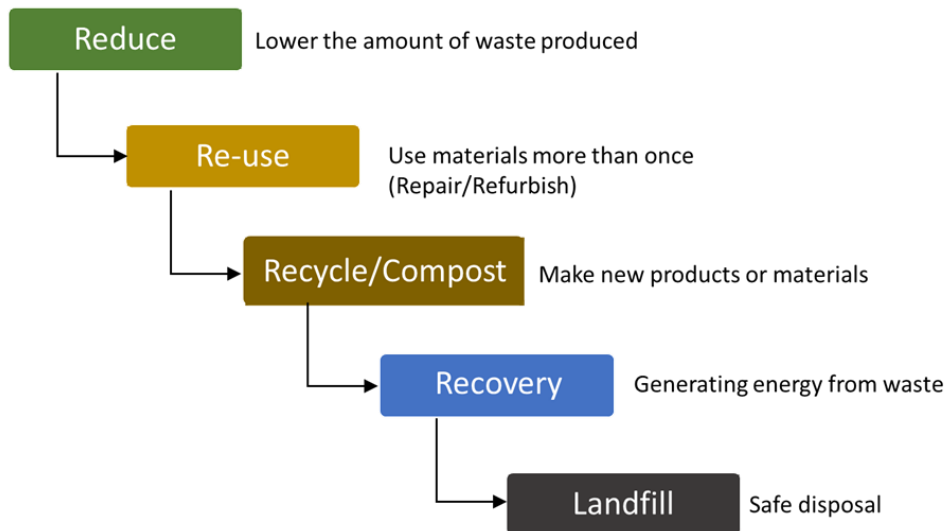
- 6.1. Waste reduction comes at the top of the waste hierarchy as it removes the environmental impacts of managing that waste. The benefits of reducing the amount of household waste managed by the Council are particularly associated with lowering the energy and fuel consumption associated with collecting and processing that waste, whether by processing that waste closer to its source or preventing the waste arising in the first place.

## **7. Background**

- 7.1. Shropshire Council aims to manage waste in keeping with the widely agreed principle of the waste hierarchy. The waste hierarchy sets out in order, the best practical environmental option for dealing with waste as shown in Figure 1.

## Figure 1. The Waste Hierarchy

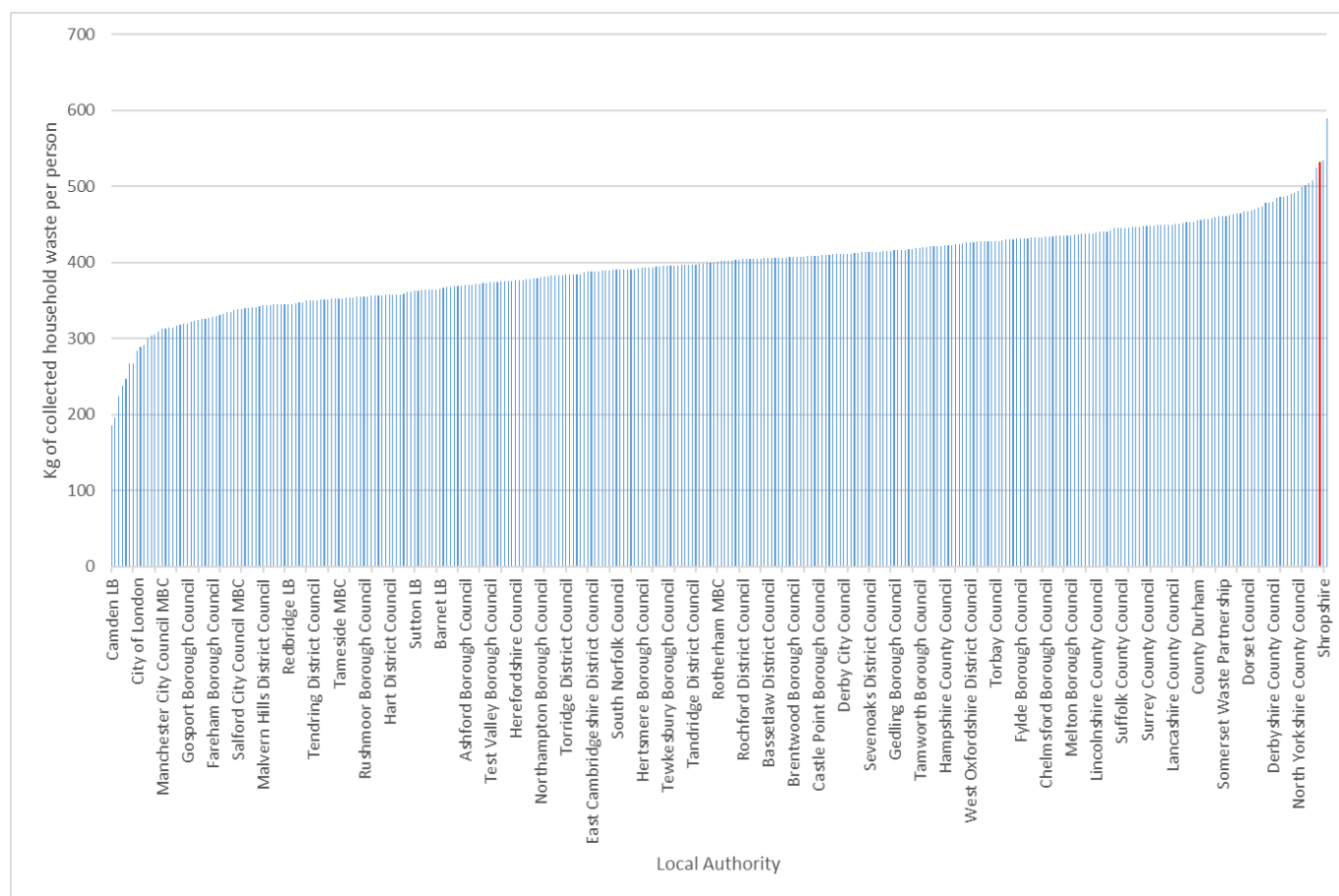
Most preferred option



Least preferred option

- 7.2. Shropshire has been successful in moving waste from the bottom of the hierarchy. In 2021/22 only 2% of household waste managed by Shropshire Council was landfilled, with 44.2% sent for recovery, 53.6% recycled or composted and 0.2% re-used. However, the most recent plan covering waste reduction (the Shropshire Waste Prevention Strategy) covered a period up to 2015 since when it has not been reviewed or updated. The Waste Management Unit is currently staffed to act as client for the Integrated Waste Management PFI contract with Veolia, with no capacity to develop or implement such a strategy.
- 7.3. Figure 2 shows that in 2020/21 the average Shropshire resident generated 535kgs of kerbside collected waste, the second highest of 348 local authorities in England and 138kg above the average. The Shropshire data is shown in a red bar to the right of the graph. Not all authorities are individually listed on the axis.

Figure 2. 2020/21 Collected Household Waste per person (kilogrammes)



- 7.4. This has a significant impact on the overall waste budget as each kilogramme has to be managed, with the associated collection, transport, processing and disposal costs. Disposal is the most expensive element, but there are charges for composting and recycling which vary depending on the material and process. Reducing the overall waste tonnage will reduce the total cost of waste services.
- 7.5. The principle that waste reduction leads to cost reductions applies equally to households as to the Waste Management contract, particularly in areas such as food waste. Developing and implementing a waste reduction strategy will benefit householders facing an increasing cost of living, and the Council in reducing its overall waste management costs.
- 7.6. For example, in 2022/23 each tonne diverted from the residual waste stream processed at the Battlefield ERF would bring a £90 tonne benefit to the Council from the sale of the capacity to 3rd parties and a reduction in the payment to Veolia. If the waste is diverted from landfill that benefit increases to £123 per tonne. The indexation provisions in the contract mean that the value of the savings will rise year on year. A 2,000 tonne reduction in tonnages if split 95% ERF, 5% landfill would be worth £183,000 at current prices.
- 7.7. To clarify the scope of this report it is useful to define what is meant by waste minimisation. The terms waste minimisation, waste reduction, waste prevention and waste avoidance have considerable commonality in their

definitions and meanings and in many cases are used interchangeably to mean similar activity that reduces the volume, or quantity or hazardousness of waste or a combination of these outcomes.

- 7.8. This report and the proposed waste minimisation strategy will deal only with household waste collected by the council's waste management contractor, Veolia, or taken to the council's network of household waste recycling centres by the public.; not for example business waste, raw material extraction or product design.
- 7.9. To further help to define the waste terms used, in the case of food, encouraging households to adopt behaviours from the Love Food Hate Waste campaign to ensure for instance that foodstuffs are stored correctly so that they can be consumed before they perish is waste prevention. Encouraging households to home compost their green or food waste is waste minimisation (as it does not enter the council's waste collection systems). However, households that put their food waste in their garden waste bins for collection and composting are contributing to the council's performance, but this is not classed as a waste minimisation or reduction activity.
- 7.10. Historically Shropshire has collected high quantities of garden waste, this is attributed to Shropshire being a rural authority with many sparsely populated areas having less intense residential development compared to other authorities in England. Census 2021 results detail that Shropshire, on average has 1 resident per football pitch area compared to 112 residents per football pitch area in Tower Hamlets. Shropshire's low population density is due to factors such as there being few high-rise blocks of flats, few flatted residential properties and few terraced properties in Shropshire compared to many other areas.
- 7.11. A consequence of this low intensity of development means that it is likely that many more properties have private gardens. More gardens inevitably means that more garden waste is generated and this challenge is compounded by the fact that Shropshire does not charge for garden waste collection unlike the majority of local authorities.
- 7.12. Numerous waste minimisation initiatives are already promoted or undertaken but with a small client team such activity is ad hoc and of a low priority compared to operational delivery and performance of the waste contract. Current waste minimisation initiatives include:
- subsidised home compost bins and related items
  - collaboration with the Shropshire master composter programme
  - 'Love Food Hate Waste' and similar food waste related campaigns
  - furniture reuse schemes
  - repair café network
  - mailing preference service
  - refill shops/network
  - reusable shopping bags

In recent years the waste management team have established positive working relationships and collaborated with the following, amongst many others:

- Shropshire master composters
- Shropshire Good Food Partnership
- Revive and Home Essentials (furniture and household item reuse)
- Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP)
- Shrewsbury Food Hub, OsNosh
- South Shropshire Climate Care
- Street Allotment Project
- Ashley Street Collective
- Wasteless Society

7.13. Whilst the above initiatives and collaborations have been beneficial, more could be achieved in terms of reducing waste and its associated costs if more resource was directed to enable focussed activity and a more coherent and strategic waste minimisation approach to be taken. In addition to bolstering the current activity the following initiatives would be researched and developed where appropriate

- Community composting
- Community/individual food growing and “Incredible Edible” type initiatives
- Community reuse/ upcycling workshops and swapshops
- Food redistribution
- Community/street level sharing and loaning initiatives
- Broaden scope of council library offer to include other items e.g. tools, bikes, clothing
- Charging for garden waste collections or free compost bins
- Real nappy network and personal hygiene products
- Substitution of toiletries and cleaning products for home made versions
- Promotion of alternatives to single use plastics

7.14. Waste minimisation also has a rising political profile and now more resident's groups of all types are taking an interest in waste reduction. A dedicated team is needed to liaise with these groups and support them in establishing local initiatives that help reduce waste. This would not only contribute to savings but demonstrate a commitment to climate change goals associated with waste management.

7.15. It is proposed that a waste minimisation team of 2 FTE's is created to deliver and implement a waste minimisation strategy. The team would consist of an officer at Band 11 and manager at Band 12 with a combined estimated cost of £92,678 p.a. The team would also maintain contact with various bodies providing grant funding for waste related projects and formulate bids for that funding, further contributing to the self-supporting nature of the team.

## 8. Additional Information

- 8.1. Prior to a restructure of the Waste Management Unit in 2015 the team did include a full time Waste Prevention Officer post. This post and a number of others dedicated to communications and policy were removed from the structure in 2015 as part of a budgetary saving exercise.
- 8.2. A waste prevention plan was produced and covered the period 2010 to 2015. This plan is now time expired and good practice has evolved significantly since that plan was developed.

## 9. Conclusions

- 9.1. The Waste Management Unit did previously include a dedicated Waste Prevention Officer and similar communications focussed posts and a strategy was created that had an impact on behaviours but is now time expired.
- 9.2. Good practice has evolved since the previous strategy and public appetite for the environment has similarly evolved and as such there are opportunities to influence behaviours still further.
- 9.3. Shropshire's recycling and composting performance has plateaued in recent years and the population in the county growing. With rising waste costs and households facing cost of living challenges, now is the appropriate time for a new waste minimisation strategy and a renewed focus to reduce waste quantities.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

**Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Cllr Ian Nellins**

**Local Member**

**Appendices: Waste Prevention Plan 2010-2015**