

Joint Scrutiny Committee



Report of Head of Housing and Environment

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To: Joint Scrutiny Committee

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Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy

Recommendation

That Joint Scrutiny Committee considers the draft joint Waste Resources and Street Cleansing strategy and makes any comments before a final strategy is presented to Cabinet for decision.

Implications (further detail within the report)	Financial	Legal	Climate and Ecological	Equality and diversity
	No	No	Yes	No
Signing off officer	Emma Creed	Pat Connell	Jessie Fieth	Abigail Witting

Purpose of Report

1. To ask the joint scrutiny committee for its views on the draft joint Waste Resources and Street Cleansing strategy.
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Strategic Objectives

2. The efficient and effective provision of waste collection and street cleansing services, as a waste collection and litter authority, are statutory requirements on local authorities, and this strategy supports the following corporate objectives.
3. South Oxfordshire: 5. Homes and Infrastructure that meets local need and 3. Action on Climate emergency
4. Vale of White Horse: 5. Working in Partnership and 2. Tackling the Climate Emergency

Background

5. Both councils, as second tier local authorities, have responsibilities under the [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#) for the collection of household waste. They also have responsibility to maintain the clean nature of their streets. These are amongst the highest profile services the councils provide as they affect all households and have a significant impact upon the climate targets for the councils. The councils provide these services through a joint arrangement, and any strategic approach is also provided jointly.
6. The councils are consistently high performing in the recycling league table, having achieved 61.6% for South, 60.9% Vale giving the position of 1st and 3rd respectively in the recycling league tables, out of a total of 343 Councils (2022/23).
7. How the services are currently provided was outlined in a confidential report to the Cabinets on 9 and 10 March 2023. This report also obtained permission to extend the current arrangement with Biffa. This will conclude at the end of a two-year extension period, ending 28 June 2026.
8. The reasons for adopting a long-term strategic approach, and the associated decisions on the mechanism for future service provision, were informally outlined to each Cabinet in August 2023.
9. The Cabinet briefings of August 2023 also outlined the process to be used to develop a new Waste, Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy.
10. There is not a statutory requirement for the councils to have their own waste strategy, although they are part of the county-wide Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS), which is a statutory document, and this strategy aims to support that approach.

Creating the Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy

11. There is no common format for a successful Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy. This provided an opportunity for officers to pick out the best elements from a range of local authority strategies and to tailor the new draft strategy in such a way as to meet the needs of the two districts. Extensive work was undertaken at a national and regional level to seek out best practice examples of work themes from other local authorities (particularly seeking out comparable authorities with similar geography, demographic and rurality) to inform work themes.
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12. Throughout the autumn of 2023, consultation sessions took place with all councillors through in-person and online sessions to discuss the key themes and the desired strategic emphasis going forward. There was also a session with the Climate Emergency Action Committee (CEAC) and Climate and Environment Emergency Action Committee (CEEAC).
13. Consultations with focus groups of residents were also completed, conducted by MEL Research, a resident engagement consultancy. These focus groups provided information from a resident's perspective and this was combined with results from the annual waste and street cleansing surveys, to give a view on the thoughts of the population of the districts.
14. The county council, as a key waste partner, was involved in the consultation as well as being consulted itself on the proposed strategy, to ensure a 'fit' with the disposal element of waste (food, garden and residual), a function that rests with the county council. The strategic waste group of the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership (ORWP), which all the districts and county council are members of, was consulted. The highways team was also involved in consultation over the street cleansing elements within the strategy.
15. Officers have maintained awareness of the changing proposals of the Environment Act 2021, over recent years. At the time of assembling the final Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy, May 2024, there was clarity on the majority of the expectations on local government, and these have been considered within the content, ambition and direction of travel described within this new strategy.

Summary of content

16. The content of the strategy is shown in Appendix 1 and is summarised below.
 17. Our residents do a good job supporting high levels of recycling and environmental activity in the district, mainly as a result of high levels of garden waste recycling. However, more is achievable, and everybody needs to do more if we are going to continue to be the best and achieve our goal to reduce the volume of waste produced, and when we do produce it having as much as possible reused or recycled.
 18. The strategy is looking beyond how the councils provide the services and instead focusses on better ways for the community to help deliver solutions. This will only work if residents have a wide choice of well communicated options so that unwanted household goods can be found other uses or other homes and those wanting to improve their local environment are supported in doing so.
 19. The key thread running through the strategy is the national, approved and recognised, Waste Hierarchy. Already backed by a statutory requirement to account for how actions move waste up the hierarchy, it provides a powerful reference, underlining the main direction of travel described.
 20. The councils also recognise the key factors at play in guiding the strategy, namely:
 - a) Legislative framework. The councils will continue to meet their statutory obligations regarding the collection of household waste and keeping streets clean. This also means that the councils will not look to introduce waste collection systems that are not in line with statutory guidelines set by government.
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- b) Commercial factors, including model of service provision and constraints placed on local authority finances.
- c) Community engagement. The needs and preferences of the residents and stakeholders, including visitors or others who work within the districts.
- d) Wider corporate and environmental aspirations, including the councils' Corporate Objectives and response to the climate emergency.

21. There is no 'end date' on the strategy. Achieving movement of waste up the waste hierarchy is not a single action that can be given a start and finish date. It is also the case that this is a guide to waste-related decisions and not a detailed programme of work. This will be achieved through the annual action planning process, where the necessary detail on intended activities and projects to support the work areas identified in the strategy will be set out. Progress reports on the annual action plans will be provided annually to Cabinet. The strategy can therefore be reviewed at a suitable future date when the councils feel it necessary to do so.

22. The key themes within the strategy are as follows:

Household waste collection:

- a) Support residents to reduce waste and move the waste they do produce up the waste hierarchy.
- b) Maximise the visibility and clarity of education messages on sustainability.
- c) Support residents to maximise the value and lifespan they get from their goods.
- d) Where items must be disposed of, have the most appropriate collection system, getting as many of the items that can be recycled into the recycling stream.
- e) Recycle and process materials in the most cost effective and sustainable way.

Street cleansing:

- a) Reduce litter through a localised, community-driven approach.
- b) Reduce fly tipping.
- c) Clean streets in partnership with and sensitive to, local needs.

23. As the strategy is not proposing a major shift in how it collects waste, other than through working more closely on street cleansing and activities higher up the waste hierarchy, it is considered low risk. Approval of the strategy is not a key decision.

24. A good example of this is investigating a 3:2:1 collection system which is explained on page 25 of the strategy. The government has recently indicated that there would be statutory guidance to cap the minimum residual waste collection frequency to every two weeks. A legal challenge over whether statutory guidance is the same as a statutory requirement is being considered by all authorities in England. This level of detail is inappropriate for the strategy, which is primarily setting out work that could be considered to deliver against the waste hierarchy within a variety of

thematically arranged work areas, with all proposals subject to further scrutiny before implementation.

25. There are no work areas within the strategy that will require significant investment or cost. The core service, especially for kerbside waste collection, is likely to remain unchanged, at least in the medium term.
26. The strategy has been developed using a wide range of supporting information which has been the result of either desktop research or directly gathering information. It is not proposed that this is presented for decision but will be made available on the councils' websites along the strategy. However, a careful review of all of the supporting information will be made by a range of officers to ensure that information presented is correctly presented. The summary list of supporting information is attached as Appendix 3.

Design and use of the strategy

27. As the final document will be a public facing document, a graphic design company has been employed to ensure the strategy is visually engaging. A graphically designed early draft of the strategy accompanies this briefing note, attached as Appendix 2. Under is how the waste hierarchy is presented. These are not in a final, finished form, but indicative of the style to be used and the emphasis within the public version. Any inconsistencies and visual improvements considered necessary will be changed prior to presenting for final decision.
28. The graphic design company will also produce a version of the strategy that fully adheres to accessibility guidelines, and a short, 1-2 page, summary of the strategy available for wider use and sharing.



Consultation

29. Extensive consultation has been undertaken, with residents, Councillors, partners, other authorities and stakeholders. It is not the intention to further consult on the strategy itself, but there will be annual feedback and engagement with Cabinet on the progress of work areas within the strategy and the opportunity to enhance or re-shape the content of work themes, in relation to the core objective of moving waste up the waste hierarchy, to reflect the developing street cleansing, resource and waste agenda.

Financial Implications

30. There are no financial implications directly from this strategy.

Legal Implications

31. There are no legal implications arising directly from this strategy.

Climate and ecological impact implications

32. As agreed with the Climate team, the Climate Impact Assessment Tool has not been used for the strategy as it covers too wide a range of work areas to represent the impacts effectively. As individual actions or projects from the strategy come forwards, these will be assessed using the tool to ensure that carbon emissions and other environmental impacts are mitigated against as much as possible.

33. Overall, we expect the strategy to have a positive impact on climate and ecology with work areas that support greenhouse gas and air pollution reduction, improvements to biodiversity and waste reduction. The guiding principle of the strategy is the waste hierarchy, and this is reflected in the themes and work areas identified. Residents will be supported to reduce waste and maximise the lifespan that they get from their goods, the councils will ensure that the collection systems enable as much waste as possible to be recycled and processed in a sustainable way, and litter will be reduced across the Districts.

Equalities implications

34. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and there are no implications identified.

Risks

35. The strategy is not proposing a major shift in how it collects waste, other than through working more closely on street cleansing and activities higher up the waste hierarchy, it is considered low risk.

Conclusion

36. The Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy will provide an exciting opportunity to build on the success of the councils in operating a high-performing waste and street cleansing service.

37. Publishing a strategy in the coming months will act as a guide and a valuable reference point for future decision-making in the area of waste and street cleansing.

Background Papers

- Cabinet report: Delivery of waste services (confidential)
9 March (South) and 10 March (Vale) 2023
- Cabinet briefing paper: Approach to a report on waste and street cleansing services beyond June 2026
4 August (South) and 18 August (Vale) 2023

Appendices

1 Draft Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy V8 (Content)

2 Strategy graphic design

3 Supporting information list