

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report To: Cabinet
11 February 2020

From: Scrutiny Committee

Subject: **POLICY REVIEW – RECYCLING**

All Wards

1.0 SUMMARY:

1.1 Between July 2019 and January 2020 the Committee undertook a review of the Council's Policy on Recycling. This report sets out the Committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations.

2.0 INTRODUCTION:

2.1 Recycling was considered an appropriate topic for review because this was a matter of both local concern and national concern improving recycling remains a priority for local authorities.

2.2 The Committee undertook the review in accordance with the following terms of reference:

- to review the existing policies regarding household recycling;
- investigate how recyclables are currently being collected and processed; and
- to explore whether more can be done to improve recycling rates across the District.

2.3 In order to determine whether the District Council's plans, policies and practices were effective, the Committee decided to:-

- review existing recycling policies;
- assess current recycling arrangements and gain an understanding of how household recycling services are delivered;
- evaluate the Council's current performance;
- review how the Council publicises its recycling service and whether improvements could be made to improve awareness amongst residents;
- consider best practice in other Local Authorities; and
- consider the potential impact of the DEFRA Waste and Resources Strategy.

3.0 EVIDENCE

3.1 The following witnesses attended meetings of the Committee to give evidence, namely:

- Paul Staines, Director for Environment, Hambleton District Council (HDC);
- Gary Brown, Waste and Street Scene Manager (HDC);
- Tracey Flint, Recycling Officer (HDC); and
- Geoff Green, UPM.

3.2 The Committee also reviewed the following documents in detail:

- Waste Management Strategy 2016-25;
- Waste and Recycling Collection Policy April 2016 – revised June 2018; and
- statistics on materials collected and recycled, along with destinations of recyclate during the period April to June 2019.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Based on the written and oral evidence presented, the Committee's findings were as follows:

- 4.1.1 The Committee acknowledged that the Waste Management Strategy 2016-25 covers every facet of municipal waste management and is designed to optimise environmental performance and deliver value for money services for Hambleton residents. The strategy sets out policies, aims, high level objectives and targets for the District and concentrates on areas the Council and its residents can influence. It identifies what waste services will look like over the coming years and how and when the Council will achieve its aims.
- 4.1.2 The Policy's prime purpose is to increase the amount recycled at the kerbside of glass, paper, card, cans and plastics. Under the scheme plastic pots, tubs and trays, cartons and all types of cardboard had been added to the list of recyclables collected.
- 4.1.3 The Committee also recognised that the Waste and Recycling Collection Policy April 2016 (revised 2018) aimed to ensure that waste and recycling services operate effectively and efficiently in order to maximise recycling and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.
- 4.1.4 It was noted that the District Council's recycling rate was 48.4% in 2018/19 and placed 96th out of 345 local authorities in 2017/18. The Committee recognised that this was an excellent result, noting as it did that most authorities who placed higher did so primarily because they collected food waste, which due to cost, the Council did not undertake. The current target within the Council Plan was to maintain a recycling rate of 47%. The current recycling figure for the year to date (as at November 2019) was 54.39%. This illustrated that the Council was not only maintaining the target but continually exceeding the target.
- 4.1.5 The Committee accepted that there were issues regarding contaminants in the recycling and that the Council has processes in place to address this. The Council operates a 'three strikes' policy whereby if the crew notice contamination in the bin or box, the recycling will not be collected and a tag will be left on the bin explaining why. In the event of a fourth contamination, the bin or box will not be emptied and a letter issued informing the resident that the service is being removed as a result of the repeated contamination. If after three months the resident wishes to resume the recycling service, the Council may provide clear sacks for a three month period in order to monitor the contents. If, after that time contamination continues, the service will be withdrawn completely.
- 4.1.6 The necessity for the Council to have processes in place to help reduce the amount of contamination was acknowledged but the Committee did suggest that there was potentially a lack of understanding by residents on what could or could not be placed in the recycling bin or box.
- 4.1.7 With regard to the methods of publicity the Council uses, such as booklets and the website, the Committee suggested that these be reviewed to ascertain whether the content could be improved and made clearer for residents to understand.

- 4.1.8 The Committee acknowledged that the Recycling Officer does engage with residents and provides talks and seminars to a variety of audiences such as Parish Councils and social groups such as the Women's Institute. Primary schools had been approached to roll-out a programme of education within schools, however the level of response had been minimal.
- 4.1.9 The Committee accepted that there were certain types of materials which could not currently be collected and recycled such as plastic bags, take-a-way pizza food boxes, black plastics and batteries. However, it was requested that this situation be carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure that the Council's processes are developed in line with any new technology that enables these materials to be collected and recycled.
- 4.1.10 The Committee acknowledged that the Council works closely with North Yorkshire County Council and UPM regarding what can be recycled and receives regular updates from various sources such as the North Yorkshire Waste Partnership and the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee.
- 4.1.11 The Committee was also informed that, on 18 December 2018, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Environment Agency (EA) launched 'Our Waste, Our Resources a Strategy for England', a resources and waste strategy to overhaul England's waste system, putting a legal onus on those responsible for producing waste or items that are harder or more costly to recycle including cars, electrical goods, and batteries.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS:

- 5.1 The Committee concluded from the evidence that the current policies, namely the Waste Management Strategy 2016-25 and the Waste and Recycling Collection Policy April 2016 – revised June 2018 remained fit for purpose and were achieving their objectives.
- 5.2 The Committee acknowledged that the Council operates a very successful recycling scheme and has a very effective waste and recycling team who were to be commended for their continued efforts, and that the residents of the District are proactively engaging with the Council's processes.
- 5.3 The Committee suggested that, should any progress be made on the inclusion of other non-recyclates such as plastic bags, food waste, black plastic trays etc, this be monitored and the Council's processes developed as necessary to take account of these changes.
- 5.4 The Committee recognised that promotion, publicity and education was an area that warranted continued monitoring and development, where opportunities arose, such as educational visits within schools and the circulation of publicity material within community sectors.
- 5.5 The Committee suggested that the information contained on the Council's website, associated recycling literature and other media, be reviewed to ascertain whether the information could be simplified to assist residents better understand the recycling scheme.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 6.1 To recommend to Cabinet that:-
- (1) the current policies, namely the Waste Management Strategy 2016-25 and the Waste and Recycling Collection Policy April 2016 (revised in June 2018) remain fit for purpose and are achieving their objectives;
 - (2) it be noted that the Council operates a very successful recycling scheme and that the residents of the District are proactively engaging with the Council's processes;

- (3) should any progress be made on the inclusion of other non-recyclates such as plastic bags, food waste, black plastic trays, etc, this be monitored and the Council's processes developed as necessary to take account of these changes;
- (4) promotion, publicity and education is an area that warranted continued monitoring and development where opportunities arose, such as educational visits within schools and the circulation of publicity material within community sectors; and
- (5) the information contained on the Council's website, associated recycling literature and other media, be reviewed to ascertain whether the information could be simplified to assist residents to better understand the recycling scheme.

COUNCILLOR D HUGILL
CHAIRMAN

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