

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Waste Strategy Working Group** held remotely on Thursday 20 October 2022 at 2.00pm.

Present:-

Mr A Baldrey
Mr J Bruce
Mr A Graham

Mrs J Hendry
Mr G MacKenzie

In attendance:-

Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead, Waste Services, Communities and Place
Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Communities and Place
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Governance
Mrs Olalla Bayon-Vazquez, Committee Administrator, Corporate Governance

Miss J MacLennan in the Chair for Items 1-3

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale and Mr H Morrison.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Appointment of Chair

Mr G MacKenzie, having been duly nominated and seconded, was **APPOINTED** Chair.

4. Waste Projects Update

As an introduction, Members were reminded that the Remit of the Working Group, as agreed at the Highland Council on 8 March 2018, was to oversee the key actions in relation to the Council's Waste Strategy. As matters had moved forward it was important that other aspects be considered, especially how the Working Group could provide insight from fellow Members and communities. Members were also informed of the details of the various strands of work currently underway, including the infrastructure for the waste transfer station network, preparations for the 2023-27 waste management contract and how the service was preparing for the future in light of various developments coming on stream such as the Scottish Government's Recycling Improvement Fund and their Waste and Recycling targets. Looking ahead, the Council would have to manage the transition from Landfill to potential Energy from Waste (EfW), align with Scotland's Household Recycling Charter and the expansion of both food and garden waste collections.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- when encouraging householders to compost their garden waste it was suggested that they could also include food waste. However, it was pointed out that, whilst this was possible, there was an increased cost involved of treating the waste;
- as new materials now able to be recycle came on stream it was vital this was communicated to the general public;
- in regard to the proposal to reduce the capacity of the green general refuse bin to 140 litres, it was important that the reasons were communicated clearly to avoid and/or minimise any backlash from constituents. The capital involved in transitioning to these bins would involve investment and an application to the Scottish Government's Recycling Improvement Fund was necessary;
- there were no plans to include glass in doorstep recycling as Highland were already used to recycling glass at the bottle banks situated around Highland;
- to encourage recycling the value of the various material streams should be explained. The better the quality of recycling the more it was worth. However, values varied and were volatile;
- there were various methods to collect recycling including sectioned bins and split body collection vehicles. However, it was hoped a simple straightforward arrangement would be put in place insuring household still received a weekly collection for specific materials;
- Members need to be aware of the sizeable challenge the Council faced;
- various supermarket "Meal Deals" resulted in littering but it was hoped that when the Deposit Return Scheme, where individuals paid a small deposit of 20p when buying a drink in a single-use container and then got the deposit back when they returned the empty bottle or can, came into force this would considerably reduce this; and
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that, whilst a waste composition analysis was planned, the service did have information on what Highland's waste was comprised of. However, this analysis had been carried out some time ago and, as composition changed over time and would depend on service provision, it was important this was up to date.

The Working Group:-

- i. **NOTED** the presentation; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a report be submitted to the Communities and Place Committee on 16 November 2022 seeking approval for the Council to make an application to the Scottish Government's Recycling Improvement Fund.

5. Scottish Government Energy from Waste (EfW) Review

Members were also provided with a presentation explaining the Scottish Government's review into the role of incineration and the Council's Green Energy Hub programme. This followed on from a wide-ranging independent review of EfW in Scotland which had made a number of conclusions and recommendations, some particular pertinent to Highland. Turning to the Council's Green Energy Hub Programme, an initial options appraisal was that the preferred option for the long-term management of residual waste was to derive some value from the waste collected and the Council, on 9 September 2021, agreed to fund up to £2.8m to develop this option further. This, however, did not commit the Council to agreeing either to the development or the scale of the development; its aim was to provide the information necessary for Members to be able to make decisions with the costs, benefits and risks transparent. Current work was dealing with site ground conditions and ecology and it was hoped this would be completed by April 2023. Meanwhile there was ongoing discussions with the Scottish Government.

In discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- home composting should be encouraged to remove this from the waste stream;
- in response to a question, it was explained that there were various financing models in place, some of which, if the contractors built the facility, local authorities were charged a gate fee;
- there were various uses for energy generated from waste including powering the plant itself, connecting to the grid through a fixed connection or directed to specific users. There were however costs involved with each of the options;
- it would be beneficial for Members to visit plants;
- it was unsettling that Scotland could have surplus processing capacity from 2027 onwards. Nevertheless, it was hoped the Scottish Government would work with local authorities in remote and rural areas of Scotland, such as Highland, where there was no settled residual management solution to meet the ban. The alternative was for Highland Council to continue to transport its residual waste out with the area;
- should an EfW be constructed locally, an option would be to build it with spare capacity to assist the requirements of other third parties, such as other locally authorities. The options for offering capacity to other local authorities were likely to be limited but seeking an arrangement with the Western Isles Council might offer a realistic consideration;
- it would be important to know the level of residual waste there would be in the future as this would determine the scale of any plant required; and
- it was important that Highland Council made representations to Lorna Slater, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity outlining the Council's position.

The Working Group:-

- i. **NOTED** the presentation; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a visit to the Inverness Transfer Station, due for completion by 18 November 2022 be provided to the Working Group and offered to other Members.

The meeting ended at 5.15 pm.