

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Waste Strategy Working Group** held in the Leader's Meeting Room, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness and via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 7 November 2023 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

Mr A Baldrey (remote)
Mr J Bruce
Mr R Gale (remote)

Mrs J Hendry
Mr G MacKenzie (Chair)
Mr H Morrison (remote)

In attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations
Mr S Graham, Project Manager
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr L Fraser and Mr A Graham.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Waste Strategy Working Group held on 8 August 2023, which had been approved by the Communities and Place Committee on 31 August 2023, were **NOTED**.

4. Long-term Waste Management

There had been circulated Report No WSWG/3/23 dated 30 October 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- in response to a question, it was confirmed that there would be no revenue from heat output from sending residual waste to an external Energy from Waste (EfW) facility;
- information was sought, and provided, on the benefits and costs of pre-sorting waste; the possible uses of the heat produced by an EfW facility and whether the Council would benefit more from heat or electricity output; the potential impacts of an increase in EfW capacity outwith Highland; the costs of continuing investigations into building an EfW facility in Highland; how much energy an EfW facility could produce annually; whether hydrogen production was being explored;

the steps being taken to decrease the amount of waste being produced; and the current composition of household waste;

- on the point being raised, it was explained that the expansion of food waste collections could help to lower the moisture content and reduce the weight of waste, and that splitting waste streams would improve the quality of recyclate available for reselling;
- there was a lot of unknown information such as whether gate fees would change, whether trains could be used for transporting waste and the amount of waste available to produce energy;
- on the point being raised, it was clarified that a decision did not need to be made imminently as the current arrangements could stay in place until 2030;
- efforts to reduce the production of waste in the first place could have an impact on the viability of an Energy from Waste facility; and
- it would be sensible to continue investigations to ensure that as much information as possible was available to make the best possible decision.

The Working Group otherwise **NOTED**:-

- i. the study findings which Waste and Finance Officers had considered;
- ii. the proposed next steps and their associated timescales as identified at section 5.2 of the report; and
- iii. the intention to submit a report to the Communities and Place Committee.

5. Waste Management Services - Update

A presentation was provided that:-

- explained the intended rollout phases for the twin-streaming collection services being introduced through the Recycling Improvement Fund;
- provided insight to the revisions being proposed to the Household Waste and Recycling Collection Policy; and
- updated Members on matters pertaining to Fort William waste infrastructure provision.

During a detailed discussion information was sought and provided on several points, including how and where food waste was processed; how the changes to the recycling policy would be advertised; what would happen to existing bins; the comparative size of new and existing bins and whether all sizes were compatible with existing bin lorries; what provision would be put in place for blocks of flats; the extension of food waste collections; and possibilities for encouraging composting.

As previously discussed at the Communities and Place Committee, the importance of communication and education was emphasised, and it was suggested that consideration be given to creating an educational video explaining what happened to recycled waste following collection. The Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations, confirmed that Members' comments had been taken on board and highlighted an upcoming BBC Alba documentary on an Inverness family's journey to reduce their carbon footprint and recycle as much as possible which followed their bin from collection to transfer station to treatment.

The Working Group otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

The meeting concluded at 3.15 pm.