

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	4ii.
Report No	CCC/2/25

Committee: Climate Change

Date: 29 January 2025

Report Title: Net Zero Thematic Group Update – Waste

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The report provides an update on the work being progressed through the Waste Management project.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **consider** and **note** the progress of actions by the Waste Thematic Group.

3 Implications

3.1 Resource

- i. The Highland Council secured significant capital investment finance from the Scottish Government's Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF). The £6.55m award is supporting a range of improvements to the Council's waste and recycling service.
- ii. The expansion of food waste collections will have a revenue implication; however, the service changes are essential to achieving a sustainable collection service model. An overall forecasted positive position will be achieved through a reduction in costs associated with residual waste treatment and through improving the quality and quantity of recycling that we collect.

3.2 **Legal** - The Council's relevant legal obligations for waste management services are from the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Furthermore, the ongoing service change project regarding waste and recycling collections supports climate change legislation and the recently passed Circular Economy Bill by reducing residual waste and improving the quality and quantity of recycling.

- 3.3 **Risk** - Within the service change project there are a number of ongoing risks that require to be carefully managed for the successful delivery of the service transformation to our internal premises. Of particular importance is internal services engaging and complying with new service standards. To achieve a successful outcome the input from service users and managers is essential for implementing the changes.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - The safety of staff undertaking waste management duties is a statutory obligation for local authorities. The effective management of waste is essential to the health and safety of all householders and other service users including waste management services provided to internal Council services.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is a monitoring and update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Waste and Recycling Service Change Project

- 5.1 Members will recall £6.55m has been awarded to the Council from the Scottish Government's Recycling Improvement Fund to deliver more sustainable waste and recycling collections by reducing the amount of non-recyclable waste sent for disposal and improving the quality and the amount of the recycling we collect.
- 5.2 Since April 2024, Waste Management Service have introduced twin stream recycling to internal Council premises, including both Secondary and Primary schools in the following areas - Ross & Cromarty, Nairn, Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey, Sutherland and Caithness. The changes to the recycling collections will help improve the quality and quantity of the recyclable material.
- 5.3 Schools in Skye & Lochalsh will be switched to twin stream recycling in February 2025 and Lochaber schools will be the final area to be switched over in Summer 2025.
- 5.4 The recyclable material is now separated into 2 bins:-
- i. Mixed containers (green bin) - plastic bottles, pots, tubs, trays, cans, tins, foil and cartons; and
 - ii. Paper, card and cardboard (blue bin) – newspapers, office paper, cardboard boxes and packaging.

- 5.5 Food waste collections for schools and other internal premises will be expanded in Easter Ross, Nairn and Lochaber. Schools in these areas will be provided with separate food waste collection bins and caddies to recycle their food waste. A review of the current food waste recycling collections provided to schools in Inverness will also be carried out to help increase the participation in this service.
- 5.6 Food waste collected for recycling is sent to an Anaerobic Digestion facility which produces biogas that is used to produce heat or electricity, displacing fossil fuels and contributing towards Scotland's renewable energy targets.

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 The Waste Aware Team will prioritise engagement with schools across the region to offer educational waste and recycling talks and activities to pupils and educational staff. Education is essential in changing mindsets and behaviours towards waste. This will include age specific presentations and interactive games and workshops covering topics such as Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, The Circular Economy, Waste Audits and Material Stream Journeys.
- 6.2 Managing waste within schools is complex and there are many factors at play including procurement, design of buildings, catering, and school policies. The Waste Aware Team will start a programme of work to benchmark the bin capacity for both non-recyclable and recycling across the school estate to identify opportunities to drive up recycling rates and reduce the amount of waste sent for disposal. This will include identifying a baseline for the number of litres of non-recyclable and recycling per pupil within each school.
- 6.3 The Waste Aware Team will work with school management teams, facility management, school catering, pupils, and the Climate Change and Energy Team to help develop strategies for targeted waste reduction to maximise recycling and reduce non-recyclable waste.
- 6.4 Increasing recycling and reducing waste across the school estate will have multiple benefits, including:-
- i. helping the Council meet its Net Zero targets;
 - ii. reducing costs associated with disposing of mixed non-recyclable waste; and
 - iii. achieving positive behaviour changes by fostering a sense of environmental responsibility.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 23 December 2024

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: None