

Meeting Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee

Portfolio Area Environment & Regeneration

Date 20 October 2022



FOCUS ON IMPROVED RECYCLING

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Members of actions being taken to improve the Council’s recycling rates.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the report and provide their feedback at the meeting.

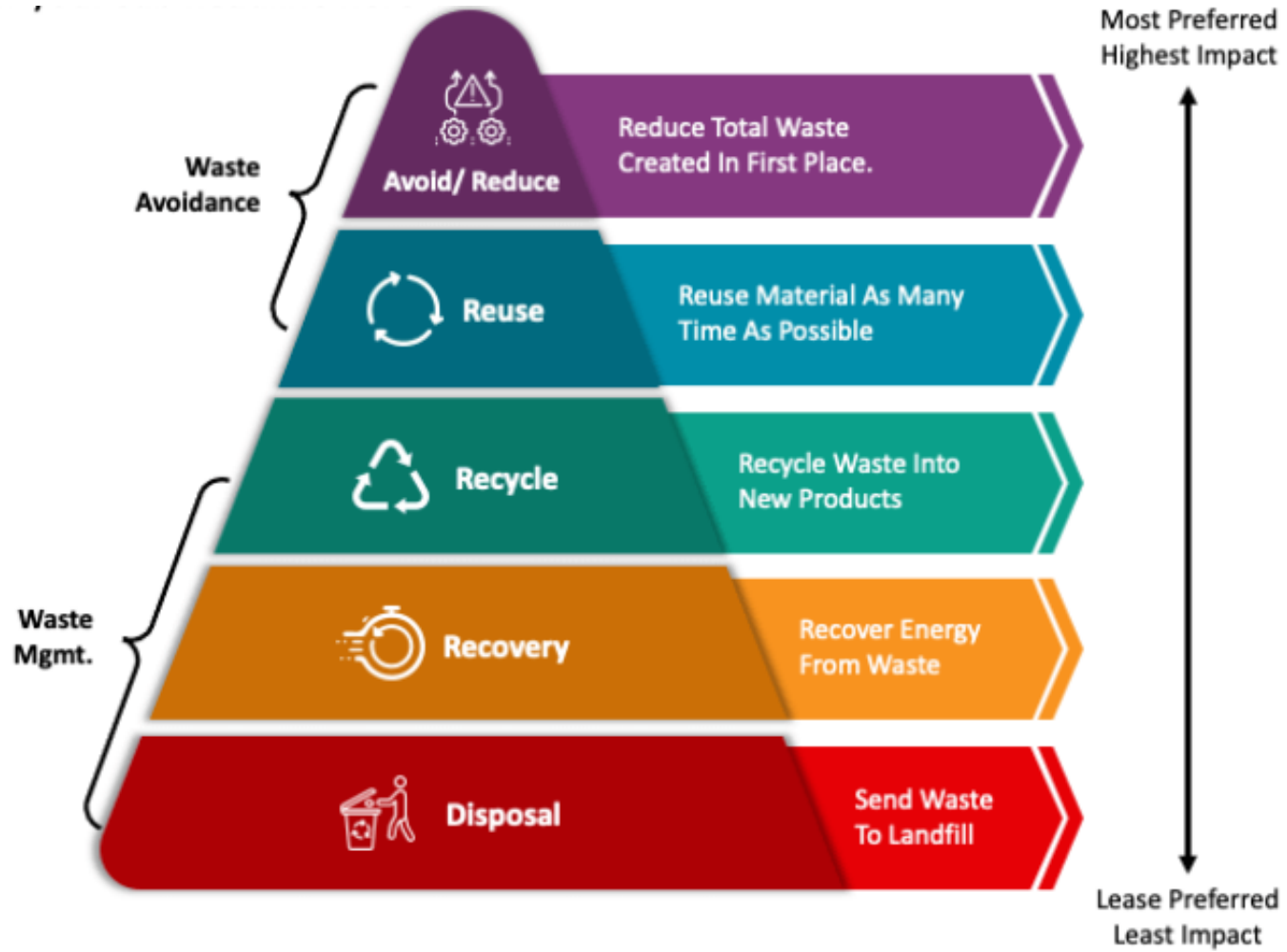
3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The “waste hierarchy” ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment.

It gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place. When waste is created, it gives priority to preparing it for re-use, then recycling, then recovery, and last of all disposal (e.g. landfill). See Figure 1.

There is an increased focus on the environment and environmental sustainability, which also aligns to our climate change ambitions.

Figure 1: The Waste Hierarchy



- 3.2 Despite Stevenage households producing one of the lowest rates of waste in the County (Appendix 1, Table 1), we have consistently fallen below the County and national recycling rates. Our current recycling rate is 40% while the national average, in 2020, was 44%. The average recycling rate in Hertfordshire, in 2020/21, was 52.4%.
- 3.3 We have the lowest recycling rate in Hertfordshire (Appendix 1, Table 2), however Stevenage has a different demographic to many of our neighbours in Hertfordshire, plus a several hundred flatted properties, and this does impact on recycling rates.
- In 2018-19; 85% of local authorities that were among the top 20% most deprived had household recycling rates below the overall average of 42%. By contrast, just one in five of the 20% least deprived areas have a below-average recycling rate.
- 3.4 In 2019/20 Three Rivers District Council achieved the highest recycling rate in the country, at 64.1%. They provide a fortnightly collection of 140lt refuse bins, alongside a weekly collection of recycling and food waste.
- 3.5 In contrast to many of our counterparts across Hertfordshire, Stevenage operates an 'at source separation' system. That is we require residents to present separate material streams for kerb-side collection, rather than having a 'co-mingled' system where material streams are mixed in a single wheeled bin for collection.
- 3.6 This type of service has been delivered in Stevenage as it generates significant income, which helps to off-set some of the cost of the waste service. In 2019/20 over £655,000 of income was realised through the sale of household recycling to re-processors, and through recycling credits received from the County Council.
- In contrast, many local authorities collecting co-mingled dry recycling currently have to pay for the re-processing of their materials.
- 3.7 A report that the Waste & Resources Action Partnership (WRAP) produced for Stevenage in 2019 showed that:
- when compared to all other UK authorities, Stevenage falls into the top 50% for the capture of metal cans, plastic bottles and mixed plastic packaging.
 - When compared against authorities with the same rurality the Council falls into the top 25% for the capture of metal cans, plastic bottles and mixed plastic packaging.
- 3.8 WRAP also noted that we perform comparably or better than average, in terms of the efficiency of our kerbside collections.

- 3.9 Following the approval of the Stevenage Household Waste Policy in 2020 the standard size of residual waste bin now provided has been reduced from 240lt to 180lt, with more robust criteria for households requesting a larger bin.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

There are a number of measures that have been or are being considered to help increase recycling rates in Stevenage:

4.1 Introducing a separate weekly food waste collection service

This proposal also forms part of the governments emerging national Resources & Waste Strategy which is delayed, but it is hoped that it will be published during 2022.

When a legislative / policy change like this is implemented, the government are expected to provide funding to pay for the costs of implementing the changes e.g. additional staff and vehicles, and this is known as 'new burdens' funding.

Officers have undertaken preparatory work regarding the implementation of a separate weekly food waste collection service, however clarity on new burdens is required which is expected within the Resources & Waste Strategy. This preparatory work also considers different ways in which this, and our existing kerbside collection service, can be delivered to maximise the benefits and encourage residents to recycle more.

One consideration is providing a weekly recycling collection alongside the existing fortnightly residual waste collection; something that St Albans and Three Rivers Council's already do. This, and other options, will need to be costed and considered in line with the national Strategy.

- 4.2 Early work with WRAP suggests the reduction to 180ltr bins and a separate food waste could result in a potential 9-10% increase in our recycling rate. The smaller bin size is a measure accounted for within the Household Waste Management Policy, however these bins are being provided on a replacement basis and not rolled out Town wide.

4.3 Review of recycling facilities for residents living in flat blocks, with the aim of improving recycling rates in these locations.

Capital funding has been approved in 2022/23 to enable a pilot to be delivered to 3-4 flat block sites. A short survey of residents in those flat blocks is being finalised and will be made available in October 2022. The results of the survey will be used to design a programme of improvements to those sites.

Works may include:

- implementation of new bins, infrastructure and signage similar to that delivered as a pilot to three bring bank sites during 2021;
 - new campaign information to support use of new / improved recycling facilities;
 - identifying residents who are willing, and able, to act as Recycling Champions – providing encouragement, support and advice to other residents in the flat block to improve recycling.
- 4.4 Consideration of on-the-go recycling facilities, and associated education / campaigns, in the town centre, High Street and Neighbourhood Centres.
- 4.5 A Stevenage Household Waste Strategy, to support the delivery of these and other actions aimed at minimising waste and maximising recycling has been drafted. However, finalising the document has been put on hold, pending the publication of the Resources & Waste Strategy, to ensure that the local strategy aligns with the national one.
- 4.6 The restrictions in place over the last 24 months, due to Covid, have had a significant impact on our ability to engage with the community to promote waste minimisation and improve recycling / reuse. However, in 2022 we recommenced our engagement with schools, and will be looking to community events such as Stevenage Day etc again.
- 4.8 Within the next 12 months we expect to have greater clarification on the requirements of the national Resources & Waste Strategy and data from the flat block pilot, both of which will help inform our future service delivery, promotion and education. These activities also support the wider environmental sustainability and climate change ambitions of the Council.

Appendix 1

Table 1. Total household wastes (kilograms per household)

Year	Broxbourne	Dacorum	East Herts	Hertsmere	North Herts	St Albans	Stevenage	Three Rivers	Watford	Wel / Hat
2020/21	950	933	917	930	864	943	896	910	858	876
2019/20	865	838	867	854	795	825	814	862	802	781
2018/19	871	851	884	863	803	838	829	864	810	800
2017/18	916	873	901	899	866	859	846	899	841	788
2016/17	923	895	889	904	872	868	861	907	859	821
2015/16	907	895	910	912	875	869	881	927	858	871
2014/15	930	887	906	920	866	869	890	950	855	931
2013/14	919	898	902	923	856	877	857	953	845	962

(source: WasteDataFlow – includes updated figures for previous years where available)

Table 2. Recycling percentages

Year	Broxbourne	Dacorum	East Herts	Hertsmere	North Herts	St Albans	Stevenage	Three Rivers	Watford	Wel / Hat
2020/21	42.4	54.5	51.5	44.4	55.9	64.2	40.2	63.1	50.0	47.8
2019/20	41.5	52.8	50.7	44.4	57.5	63.0	39.5	64.1	45.3	46.6
2018/19	42.0	52.3	49.9	44.3	56.8	62.1	40.0	63.0	45.1	45.4
2017/18	41.8	52.5	49.4	43.6	57.5	59.5	38.3	62.4	44.3	43.4
2016/17	41.1	51.1	51.2	43.4	58.9	57.5	39.8	61.9	42.9	53.0
2015/16	40.3	49.1	48.4	42.1	57.6	52.2	39.4	59.4	40.1	48.5
2014/15	35.0	46.3	49.5	43.3	58.5	50.4	38.2	63.2	41.7	48.0
2013/14	35.0	46.2	48.5	43.2	57.3	47.7	37.4	62.4	40.6	46.6

(source: WasteDataFlow – includes updated figures for previous years where available)

Table 3. Changes in recycling and composting in 2020/21

Authority	2019/20	2020/21	Change
Broxbourne	41.5%	42.4%	+0.9%
Dacorum	52.8%	54.5%	+1.7%
East Herts	50.7%	51.5%	+0.8%
Hertsmere	44.4%	44.4%	---
North Herts	57.5%	55.9%	-1.6%
St Albans	63.0%	64.2%	+1.2%
Stevenage	39.5%	40.2%	+0.7%
Three Rivers	64.1%	63.1%	-1.0%
Watford	45.3%	50.0%	+4.7%
Wel / Hat	46.6%	47.8%	+1.2%
Herts CC	58.7%	56.9%	-1.7%
HWP	52.3%	52.4%	+0.1%

(source: Hertfordshire Waste Partnership)