

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 27 February 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair) (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice-Chair) (Vice Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Forhad Chowdhury, Alistair Gordon, Claire Parris, Ellie Plater CC, Nigel Williams and Jade Woods

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 7.42pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Leanne Brady and Sarah Mead.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 14 JANUARY 2025

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 WASTE & RECYCLING PRESENTATION

The Chair introduced the Officers in attendance and provided an overview of Stevenage Borough Council's waste and recycling services, highlighting the team's dedication, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chair informed the Committee that the purpose of the presentation was to introduce waste and recycling, setting the stage for future scrutiny sessions.

Key Points from the Presentation:

Roles and Responsibilities: The Council served as the Waste Collection Authority, while Hertfordshire County Council oversaw waste disposal.

Statistics:

- 38,000 properties served, including 8,500 flats.
- 43 staff members (15 HGV drivers, 28 operatives).
- 495 trade customers.
- £807,000 income in 2023/24, with a net profit of £199,000.
- Staffing costs: £1.7 million.
- Net cost per property per week: £1.07.

Collection Arrangements:

- Gradual replacement of 240-litre refuse bins with 180-litre bins.
- Multiple recycling containers available upon request.
- Garden and food waste collected together in 240-litre brown bins.

Waste Processing:

- 75% of general waste sent to energy-from-waste plants.
- Recycling sent to paper mills and material recovery facilities.
- Over 30,000 tonnes of material processed in 2023/24.

Legislative Changes and Future Plans:

Simpler Recycling: Standardisation of recycling processes nationwide, aiming for a 65% recycling target by 2035.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): Producers to fund packaging waste disposal, with councils receiving payments.

Deposit Return Scheme: Single-use plastic bottles and cans to carry a deposit charge from 2027.

Food Waste Project:**Implementation:**

- New service to be rolled out to trade customers in 2025 and households in 2026.
- Weekly food waste collections to be introduced.
- DEFRA funding allocated in three stages: Capital, Transitional, and Resource Funding.

Challenges and Solutions:

- Addressing odour control and pest issues in flats.
- Ensuring compliance with food waste storage regulations.
- Developing a comprehensive communications plan.

Members asked questions covering a wide range of topics, as set out below, along with the Officer responses:

Waste Travel Distance and Environmental Impact: Officers clarified that waste was sent to sites outside Hertfordshire due to the lack of local facilities. The County Council managed waste disposal contracts, and while new local facilities had been considered, none were currently planned.

Multiple Waste Destinations: Capacity limitations at different facilities necessitated multiple contracts for waste disposal across several locations.

Weekly Food Waste Collections: Officers explained that weekly collections aimed to minimise waste and prevent odour issues. DEFRA funding was available, but its

long-term sustainability remained uncertain.

Food Waste Recycling Rate: Officers did not have an exact figure as food waste was collected with garden waste. Previous analysis showed that only 64% of residents used their brown bin and approximately 35% of residual waste was food.

Garden Waste Disposal Methods: In-vessel composting (IVC) and windrow composting were used to process food and garden waste.

Environmental Impact of Kitchen Caddies: Officers confirmed that residents could use their existing containers to reduce unnecessary waste.

Public Street Bins for Food Waste: Officers acknowledged the potential benefits but stated it was not currently feasible due to resource constraints.

Contaminants in Recycling: The most common contaminant was food waste, followed by plastic bags. PET1 plastics were generally recyclable. Bin stickers were used to notify residents of contamination issues.

Retailer Role in Reducing Contamination: Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation aimed to improve packaging recyclability and implement a universal labelling system.

Residual Waste Figures: Figures represented total residual waste divided by the number of households.

Comparison with North Hertfordshire: North Hertfordshire's food waste collections and smaller refuse bins likely contributed to higher recycling rates.

Financial Implications: Stevenage generated income from recycling due to its separated collection system, whereas North Hertfordshire incurred additional costs for mixed recycling processing.

Contaminated Paper and Cardboard: Wet paper was dried and reprocessed at the Council's transfer station.

Neighbourhood Recycling Bring Banks: Enhancements funded by UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Climate Change Community Fund grants aimed to reduce contamination and improve recycling rates.

Engagement with Younger Generation: School visits, assemblies, and re-establishing the Stevenage Green Network were planned to encourage sustainability.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their presentation and invited Members to discuss areas for detailed scrutiny. Members suggested flat blocks, bring banks, communications, and recycling rates.

A site visit to the Cavendish Road depot and observations of waste collections were suggested.

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR