

**Cabinet**  
**16 April 2015****4. SCRUTINY REPORT: INTEGRATED WASTE**

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| <b>Relevant Cabinet Member</b> | Mr A N Blagg   |
| <b>Relevant Officer</b>        | Director of Business, Environment and Community  |
| <b>Recommendation</b>          | <p><b>1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for the Environment recommends that the Cabinet:</b></p> <p><b>(a) receives the Scrutiny Report on Integrated Waste, together with the response from the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for the Environment; and</b></p> <p><b>(b) notes the Scrutiny Report's findings and recommendation and adopts the response of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility as the way forward.</b></p>   |
| <b>Background Information</b>  | <p><b>2. On 16 January 2014 Full Council agreed the following Notice of Motion:</b></p> <p>"It is frequently suggested that large savings can be achieved by combining District Councils' responsibility for collection of waste with the County Council's responsibility for disposal. In view of this Council requests the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) to set up a Task and Finish Group in conjunction with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility to investigate the potential of an integrated refuse collection and disposal service across the County leading to greater efficiency and more sustainable outcomes. This review to be completed by October 2014."</p> |
| <b>Terms of Reference</b>      | <p><b>3. On 30 January 2014 the OSPB agreed that a Scrutiny Task Group should be set up, led by Councillor Ken Pollock to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>investigate the potential for introducing an integrated waste collection and disposal service in Worcestershire</li></ul>   |

## **Scrutiny Findings/Conclusions and Recommendation**

- examine potential costs, savings, benefits and barriers
- make recommendations to Cabinet on a way forward.

4. All of the District Council Overview and Scrutiny Committees were invited to put forward a member to take part in the scrutiny, and Cllr Neil Laurensen from Worcester City Council joined the task group.

5. The cost of dealing with municipal waste in the two counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire is £57m p.a. and costs are increasing.

6. At present waste disposal is run by a single company across the two counties. It has organised itself to optimise waste disposal activities, principally at Envirosort in Norton and at the Energy from Waste plant being constructed in Hartlebury. In addition, it has encouraged route optimisation between District Councils, and optimal siting of its transfer stations, taking waste from collection areas to disposal sites.

7. There is already successful joint working between partners across Herefordshire and Worcestershire and a commitment to deliver the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

8. Options for further integration include the creation of a Joint Waste Authority or the development of joint waste collection contracts.

9. While a case could be made for District Councils to combine their waste collection operations, this would involve a significant loss of sovereignty over a crucial activity that has a direct bearing on a council's standing in the eyes of the general public. Any joint collection contracts that might in future be developed would need to enable local flexibility, but it was concluded that partners' concerns about loss of sovereignty and weakened accountability could be overcome with well-designed governance arrangements.

10. Creation of a joint waste authority would enable a more unified waste minimisation and recycling campaign and would result in potential savings, but these are likely to vary amongst partners and a robust business case would be needed to assess exactly what those savings might be.

11. The examples examined in Somerset and Oxfordshire demonstrate that while combining operations can bring financial benefits (£1.7m p.a. in Somerset's case), it is essential that there is a strong desire from at least one of the participating authorities for the project to succeed, in order

for it to even be considered.

12. In the case of the six District Councils in Worcestershire, there are few if any signs that such desire exists to any realistic extent at present and in consequence it is difficult to see such a move coming about in the near future. It will be essential to have political champions across Herefordshire and Worcestershire to take forward any further joint working.

13. The scrutiny has established that at present, there would only be a desire to create a joint waste authority in Herefordshire and Worcestershire if significant savings could be guaranteed for all partners.

**14. Recommendation: Given this situation, it is essential that an audit is conducted to find out what savings might be made from integrating waste in the county. It is recommended that the County Council's Business, Environment and Community Directorate should explore whether Government or other funding, e.g. from the West Midlands Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, is available for this purpose. If significant savings could be guaranteed it would be financially beneficial to come together in the fashion found to be successful in Somerset.**

15. The OSPB endorsed the scrutiny report on 29 January 2015. The report has been circulated separately.

## **Response of the Cabinet Member**

16. The scrutiny process provides for the relevant Cabinet Member with Responsibility to submit to the Cabinet a response to the scrutiny report's findings and recommendation to be considered alongside the Scrutiny Report.

17. A copy of the response from the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for the Environment is attached as an Appendix.

## **Supporting Information**

- Appendix - Response of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for the Environment
- Integrated Waste Scrutiny Report – previously circulated and is available in the Member Support area, at County Hall Reception and on the Council's website:  
[http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/5286/integrated\\_waste\\_services](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/5286/integrated_waste_services)

## **Contact Points**

### **County Council Contact Points**

Worcester (01905) 763763, Kidderminster (01562) 822511 or Minicom: Worcester (01905) 766399

## Background Papers

### Specific Contact Points

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In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Commercial and Change) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and Minutes of:

- Council – 16 January 2014
- Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board – 29 January 2015

All of which are available on the Council's website at <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/democratic-services/minutes-and-agendas.aspx>