

Response to Consultation - Resource and Waste Management Strategy

February 2021

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Background

Torbay Council's draft Resource and Waste Management Strategy was published for consultation on 28 September 2020. The consultation period ran until 9 November 2020.

The consultation sought to determine whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the essential elements of the Strategy. The survey, which was run solely online, provided the opportunity for respondents to explain their reasons for disagreement and how each area could be improved upon.

818 online surveys were received with a total of 1205 pieces of additional explanatory text. In addition, 58 emailed responses were received during the period of the consultation, with a further 4 additional responses, by email and letter, received after the closing date.

We appreciate the time that so many residents took to read the draft Strategy and to give their feedback.

This report sets out the Cabinet's response to the consultation, providing an overview of the changes made to each section of the Strategy as well as how other responses received will be taken forward.

Introduction

Within the Introduction we have highlighted our overall aim of increasing the recycling rate in Torbay as well as describing in more detail the work that has already taken place to improve how we deal with recycling and waste.

The links between the Resource and Waste Management Strategy and the Energy and Climate Change Strategy have been strengthened and we recognise that more work needs to be done, collectively, to address the Climate Emergency.

Respondents made reference to the emissions from our recycling vehicles. Our new recycling vehicles have the most efficient up-to-date diesel engines. At this stage electric powered options for large waste and street cleansing vehicles are still very much in development stage. The current battery technology would not power them for a whole days use, so additional vehicles would be needed which very much defeats the object.

Many respondents suggested that we need to make sure the current arrangements for the collection of recycling and waste work as they should do before making changes to the service. With the creation of SWISCo in **June/July 2020**, we are committed to ensuring that the best possible services are delivered within Torbay and we are putting in place improvement plans to ensure that this happens.

The Local Context

A number of respondents expressed the need for there to be clear information about what can and cannot be recycled, and to encourage more recycling.

Education and engagement is a critical part of our Strategy and we have strengthened this section to recognise that we need to work in partnership. We will ensure that a range of methods and communication means are used to reach as many in the community as possible, including our schools and businesses.

The Regional Context

Whilst there has been little change to this section, Torbay Council has reviewed best practice elsewhere, both locally and around the UK. We have looked at waste collection holistically and this is the reason that we have employed the current system.

We have followed advice from the Department for the Environment, Fisheries and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), WRAP, LARAC and other waste industry leads to help and advise on how to best improve our recycling rate. Their advice has been taken on board in preparing the Resource and Waste Management Strategy.

Torbay's methodology of kerbside sorting of recycling is seen as one of the most effective models. It not only recovers high levels of recyclate, but means that the recyclate is of good clean quality that will be accepted by the recycling markets. This means we are able to adhere to tighter central government targets.

The National Context

We have expanded the explanation of the Government's consultation on extended producer responsibility for packaging as many respondents suggested that the Council should be encouraging businesses to include less packaging on products. The Extended Producer Responsibility will address improving what packaging materials are used, as ultimately producers will have to pay local authorities to dispose of the waste they have generated.

We will, however, continue to work with our local business community to help move our collective behaviours higher up the Waste Hierarchy and we will make our views known to the Government through responding to their consultations and continuing to have close relationships with our MPs.

Objectives, Principles and Aims

We have provided a further explanation of our Objective of managing waste in accordance with the Waste Hierarchy. We will be as clear as we can with our community that we want to prevent waste from being produced in the first place, then enable the reuse of products and improving how much we recycle.

We will recover energy from waste through our joint partnership with Plymouth City Council and Devon County Council which will continue for the next 20 years.

None of our non-recycled waste is sent to landfill – which is the “disposal” at the bottom of the waste hierarchy.

Reasons for Change

We already knew from the correspondence that we receive on a day-to-day basis that residents are not happy with the service that they have received in the past from TOR2. These views were also shared by many of you during the consultation process.

Part of the reason for establishing SWISCo was so that we, the Council, could have better control over the services we provide. We have included a new section within the Resources and Waste Management Strategy to explain the reasons why want to change (and in the order of priority):

- **The Climate Emergency**

We want to work with our communities to ensure they recognise the links between recycling, waste and climate change.

- **Improved customer experience**

We want to improve our recycling and waste service and we have the fleet of vehicles and technology to do this. We will work with you and our crews so that together we can be more efficient. We will improve how we communicate with our customers. We also recognise that this won't be a five minute fix.

- **Financial benefits**

We know that waste disposal is one of the biggest costs we face as a local authority. By increasing our recycling rates, we can save money on waste disposal that we can reinvest into other services, including our recycling service.

Making the changes

Action 1: Increased education, engagement and communication

You told us during the consultation that you wanted more information about what can and cannot be recycled and that those within our community who are not recycling as much as they should be should be encouraged to do more.

Torbay already collects most items that processors will recycle. If there is no market for what we collect then it will need to be included with the residual waste.

We have added more information under this action about the role of the Recycling Co-ordinators and how they will be working with our recycling teams – all with the aim of increasing our recycling rates.

We will proactively educate and encourage residents to recycle, and where it is obvious that residents are not participating, they will be strongly advised to change their habits. As a last resort, if any residents actively fly tip or refuse to recycle then they will be issued enforcement letters.

We've also strengthened the information within the Strategy about the different means by which we will provide clear information about the recycling service, including how residents can request additional or replacement containers and the options for disposing of nappies and/or medical waste.

Our education, engagement and communication campaigns will be critical to the successful implementation of this Strategy and we will be taking many of the comments raised (and misconceptions highlighted) through the consultation to inform these campaigns. We will continue with promotions such as "Love Food, Hate Waste" in partnership with others.

Action 2: Increase recycling capacity

We have changed the focus of this action from the draft Strategy – away from reduced frequency of residual waste collections toward increasing recycling capacity.

There were many responses which objected to a reduction in the frequency of residual waste collections, with many people stating that this was a cost cutting exercise.

The aim of this Resources and Waste Management Strategy is to increase recycling rates in order to help address the climate emergency.

This section has been updated to explain that:

- additional recycling boxes will be introduced, firstly in trial areas,
- practical advice on containment capacity will be given
- we will raise awareness of the amount waste households could recycle, especially food waste
- food waste will continue to be collected weekly, and
- any household can request additional recycling bins

The conclusion of this section is that if households recycle more, the amount of residual waste will be reduced and that this will mean we will not need to collect it as frequently.

As we say in the Strategy, East Devon District Council now has a recycling rate of around 62%. If Torbay could achieve half this gain, it would reduce our disposal tonnage by 5,000 tonnes. This has a positive impact on us achieving our climate change targets and would free up £500,000 to be invested in other services.

Action 3: Changes at the Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC)

There were comments within the consultation responses that the frequency of visits to the HWRC should be increased. As a result of listening to the concerns raised, on 5 October 2020, the frequency has been increased to four times every 28 days.

There were also comments about the potential for a resale shop to be situated at the HWRC. The site at Tor Park Road, Paignton is shared with the Transfer Station which bulks up recycling and residual waste prior to onward transport to the recycling processors and the Energy from Waste plant, respectively. This means that the site is always very busy with heavy plant operating daily. Therefore there is limited safe space to provide a resale shop as is provided by other local authorities.

We have considered setting one up in a different location, but this site would need its own waste permit, the required security and additional staffing. This means that, for both efficiency and financial reasons, the benefits are not sufficient for us to progress this option.

Action 4: Introduce a garden waste collection service

We have added to this section that we will be investing in vehicles and containers in order to progress this action.

Action 5: Review collections from flats and multiple occupancy buildings

No changes have been made to this section but we recognise that this is an area of frustration for residents and will work to improve our collections from these types of premises.

Action 6: Develop commercial waste services

We have updated this section to ensure that we are encouraging businesses to operate at the highest level of the waste hierarchy.

Action 7: Litter and street cleansing and fly tipping

Again we recognise the frustration that residents have with these services and we will review how they operate. A new Environmental Enforcement contract is now in place which will help to address the issues of littering and fly tipping.

Action 8: Review of recycling banks

We have added a new action in response to the comments made about the provision of recycling bank across Torbay.