

Towards Zero Waste

Report by Trevor Muir, Chief Executive

1. Introduction

This report acknowledges that the Scottish policy landscape in terms of waste management has changed substantially with high aspirational targets being set by the Scottish Government. In recognition of the need for Midlothian to continue to play a leading role in Scotland, the Cabinet is asked to adopt a resolution “*Towards a Zero Waste Midlothian*” which will set the framework to progress a local delivery plan.

2. Background

A detailed initial position paper on Zero Waste produced by the Lothian and Borders Waste Management Team is provided for background information at Appendix 1.

The Project Team believe the concept of Zero Waste is one part of an interlinking series of steps on the road towards sustainable resource management. It is more of a progressive and aspiration journey rather than a fully achievable goal. In addition to reuse, recycling and energy recovery, it involves clean production decisions, policies and actions to minimise waste, most of which are outwith the control of local government.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment when he met with political representatives of the five Lothian and Borders Councils on 21 May 2008 was encouraged by the general intention of Councils in the area to develop their own Zero Waste Visions and seek formal adoption by their Councils.

The proposed resolution “*Towards a Zero Waste Midlothian*” is provided for consideration at Appendix 2

3. Report Implications

3.1. Resource

This report is not providing detailed proposals for any specific projects or new services which have resource implications but adoption of a “*Towards a Zero Waste Midlothian*” resolution will result in proposals being formulated that will have financial and human resource implications.

There are substantial financial implications ahead for all Scottish Councils if they are to work in partnership with the Scottish Government on the journey towards a Zero Waste Scotland. There is also a severe penalty regime in place where fines can be imposed by the Scottish Government for excess landfilling of wastes if Councils were to continue with current practices.

It was estimated that an additional £5 million per year by 2021, at today’s prices could be required by Midlothian Council if it is to aim for maximum practicable compliance with the new Scottish Government’s waste policies. Although the Scottish

Government has recently published its Infrastructure Investment Plan 2008 and has advised that waste management infrastructure projects are to be considered by the proposed Scottish Futures Trust, it is not yet clear how the Scottish Government anticipate this level of investment being provided. Any project proposals brought forward to move towards a Zero Waste Society will therefore require to be carefully costed for consideration by Cabinet.

In considering the necessary investment, any potential support from the Government's new Zero Waste Fund (£100 million over 3 years) shall be taken into account, but this will not on its own be sufficient to bridge the identified funding gaps in the future.

3.2. Risk

Risk management was very much at the heart of the Lothian and Borders Waste Management Project. In considering the options for any new Projects to support a resolution to move "*Towards a Zero Waste Midlothian*" with or without other Council partners, the Cabinet will be provided with an appropriate risk assessment should any recommendation be brought to Members.

The Council will also have to balance proposals against the risk that failure to act will expose the Council to increasing landfill tax and potential fines. Fines can be imposed for excess landfilling as a result of the European landfill Directive which limits the amount of biodegradable municipal waste permitted to be landfilled. The Councils exposure to fines alone is around £0.250m in 2009/10 rising to £2.8m by 2019/20, the last date for which targets have been set.

3.3. Policy

Strategy

The proposals support a number of Council priorities covering the following agreed objectives:

- Objective 1- Supporting healthy, caring and diverse communities where local needs are met
- Objective 2- Maximising business opportunities
- Objective 4- Conserving and improving Midlothian's natural environment; and
- Objective 6- Delivering Responsive, Efficient and Effective Services to the People of Midlothian

Consultation

The Directors of Corporate and Commercial Services have been consulted in preparation of this report.

Equalities

This report is not proposing new services, policies, strategies, or plans which will require to be assessed for equalities implications.

Sustainability

The proposals in this report support the Council's core value of Sustainability as outlined in its Corporate Strategy:

“we want to ensure that everything we do can be justified by its positive long-term social, economic and environmental benefit to Midlothian and so is not done merely for short-term gain.”

By adopting the proposed resolution Midlothian Council will be laying out its long term vision of a Zero Waste Midlothian and would be consistent with the Council's Sustainability Strategy.

4. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to adopt the resolution *“Towards a Zero Waste Midlothian”* as provided at Appendix 2.

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Report Contact: Gordon Pollock

Tel No: 0131 271 3334

E mail: Gordon.pollock@midlothian.gov.uk