

Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee Monday 25 March 2024

Report Title	Waste Management Three-Year Plan (update)
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Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Which Corporate Plan priority does the report most closely align with? Our priorities for the future North Northamptonshire Council (northnorthants.gov.uk)	Green, sustainable environment

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. In September 2022, the Executive approved the Council’s first Waste Management Three Year Plan (2022-2025) (“The Three-Year Plan”). This report provides an update on progress against that plan and looks ahead to the remaining period of the plan.
- 1.2. A key decision for the Executive, identified within the Three-Year Plan, is the future delivery of waste collection (and street cleaning) services in East Northamptonshire. This report seeks the views of the Scrutiny Committee in determining the most appropriate delivery model for those services.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) is committed to delivering a high-quality waste collection service. The Waste Management Three Year Plan (“The Three-Year Plan”) sets out the work the service is undertaking to optimise the service, engage new contracts and understand and prepare for the direction of future waste services in North Northamptonshire. The Council’s Three-Year Plan, as approved by the Executive in September 2022, can be found here: [Appx A - Waste Management 3 Year Plan FINAL.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee:

- (a) Note the progress against the Waste Management Three-Year Plan and the remaining actions to be delivered.
- (b) Consider the future delivery model for waste collection (including street cleaning) services in the East Northamptonshire area and provide their comments on the potential options.

3.1. Reason for Recommendations –

- Given the time elapsed since the Three-Year Plan was adopted and the progress against the plan, it is valuable to have the comments and views of the Scrutiny Committee on the progress made to date and the remaining actions to be implemented.
- There is a key decision for the Executive to make regarding the future delivery model for waste collection services in the East Northamptonshire area. It would be valuable to receive the views of the Scrutiny Committee on this matter.

3.2. Alternative Options Considered –

- There is the option for the Committee not to comment on the Three-Year Plan and to refer this to the Executive without any comments. The Committee could also choose not to discuss and consider the future delivery model of waste collection services in the East Northamptonshire area. In both cases, these options are not recommended as it is considered valuable to receive the views of the Committee on these matters.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. The Council's waste team deliver services for all North Northamptonshire's residents. These consist of waste kerbside collection services for co-mingled recycling, general waste (refuse), garden waste and food waste (in the areas of Corby and East Northamptonshire only). The Council also has a range of disposal arrangements to treat the material in the most environmentally conscious and economical way. Furthermore, the Council operates a network of Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs) offering a wide range of recycling and disposal services for residents, which are free of charge to use.
- 4.2. In September 2021, the Council agreed a Waste Management Three-Year Plan ("The Three-Year Plan") that laid out the intended developments for the waste services. The actions in the plan sought to harmonise services, which were inherited from the former borough and district councils, where appropriate to do so, and continue to develop the services to reflect emerging Government regulation and guidance. It was also necessary to undertake a

range of procurement activity to ensure suppliers and contractors were in place to treat the waste and recycling in the most appropriate and economical manner.

- 4.3. As part of the Government's plans to reform waste collections and packaging, now referred to as *Simpler Recycling*, the Government has been carrying out extensive consultation with local authorities and the waste, packaging and retail sectors regarding future recycling arrangements and requirements for local authorities. The aim is to ensure that people across England can recycle the same materials consistently for the benefit of the environment. This consultation and the emerging regulatory framework have taken longer to complete than was expected. This has delayed some of the work that the local authority intended to complete as the Government's strategy is required to inform the future of recycling collection services across North Northamptonshire. Nonetheless, the Council has made significant progress against its own Three-Year Plan published in September 2022.
- 4.4. The action plan within the Three-Year Plan are presented on pages 16-21 of the document, which can be found [on the Council's website](#).
- 4.5. One of the early decisions made by the Executive was to transfer the services provided by Wellingborough Norse back within the direct control of the Council. This decision was made before the Three-Year Plan was adopted and therefore is not contained within the action plan. This activity saw the return to in-house provision for waste and cleansing activities in the Wellingborough area, including provision of waste transfer arrangements and a new fleet. This was a significant transformation project supported by colleagues from across the organisation, including finance, legal, procurement, fleet service, ICT and property. The project was successfully completed in April 2022.
- 4.6. The following actions from the Three-Year plan have been completed:
 - **Procure disposal arrangements for Dry Mixed Recycling:** This contract commenced in December 2022.
 - **Procure disposal arrangements for green waste for composting:** This contract commenced in April 2023.
 - **Procure disposal arrangements for Kitchen Food Waste:** The procurement process is underway. Tenders have been received and it is envisaged that the new arrangements will be in place by April 2024.
 - **Implement route optimisation for Kettering and Corby:** Phase one of round optimisation to address the variations in operating practices inherited from the legacy Kettering / Corby shared service. Further phases will be required to account for the growing number of houses in the area, and to continually integrate the rounds across former district and borough boundaries. This was completed in September 2022.

- **Implement route optimisation for Wellingborough:** Phase one of round optimisation to address the resourcing issues inherited from the legacy arrangements provided by Wellingborough Norse. Further phases will be required to account for the growing number of houses in the area, and to continually integrate the rounds across former district and borough boundaries. This was completed in January 2023.
- **Carry out Waste Composition Analysis:** Data has now been obtained which analyses the material presented by NNC residents within the non-recycling container. The analysis showed that the average household in North Northamptonshire during this period disposed of approximately 18kg of general household waste per collection. Within that total it was found that 14.47% of this material could have been recycled via the Council's existing kerbside recycling collections, e.g. paper, card and plastic bottles that could have been placed into the recycling bin. With another 34.04% of the sample comprising of food waste which for half of the sample could have been recycled by using the food waste service where provided. In addition, the sample also showed that 4.4% of the material was organic garden waste that can be managed by home composting, using the Council's network of Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs) or signing up to the Council's garden waste collection service. This was completed during Summer 2023.
- **Reducing contamination in the kerbside recycling waste stream:** Contamination continues to be a concern within the recycling sector. The team continues to promote good recycling practices through regular communications through direct literature to residents, including bin tags, as well as through the Council's website, social media and press releases. Where contamination is identified within bins, the crews will leave a bin tag with information about what should be placed into each bin. This work is on-going.
- **Implement changes to the garden waste service:** Following an Executive decision, the garden waste service across North Northamptonshire was harmonised so that all residents were able to access the same service. A new subscription service was introduced with a strong focus on self-service; the service now has approximately 70,000 users. This was completed in April 2023.
- As part of the on-going work to develop an efficient and customer-focused garden waste service, the team are implementing a new direct debit solution for service users. This will make it easier for residents to renew each year and reduce administration for the back-office teams. This is due to be completed in April 2024
- **Investigate opportunities to decarbonise critical infrastructure. To include electric and hydrogen hybrid options:** The team has carried out several trials of electric vehicles. Following those trials, the Council has leased an electric refuse collection vehicle. This is now operational on the service and is performing well. This experience will

influence future decisions about procuring fleet. Smaller vehicles are also being procured and considered for inclusion within the fleet.

- **Undertake procurement of the Corby closed landfill Operational & Maintenance contract and also the wider technical support contract for all closed landfills:** a new contract is in the final stages of being put in place to ensure the Council continues to fulfil its statutory obligations for Corby closed landfill under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and remain compliant with the site's Environmental Permit and Trade Effluent Consent. The new contract is intended to commence on 1st April 2024.
- **Secure arrangements for the future provision of the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) to include Wood Waste disposal:** This procurement activity is on-going and is due to complete in time to secure future disposal arrangements and provision of the HWRC services in April 2025.
- **Communications Plan for Waste Awareness & Prevention:** The waste team maintains an on-going communications campaign aligning with national campaigns and 'calls to action'.

4.7. To continue the process of transforming the waste services, the following actions, originating from the Three-Year Plan, are required to be delivered:

- **Options Appraisal of all waste collection services for the ending of the FCC contract:** The waste collection (including street cleaning) services in East Northamptonshire are currently provided by an external contractor. The services operate from a depot in Chelveston. The contract has been in place since 2018. In July 2025, there is an opportunity to extend the contract by up to a further seven years or allow the contract to end at that point. If the contract is not extended the Council will need to implement an alternative delivery model in time to avoid any disruption to this highly valued, and essential, service for residents. The service currently performs well with few disruptions and is well established.
- The team have started to explore these options with the intention to present a recommendation to the Executive for a decision. If the services are to transfer in-house, they will need to be in place by 1st August 2025.
- **Implement Food Waste Collections to Kettering and Wellingborough:** The Government has recently confirmed that all authorities will be required to provide food waste collections by April 2026. At the time of producing the Three-Year Plan, the Government had indicated that this date would be earlier, in April 2025. The waste team will now develop a programme of work to deliver the service in line with those timescales. This will also give an opportunity to promote the existing food waste collection services in the East Northamptonshire and Corby areas.

- **Introduce Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) doorstep collections in Wellingborough, Kettering and Corby:** The team have been waiting for the outcome of the Government's guidance on future recycling arrangements before progressing with this project. It is possible that the Government will make it a requirement to provide this service, and if necessary, may be providing further guidance and funding to implement the service. It is in the interest of the Council to have this confirmed by Government before they progress with this project.
- **Reorganisation of the waste team:** Since NNC was created, the team across North Northamptonshire have continually improved the way they work together across the former district and borough areas. This has brought efficiencies and service improvements such as increased resilience for the collection services. The next stage is to formerly restructure the team, so they reflect a unitary authority delivering waste collection and disposal activities. The first phase to reorganise the waste team has been launched and is underway. The second phase will follow, and it is expected that this will be completed during 2024.
- **Revisit all waste policies:** Given the Government's announcements, including changes to the maximum penalties for litter and fly-tipping, the team will be reviewing the policies to reflect future changes to the service. This will progress during 2024, with a view to have all policies reviewed and updated by April 2025.
- **Draft, for adoption, a Waste Strategy for North Northamptonshire:** The development of a local strategy is dependent on confirmation of the Government's national strategy. As this continues to emerge, the waste team will start to draft its own local strategy for adoption. This will progress in 2024 for likely adoption in early 2025.
- **Public Consultation on the types of Service they want in North Northamptonshire:** The Government's *Simpler Recycling* strategy has confirmed the requirements for local authority recycling collections. Given the requirement to collect recycling in line with the Government's strategy, there is less value in consulting the public on these matters. As the new services are embedded, it may be beneficial to consult with residents about how the Council could encourage higher take up of recycling to drive up performance. Opportunities to consult will be considered for the future.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1. Reviewing the Three-Year Plan

- 5.2. Given the progress in delivering the Three-Year Plan and the publication of the Government's *Simpler Recycling* strategy, it is now a good opportunity for the Council to review its Plan. The Scrutiny Committee is requested to review progress against the plan, note the actions still to be completed, and make comment on both.

5.3. Providing waste collection services in East Northamptonshire

- 5.4. The Council has a decision to make regarding the service delivered across East Northamptonshire. The Council could either seek to extend the contract with the provider for up to a further seven years or bring the service in-house.
- 5.5. The Scrutiny Committee is requested to comment on which basis this decision should be made. The Executive could decide to bring the service in-house so that all waste collection services across North Northamptonshire are delivered directly by the Council through in-house teams. This would enable the authority to continue the integration of collection rounds and utilise resources across the boundaries of the former boroughs and districts.
- 5.6. Alternatively, the Executive could decide the future delivery model for services in East Northamptonshire based on the cost of delivering the services. This would rely on financial analysis to determine which service delivery model is more cost-effective and decide on that basis. This analysis has not yet been undertaken so it is not yet possible to determine which delivery model is more cost effective. If the external provider was deemed to represent better value for money than an in-house service, then the decision could be to extend the contract. This may mean there is a mixed approach to service delivery with some services in North Northamptonshire being delivered in-house and others delivered by external providers.
- 5.7. If the contract was extended for some additional years, the Executive could take that time to consider its longer-term approach to delivering the services. During that period, it could determine whether it wanted to externalise all the waste collection services across North Northamptonshire through a procurement exercise, or whether it wanted to integrate them all into one directly delivered in-house model. The authority could also consider establishing an arms-length organisation to deliver those services on behalf of the Council.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. It is intended to present progress against the Three-Year Plan to the Executive at its meeting to be held in April 2024. An updated plan for the remaining years of the plan, considering the Scrutiny Committee's comments, will also be presented to the Executive.
- 6.2. The Executive will be presented with options, and a recommendation, regarding the future provision of waste collection services in the East Northamptonshire area. This will be informed by the comments of the Scrutiny Committee.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1. The waste collection service has a combined revenue budget of approximately £12m. This will be used to deliver the actions within the Three-Year Plan. Additional funding has been received from the Government for the introduction of the food waste service in Kettering and Wellingborough areas.
- 7.1.2. If the waste collection services in East Northamptonshire are to be transferred in-house, there would be additional costs related to the transfer of the services. These costs are yet to be finalised. The principal costs are likely to relate to the provision of replacement vehicles and equipment and establishing an operational depot in the local area.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. There are no legal implications arising from reviewing the Three-Year Plan. The plan sets work to be undertaken by the authority over the next three years and does not make any legal or commitments with third parties.
- 7.2.2. Each project within the plan may have legal and governance implications, as such these will be subject to review with relevant authorised officers throughout the duration of the project.
- 7.2.3. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires local authorities to provide waste collections to households (section 45) and the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 requires those collections to encompass arrangements to separately collect paper, metal, plastic, and glass as a minimum. The Environment Act 2021 amends these provisions to define recyclable waste as: (a) glass; (b) metal; (c) plastic; (d) paper and card; (e) food waste (f) garden waste.
- 7.2.4. The Environmental Protection Act 1990, at section 46, allows the Council to specify the size and type of containers in which waste is collected as well as the frequency of those collections.
- 7.2.5. The Council is permitted to charge for the collection of waste from non-domestic premises under Schedule 1 Section 4 (2) of the Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012. Section 45(3)(b) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 further provides that any charge must be “reasonable”. The Act does not define “reasonable,” but the usual meaning is that the charges should be comparable with those levied by other authorities and service providers and reflect the costs of delivering the service.
- 7.2.6. The Environmental Protection Act 1990, at section 51, places a duty on Councils to provide to provide Household Waste Recycling facilities. There is no mention of the number of facilities needed save the requirement for them to be ‘reasonably accessible to persons resident in the area.’
- 7.2.7. The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 requires contracts for supplies and services more than £189,330 to be tendered in accordance with the regulations by way of a tender process.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1. [North Northamptonshire Waste and Recycling Policy](#) as approved by Executive on 18th November 2021.
- 7.3.2. These policies have been designed to meet our statutory obligations in relation to waste collection and recycling and to ensure that there are clearly defined policies and standards in relation to the collection and disposal of waste and recyclable materials.
- 7.3.3. The proposal is in line with the Council's Corporate Plan, particularly the commitments to provide modern public services and create a greener, sustainable environment. The recommendations seek to promote a harmonised service, which promotes recycling opportunities for all users.
- 7.3.4. Activity undertaken in this service area is supported by the following corporate policies and plans: Highways & Waste Service Plan (2023-24); North Northamptonshire Waste & Recycling Policy; Street Cleansing Policies; Litter and Fly tipping strategy; Enforcement Policy for Waste Crime; and North Northamptonshire Council Carbon Management Plan

7.4. Risk

- 7.4.1. The loss of recycling processing and disposal facilities has been identified as a key risk for the waste management service and has been included in the service risk register. The disruption of collection services is also highlighted as a potential risk. The activities contained within the plan are controls to mitigate this risk.
- 7.4.2. There is a specific risk regarding the services delivered in the East Northamptonshire area. If future plans for this service are not determined and implemented before the current contract period expires, the waste collection services in this area would fail. It is necessary to ensure that the services are not disrupted in this way.

7.5. Consultation

- 7.5.1. In advance of any significant service changes, a public consultation exercise would be carried out to inform the proposed changes. It is not proposed to consult with the public on the service delivery model for East Northamptonshire i.e. contracted or in-house, unless this significantly changed the nature of the service they were receiving.

7.6. Consideration by the Executive

- 7.6.1. The Executive agreed the Three-Year Plan in September 2022 and will be asked to consider the updates to the plan, intended to be at its meeting in April 2024.

7.7. Equality Implications

- 7.7.1. An Equalities Screening Assessment (ESA) was completed for the original Three-Year Plan indicating no need at this stage for an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA). There were no negative impacts on any of the protected groups owing to the recommendations of this report. This report does not seek to alter the plan, only provide an update on progress to deliver the plan.
- 7.7.2. Specific projects and activities contained within the Three-Year Plan will require separate ESA and EqIAs to assess any equalities implications. These will be completed as detailed project plans are made for each activity. It may be necessary to provide more detailed action plans for any identified negative impact following those assessments.

7.8. Climate Impact

- 7.8.1. The Council, having declared a climate change and environment emergency in June 2021, is committed to reducing its climate impact both within its own Council buildings and in working with businesses and the wider community to achieve net zero energy emissions.
- 7.8.2. By ensuring the Council has appropriate arrangements in place for its obligations for the collection, treatment and disposal of the various waste streams, it can continue to promote and encourage the separate collection and treatment of recyclable material. This approach seeks to reduce the environmental impact of waste disposal. In addition, by virtue of the contract arrangements the Council can monitor the impacts of managing the material to ensure that it is ethically and environmentally managed in accordance with Waste Management legislation and aligns with the Council's strategy in terms of Climate Change.

7.9. Community Impact

- 7.9.1. The waste management service is highly valued by residents and most residents wish to increase the total amount of material recycled from households by utilising the full range of recycling opportunities available to them. By putting in place a contract, and the other activities contained within the Three-Year Plan, NNC can encourage and promote recycling, which provides all communities with the associated environmental and societal benefits.

7.10. Crime and Disorder Impact

- 7.10.1. By delivering the Three-Year Plan the Council is ensuring it has appropriate disposal routes for waste. As such it is tackling illegal waste disposal and associated anti-social activities therefore mitigating crime and disorder offences associated with illegal waste disposal.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1. [Waste Management 3 Year Plan \(2022-2025\)](#)

- 8.2. [North Northamptonshire Waste and Recycling Policy](#) - approved by Executive on 18th November 2021
- 8.3. [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#)