



Report of the Director of Communities and Environment

Report to Executive Board

Date: 24th July 2019

Subject: A Waste Strategy for the city of Leeds

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary

1. Main issues

- The Council last developed a waste strategy in 2006. Since that time, the Council has added to the kerbside collections of household waste, built the Recovery of Energy from Waste facility diverting huge quantities of waste from landfill and providing energy to heat homes, developed the reuse infrastructure in the city and, unlike many other LAs, continued to provide the vast majority of waste services to residents free of charge. Much has been achieved in the city in that time, but the landscape is changing and expectations are growing.
- The public are increasingly engaged on environmental issues with a growing awareness of the impact of their daily choices and actions on the environment. That interest and knowledge is bringing about change at a local, national and international level. Air quality is now acknowledged as an issue of concern; meat substitutes are increasingly being requested and provided on menus; single-use plastic straws and cups are widely being replaced. We now consume only 15% of the plastic bags that were in use before the 5p charge was introduced. The increased knowledge of the consequence of our everyday actions and a concern sufficient to make people want to do things differently all provide an opportunity for the city to improve how we manage our waste.
- A city conversation has commenced involving residents, local businesses, education and third sector partners. This conversation is intended to be ongoing, but the early indications are that responsibility for change is accepted and people

are generally ready to pledge and make changes themselves. The waste strategy will make the most of this interest and proposes an initial focus on reducing waste and reusing the valuable resource in our everyday items as much as a possible to avoid the constant 'need for new'.

- The Council of course has a key contribution to waste management in the city through the collection and processing of all household waste. Whilst the diversion of this from landfill has been transformed in Leeds in recent years and the proportion of household waste recycled has increased over time, it has been stalling more recently, in line with experience elsewhere. The Government published a Resources and Waste Strategy for England in December 2018 which, if implemented, would require some fundamental change in how we collect household waste in Leeds from approximately 2023 onwards. The Government has also stated it will cover net start up and ongoing costs of changes required by the national Strategy. As a result, the waste strategy for Leeds doesn't propose to make significant additions to kerbside collections at this stage, but rather to refresh and relaunch the current collection infrastructure and communications to increase recycling rates through better use of what is already in place.
- The Government is also proposing to introduce new performance metrics on recycling which include impact-based measures which may replace or supplement the familiar target of 50% household waste to be recycled (by weight) by 2020. This is welcomed and will support changes which can effect carbon savings in the city in line with the intention to be carbon neutral by 2030. However, this also will influence future collections locally and is another reason why there is no proposal at present to add to the current household waste collections at this time.
- A key feature of the waste strategy for the city is to ensure the environmental benefit, largely of carbon reductions, is a prime consideration when determining the most pressing actions to take in the short term. There is the potential for the strategy to be an early sign of the city's commitment and intent to be net carbon neutral by 2030.
- At present, there is much that could still change which should further shape and direct how the city manages its waste. With that is the ongoing conversation across the city which will help understand what's needed but also how best to secure change by all sectors. It is proposed to update the strategy by 2021 at the latest and therefore the strategy in this report should be seen as an interim strategy to outline our focus and direction until that time.

2. Best Council Plan Implications

- The implementation of the city's waste strategy is absolutely in line with our Best Council Plan ambitions in reducing consumption and increasing recycling in the city. The strategy has significant potential to promoting a less wasteful, more resource efficient, low carbon economy.
- **Climate Emergency**
In 2016, waste accounted for 4% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions. The UK charity Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) plan to 2020 states "an urgent and radical step-change is required in how efficiently we use the world's resources. The future is about enabling countries, businesses and individuals to

move away from the 'design, make, use and discard' model of the linear economy towards a resource efficient, more circular economy. An economy in which we keep resources in productive use as many times as human ingenuity can conceive. Where we can extract the maximum value from products and materials whilst in use, then recover and recycle resources at the end of each service life".

By adopting this philosophy and by putting carbon emissions at the core of our considerations when we review the waste strategy, it has a fundamental impact on the outcome - part of this is the acknowledgement that weight-based recycling targets don't always consider carbon emissions, and that waste reduction measures impact on our carbon emissions far more significantly than increasing our rate of recycling.

3. Resource Implications

- The implementation of the City's strategy will not require additional corporate funding to deliver and costs will be managed within the Directorate.
- The waste strategy is principally about how the city uses its resources and how we can value those more in practice to get best value. Whilst this is not primarily in pecuniary terms, the waste strategy is nevertheless built on optimising the use of what we have, enabling us to reduce unnecessary consumption of new products and the expense associated with that.

Recommendations

To consider and approve the interim waste strategy for the city at para 3.5 and to receive a comprehensive, updated strategy by 2021.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the context and intent of a new waste strategy for the city as an interim strategy until 2021.

2. Background information

- 2.1 The environmental issue of waste is a huge challenge both locally in Leeds and globally. In Leeds alone, we still produce over 600,000 tonnes a year of domestic and business waste. However, public awareness of its impacts has never been higher and this presents an opportunity for change.
- 2.2 The recent declaration of a Climate Change Emergency in Leeds and our commitment to achieve 'net zero carbon' by 2030 has set out starkly the need for radical action at every level, from international to individual, to avoid irreparable damage to the world's eco systems. The benefits of a resource efficient economy include growth and job creation in new business opportunities. The construction sector, ecosystem and resource management, renewable energy, eco-industries and recycling all have a high potential for employment growth. Increased economic stability through being resource efficient is a way to tackle the security of supply issues and market volatility in critical resources.
- 2.3 The Council last published a strategy on waste management in 2006. Much has changed in that time including what we collect from households and how that's processed and used beneficially as opposed to being seen purely as a waste disposal problem. The population in the city has both grown and altered, bringing challenges to long established ways of handling domestic waste well. We consume more and produce more waste than we did in 2006. However there is also now an increasing acceptance that we can't simply continue with our throw away culture without real consequence for the environment and the increased public interest provides a good platform for real and meaningful change.
- 2.5 The waste strategy presented in this report is not one of sole interest or relevance to the Council alone. It is intended as a strategy for the city, with a call to all sectors to play their part, both large and small. The Council is a key player of course, with responsibility and opportunity to optimise how we handle the waste we create as an organisation, by managing well the household waste we collect and also in providing leadership to co-ordinate effort and voice across the city to influence for the as good as widely as possible.
- 2.6 The contribution by the Council in managing household waste is increasingly directed by national expectations and directives from central government aimed at a greater national consistency. The Government published the Resources and Waste Strategy for England in December 2018 which launched a range of ideas and intentions with significant implications for how local Authorities would collect household waste in future. Following consultations which are now closed, announcements are due later this year to confirm for example, a core set of recyclable materials to be collected by LAs and the type and consistency of collection systems to preserve material quality. This is likely to include the type & number of containers householders will use for kerbside collections, with directions on collection frequencies for some waste streams. The Resources and Waste Strategy also confirms LAs will receive additional resource to meet new net costs,

including set up and ongoing costs to implement the changes directed by Government. This clearly presents a real challenge to LAs wanting to change kerbside collections now, but needing to hear from Government on what will be funded and required as a core kerbside collection service in just a few years' time. Whilst we are impatient to make changes locally, the landscape is such that it makes little sense but to wait further and do what's sensible for now, to avoid setting down a path which may eventually prove to have been in the wrong direction. For example, we could introduce a new collection arrangement now to recover a new waste stream at significant cost, only to find that the national or local waste strategy developments over the next couple of years result in us seeing a significant reduction in that particular type of waste due to, for example, changed packaging regulations, deposit return schemes and significant behavioural change by producers, retailers and consumers.

- 2.7 Currently, a key performance indicator for waste management for LAs is for 50% of household waste to be recycled by 2020, calculated by weight of material. The Resources and Waste Strategy for England sets out intentions to widen the performance measures used and promote waste minimisation and better quality recycling. New performance metrics for waste are expected, to complement and move beyond current the weight-based targets to ones which recognise environmental benefits of sound waste management. This is a welcome shift from a monitoring system which favours recycling heavy materials as opposed to those which lead to the greatest environmental benefit. Consideration of the carbon emissions of various waste management activities is a clear way to help determine what that environmental benefit could be. The declaration of the climate change emergency in Leeds has swung thinking locally to be much more ambitious about using impact-based targets, unlike the familiar target of recycling 50% of household waste by 2020. When viewed from the perspective of environmental impact, the direction for waste management in the city is very much to reduce waste rather than optimising how it's processed once the consumer has finished with it. This has therefore been a key consideration in developing the waste strategy proposed in this report.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 We are ready to make full use of the upsurge in public interest in the environmental consequences of our daily actions, decisions and choices. These include our current levels of consumption, how much waste we each create and what we do with items once we're done with them. The trick will of course be to translate this growing unease into real change, with every one of us making at least making many small changes, sustained such that it becomes habitual behaviour and our cumulative effort having a significant positive impact on the environment.
- 3.2 Consumers have the potential to make a big difference, both in doing things differently themselves and in influencing producers, retailers and the service industry to do more and go further. The direction set out in the Resources and Waste Strategy for England will already be making an impact in how those sectors are planning to make and sell goods and services as they adjust to probable future markets and consumer expectations alongside what they will be required to do through regulation. The now familiar use of alternatives to single use plastic items in our retail and hospitality trades and the expansion and popularity of meat alternatives are good examples of how our everyday items are already changing and with some pace. The waste strategy for the city has been developed through

insights shared by those sectors locally and through direct surveying of our residents. A city conversation on waste was commenced in the spring, involving local residents, businesses, the third sector and partners in education. This conversation will continue and will expand into work to also engage communities and sectors on the theme of climate change. We have listened to what people in Leeds have said they're ready to do and the strategy intends to create the conditions to move interest into action at a range of levels. This is far removed from telling people what to do – we are looking for the city to work together to make Leeds a place renowned for eliminating unnecessary waste and in maximising the value in our resources for the benefit of our local economy and communities.

3.3 The strategy will set the direction for change in how we see and use resources in the city and how unavoidable waste is handled and processed to create the least environmental impact, primarily through reducing carbon emissions. The uncertainty in the national picture on the collection and processing of household waste means the Council is not at this stage proposing fundamental additions to kerbside collections. Instead, we will refocus efforts to make the very best use of the current infrastructure and up our game in engaging with communities, both of which have the potential to drive up household waste recycling performance whilst announcements are pending which pave the way to us going even further. The Council will also step up to lead and co-ordinate actions by various sectors locally, to ensure the city maximises the collective effort to make the changes which best deliver on our city ambitions. In implementing this waste strategy, the city can add much to the movement to address the climate change emergency we face.

3.4 The actions needed to realise the change intended by the waste strategy for the city will evolve over time. The city conversation and engagement on waste will continue, we will all increasingly understand and acknowledge the environmental impacts of our everyday actions in the city and the legislative and financial landscape to shape the direction of our services will inform what we do and when over coming years. Whilst this strategy sets the overall focus and direction of travel, it is intended that further specific actions will be developed and that the strategy itself is reviewed in the first instance by 2021 at the latest and regularly thereafter.

3.5 **The Waste Strategy for Leeds**

3.5.1 **Our Vision**

Our vision for Leeds is to become the best city in the UK and a world leader in eliminating unnecessary waste and its environmental impact, and in maximising the value in our resources for the benefit of our local economy and communities.

3.5.2 **Why do we need a Waste Strategy for Leeds?**

The environmental issue of waste is a huge challenge both locally in Leeds and globally. In Leeds alone we still produce over 600,000 tonnes a year of domestic and business waste. However, public awareness of its impacts has never been higher, and this presents an opportunity for change.

The recent declaration of a Climate Change Emergency in Leeds and our commitment to achieve 'net zero carbon' by 2030 has set out starkly the need for radical action at every level, from international to individual, to avoid irreparable damage to the world's eco systems.

The earth's resources are precious and finite, and our current rate of consumption and our throwaway culture cannot be sustained. And so in Leeds we are committed to doing our part and leading the way in redressing the balance in favour of the natural world so that it is safeguarded and left it in a healthier state for future generations.

Our recent conversations with the people of Leeds have demonstrated a real desire for this significant change. As part of our own commitment to be the best city in the UK, we are seeking to harness this new public appetite to both influence and deliver take forward positive developments locally and to use our collective voice to influence at both the national and international levels wherever possible.

However, we recognise that this is not an issue that the Council can solve alone, and we need commitment, leadership and action from all sectors, communities and individuals across the city. We therefore see this genuinely as a strategy for Leeds as a whole, which depends on everyone playing their part if we are to realise our ambitions.

3.5.3 What we have done since the last strategy

Since the last Waste Strategy was published in 2006, much has been achieved. As a city we have almost doubled our household waste recycling rate since this time, and the Council has reduced the proportion of domestic waste sent to landfill from around 78% in 2006 to less than 3% in 2019, already exceeding the Government's long-term targets for landfill. During this time we have introduced fortnightly collections of recyclables to the vast majority of households, completed a trial food waste collection service in part of the City and continue to provide the vast majority of waste collection services free of charge in a way which makes us stand out from most other Local Authorities.

We have now redeveloped our Household Waste Recycling Centres into modern facilities which allow a wide range of materials to be recycled, and have opened award winning 're-use shops' on two of these sites in partnership with a consortium of charities.

The Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility (RERF) at Cross Green became fully operational in 2016. This has enabled us to achieve the huge reduction in landfill referred to above, and has enabled enough electricity to power the equivalent of over 22,000 homes to be generated from our non-recycled waste, saving over 60,000 tonnes of carbon a year. The district heating network to be supplied by the RERF has now been installed and will soon be supplying affordable heat to some of the City's social housing, as well as to businesses, thus further improving the energy efficiency and carbon footprint of the RERF. However, there we need to do much more ...

3.5.4 What will make the biggest difference:

Waste and recycling performance is still measured primarily by weight of materials, with Government targets still expressed in these terms, and this has therefore influenced the material streams historically targeted by local authorities. However, in light of the urgency around climate change, the carbon savings that can be made from waste must become the primary driver.

Analysis of the carbon impacts of waste demonstrates the huge potential carbon savings from a reduction in the production and consumption of excess food, which is a key theme and focus of the recently published Resources and Waste Strategy

for England as well as the national climate change strategy. It also shows very significant carbon savings from avoiding the production of textiles and plastics. Lesser, but nevertheless significant carbon savings also can be made through the recycling of these materials, but this evidence shows the need for a strategy for Leeds which is focused as much on waste reduction as it is on reuse and recycling.

We believe that the most significant way we can secure major environmental change is for individuals to each make small everyday changes to reduce their waste, to reuse items and to recycle more. We each need to take personal responsibility and play our part.

However, we recognise the importance of supportive policies and legislation from Government, both to ensure that manufacturers and retailers bear the costs of dealing with the products and materials that are sold to customers, and to ensure that local authorities receive the funding necessary to provide the services and infrastructure needed to support the efforts of individuals. The Government's Resources and Waste Strategy published in December 2018 left a range of key issues subject to consultation, especially relating to recycling collections and how performance is to be measured in the future, making it difficult for councils to move forward with certainty until the outcomes are known.

We also believe that collaboration and partnerships across sectors, with strong leadership from key strategic influencers will be crucial if we are to tackle problems and generate solutions for the City. We acknowledge the crucial role that business leaders in the city have in this regard and the potential commercial opportunities ripe for exploration. Opportunities to capitalise on waste management processes which produce hydrogen would be created by through the establishment of a hydrogen network in the city. The Council plays a lead role in the Northern Gas Networks H21 Hydrogen Conversion project, which envisages that Leeds could be one of the first cities to convert its gas supply to hydrogen instead of methane.

These changes need to be complemented by effective and engaging campaigns to change our current waste behaviours and resource consumption, and also services and infrastructure that are designed around local community needs and maximise environmental and economic benefits.

3.5.5 Our success on this agenda will see:

- major reductions in the carbon impacts of waste generated in Leeds;
- a reduction in waste volumes generated in Leeds;
- major increases in reuse and recycling, prioritising materials offering the greatest carbon savings;
- heightened public awareness and local community ownership of waste issues, with clear evidence of increased public action and demand for change;
- a growing body of businesses and other key organisations in Leeds becoming exemplars of waste reduction, and exercising clear influence for change through their own activities and as City leaders;
- evidence of a growing culture of reuse over disposing and buying new;
- measurable economic benefits within the City, in particular benefiting the economically disadvantaged.

3.5.6 **The City Conversation on waste**

We started a 'conversation' with the people of Leeds in the Spring of 2019 to listen to views on waste within Leeds, to stimulate debate, to identify our influencers, and ultimately to harness the growing desire for positive change. This conversation will be ongoing, and our intention is that this will develop into a city-wide 'movement' which will result in long-term environmental change.

The 'conversation' is happening via a wide range of media, for example through face-to-face conversations, social media, using surveys and physical installations to stimulate views and discussion, and through events with businesses, the universities and the Third Sector. Some of the key things that we as the people of Leeds are saying are as follows:

- we care about waste and what's happening to the environment and in our city
- we are already doing a lot
- we want to be able to do more to reduce and recycle
- we want the people who sell things to reduce waste and packaging
- we think everyone is responsible
- by working together as a city we can make a difference

3.5.7 **THEME 1 – Reducing excess**

Clearly, if we consume less, less will need to be produced, and this is where the greatest environmental benefits are to be had, particularly from a carbon perspective.

Programmes like Blue Planet II and the recent profile of the climate change agenda have raised public awareness of the environmental impacts of plastics, food and textiles. Last year alone we threw away over 49,500 tonnes of food, 23,300 tonnes of plastics and 5,200 tonnes of textiles just through domestic collections in Leeds. Add to this the amount discarded by businesses in the city and you can multiply these figures several times over.

National research estimates that for every two tonnes we eat, one is thrown away, and that ten million tonnes of food that leaves farms each year is wasted, with 70% of this being thrown away in homes. It is thought that 14% of our weekly shopping bill is spent on food that ends up in the bin. There is also a growing awareness around the environmental impacts of purchasing much more new and cheap clothing and the rise of 'fast fashion' where clothes are purchased and disposed of with little wear.

Although we will work together to recycle more of these materials, we recognise that the greatest benefits are through preventing quite so much of their use or purchase in the first place. This is of particular importance in the case of food waste, with the most significant carbon savings to be had from scaling back the huge level of intensive farming associated with producing food that then goes to waste, especially meat and dairy.

Much of this waste could be avoided through retailers or consumers changing their practices, and reducing their production would provide the most significant carbon savings relating to waste.

Through our city conversation, people and businesses of Leeds have been expressing a clear desire to do more and to change their habits. People were asked to 'Agree your three key actions', helping us to find out what the main things are that people are either already doing or are willing to pledge to do more of to reduce their waste. It is becoming clear that people in Leeds are ready to do more of the following: using reusable shopping bags, coffee cups and water bottles, buying products with less packaging, recycling unwanted clothes and giving away or composting their surplus food to avoid food waste.

Three quarters of businesses who we heard from expressed a willingness to make a public commitment around reducing, reusing and recycling their waste. Generally, people accept that the problem of waste is their individual responsibility, but they also see a major role for manufacturers and retailers. Based on this willingness expressed across the city, we are therefore committing to positive action.

The city of Leeds will work together to:

- harness the growing public interest and exert local consumer pressure to influence manufacturers and retailers to reduce excessive and unsustainable packaging;
- engage the businesses sector to seek exemplars in the city to lead and share innovative practice within the sector which advance the city's carbon reductions.
- develop a range of commitments across businesses and public sector organisations in Leeds to eliminate avoidable plastic waste;
- change retailer marketing and promotional practices in the city to support more sustainable consumer purchasing choices;
- deliver measurable reductions in food waste through a change in retailer and food outlet marketing and practices in Leeds, and through influencing consumer behaviour;
- build communities where excess waste is considered to be socially unacceptable.

Key commitments from LCC:

- we will eliminate all avoidable single-use plastics from our buildings, services and supply chain by 2020;
- we will work with and influence Government to ensure that tough producer responsibility measures are introduced for packaging;
- we will take the lead in bringing together different sectors to enter into common waste reduction commitments for the City;
- we will provide support for citywide and community led/based campaigns, initiatives and infrastructure that deliver substantial and measurable levels of waste reduction and carbon savings.

3.5.8 THEME 2 - Getting the most out of our resources

Although the greatest gains are through reducing waste, materials will inevitably be thrown away and will need to be dealt with. In many cases these materials still have value and could be used again, possibly by someone else, or used in a different way. It is crucial that we secure this value and move away from our habits of minimal use before throwing away.

Alongside being much better at reusing items, we want the city to increase how much it recycles. The greatest environmental gains in carbon reduction terms would lead us towards a focus on recycling more textiles, metals, plastics and food waste. Our recent work to look at how high recycling rates are being achieved elsewhere shows that food waste and glass provide significant increases in recycled tonnages if collected at the kerbside.

The national landscape of Government funding and opportunity is changing and the city will need to be smart in order to move with and take advantage of this. However, we also want to determine for ourselves what is best for our city and our region, not being driven solely by historical ways of measuring performance, but by what will deliver the right environmental outcomes.

In practical terms, and given the increasing demand in the recycling markets for high quality materials, it is clear that doing more recycling means being willing to have more containers for these materials and to do more to separate out our waste, whether at home, at work or on the go.

Again, our 'city conversation' demonstrated a willingness amongst residents to do more, with many expressing a desire to be able to recycle more household waste items at the kerbside, and over half willing to separate out food waste at home for composting.

This needs to be balanced with the fact that we could get more recycling out of our existing collection regime, and the challenges faced in a city of Leeds size with a huge variation of housing types, communities and physical spaces for additional bins etc.

Around half of the businesses we listened to are willing to work together with others to understand how they can support Leeds and the local circular economy through managing resources more effectively.

There was also evidence of a growing culture of reuse, with many people giving examples of buying second hand or donating items to give them a second life.

The city of Leeds will work together to:

- establish a single reuse partnership for Leeds and stimulate a culture of reuse within the city, supporting this with infrastructure where appropriate;
- expand the range of materials collected in the City for recycling;
- identify and promote exemplars from the business sector to demonstrate the economic benefits of resource efficiency and sustainable waste management;
- assess the need and seek investment in Leeds for the local infrastructure necessary to support all sectors to realise greater resource efficiency and carbon based recycling outcomes.

Key commitments from LCC:

- we will make a strong and consistent case for us each to accept responsibility for the waste we produce and the need to make our own changes to reduce our environmental impacts;
- we will launch improved waste and recycling centres to increase the use of these sites and the proportion of items brought here which are then reused and recycled;
- we will make preparations to expand the range of materials collected for recycling at the kerbside, to include food waste;
- we will invest in and expand our district heating network, continuously improving the carbon performance of the Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility and delivering wider environmental, economic and social benefits;
- we will demonstrate leadership in ensuring that our strategy is driven by the right environmental targets, completing a full life-cycle assessment of resources and waste in Leeds, and developing a carbon-based measure for waste management.

3.5.9 THEME 3 – All doing our part

Although we recognise as a city that we need to do new things and to do things differently, it is also essential that we get the basics right in supporting people to manage their waste well. This starts at individual and local community level. The greatest gains are to be had through very many individuals making small changes to their behaviours and lifestyle so as to minimise their environmental impact. Our conversations with the people of Leeds have demonstrated a significant desire to do more and to each do their part.

Together, Leeds can do much to get the messages about recycling out effectively so that a shift occurs in our understanding of the importance of our contribution, and in the ease with which people see how they can play their part. Key influencers in the city can build a 'movement' in Leeds which will bring about fundamental change in the social norm in relation to waste and resources.

However, there are still parts of the city where people are not using the current waste collection services fully; whether due to lack of understanding, motivation or interest, or issues of limited waste storage capacity and / or vehicle access. Some areas of Leeds have large concentrations of terraced streets and dense housing with significant transient populations adding to the challenges of managing waste well which would benefit from a different service offer here.

Over 20% of the materials residents put in their recycling bins cannot be recycled because the materials are either the wrong ones or are contaminated. Dealing with this costs the city around £0.7 million a year. Also, there are still a lot of recyclables going in the black bins unnecessarily. If we were to put all of the relevant recyclables into their green bins that are currently going into the black bins, this could add an estimated 7% (percentage points) on to the city's domestic recycling rate. In this way we could significantly improve performance, whilst also reducing costs.

The incidence of waste related crime in Leeds is also still too high, and further co-ordinated action is required to tackle these issues.

Many of the views we've heard recently indicate that there is a clear willingness to do more with the opportunities for recycling that we already have if these can be made easier to use and understand.

Over half of those we listened to wanted better information on what can be recycled and where, and many expressed confusion over what should go in the green bin, particularly in relation to plastics. Businesses also wanted to have access to more information on what can be recycled and the opportunities available to them. In light of the above, we need to become smarter in designing information and services around specific local needs so as to make things easier and simpler, and to have practical strategies for changing behaviours in key areas of the City.

The city of Leeds will work together to:

- build a waste and environmental 'movement' in Leeds using creative methods and capitalising on existing initiatives and demand for change within the City;
- develop and secure a range of high-profile pledges and commitments across businesses in Leeds, demonstrating their leadership in influencing for positive change and eliminating unnecessary waste in the City;
- exploit the potential of social media to influence for change across Leeds, showcasing examples of innovation and good practice across all sectors;
- deliver innovative and high quality facilities and services for recycling 'on the go' in the City Centre (and beyond where of proven benefit).

Key commitments from LCC:

- we will significantly reduce the amount of waste created by the Council to further the commitment to become a carbon neutral city.
- we will join the Business in the Community 'Waste to Wealth' Programme and commit to develop actions to meet the five themes of this programme.
- we will increase people's sense of ownership of and engagement with local waste and recycling issues through becoming more responsive and locally accountable, using technology to provide more accurate and 'live' service performance data;
- we will reduce uncontained waste and green bin contamination and improve recycling rates through a range of solutions and interventions in areas of low service engagement, including investment in a dedicated, bespoke environmental service in parts of the city where the current offer does not work;
- we will simplify recycling messages to the public so as to increase the quantity and quality of materials collected from households;
- we will review planning policy and develop 'best practice' planning guidance to ensure waste management and recycling is designed into new properties, and that developers are meeting all requirements for the provision of waste storage and collection at planning and development stages;
- we will develop and agree localised waste crime action plans for Leeds to tackle all aspects of environmental crime, but prioritising fly-tipping and incorrect handling of domestic and commercial waste. Measures will include enhanced surveillance, engagement campaigns, formal enforcement action and appropriate use of Public Space Protection Orders for managing anti-social environmental behaviour in targeted areas.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 The strategy has been written with direct reference to the early outcomes of the city conversation on waste which commenced in the spring of 2019. This work focussed on three key audiences; residents, business and the education sector. Each audience was asked to consider three things they would do to reduce, reuse or recycle their waste, to be followed by a publicly declared pledge to act. This was termed 'Agree Your 3'.
- 4.1.2 Launch events were then arranged for business, third and educational sectors, where the results of the surveys for the relevant sectors were shared. Key organisations and representatives were encouraged to network and share best practice at these events and further follow-up sessions are being arranged.
- 4.1.3 The 'city conversation' about waste was officially launched to the public in May, with the installation of the 'Agree Your 3' pledge tree starting in the Trinity centre. The #LeedsByExample website was also launched in May, creating an online space where people are asked to 'Agree Your 3' in addition to visiting the pledge tree. As at mid-June, over 1,200 members of the public have made a pledge and 'agreed their 3' through the various routes available.
- 4.1.4 A communications guide and toolkit was developed to support and encourage involvement in the city conversation on waste in various ways. The toolkit of assets includes GIFs, photos, facts and figures, a short video, suggestions for social media content, etc. and can be used easily by anyone to spread the reach of the 'city conversation'.
- 4.1.5 It is very much intended that the city conversation continues and makes mutually beneficial connections into the city conversation on climate change, launched in June.
- 4.1.6 A Waste Strategy Advisory Board was established in September 2018 with cross-party Membership and including colleagues from the third sector and those on related areas of work in the Council. This Board has met six times now and has assisted and advised on the development of the strategy on, for example, the engagement plans and the intended main areas of content in the strategy. The Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability has chaired this Board and has received regular additional briefings on the proposed direction and focus of the strategy throughout the process.
- 4.1.7 The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing & Communities) undertook an inquiry into waste management services in 18/19 which included an interest in the waste strategy being developed for the city. The inquiry considered various aspects of the current systems and performance in the collection and recycling of household waste in particular and recommendations were made in March 2019 which have been incorporated into the waste strategy for the city.
- 4.1.8 Members of the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) were keen to see the service review of waste operations completed without delay and this work is progressing well, with completion planned for August 2019. Whilst the review is still ongoing, several probable outcomes of that work have been incorporated into the commitments from the Council in the city's strategy on waste.

So, collection operations are being designed and agreed with the intention of improving recycling rates including those areas of the city which have had least engagement with this to date. Through its inquiry, Scrutiny Board reviewed and made recommendations on communication and engagement with residents, including on how to present their waste for collection. The city's waste strategy commits to simplifying recycling messages to the public so as to increase the quantity and quality of materials collected from households and help drive up our recycling performance. Scrutiny Board also reviewed and made recommendations on using the planning process to ensure that housing developers meet all requirements for the provision of waste storage and collection. Again, as a response, the city strategy on waste commits the Council to reviewing planning policy and develop best practice planning guidance to deliver on this recommendation.

4.1.9 The wording of the strategy at paragraph 3.5 was reported to Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) on 11th July 2019 for consideration and comment. Feedback will be provided verbally to Executive Board at the meeting on 24th July. This Scrutiny Board is also proposing to maintain a watching brief on the development of the waste strategy in its 19/20 work programme.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration.

4.2.1 It is recognised that there are certain areas of the city where communities face greater challenges when trying to manage waste well generally and to reduce their environmental impact as a result. We know there are some for whom waste management is a low priority when compared to all else that they can be faced with in daily life. The strategy acknowledges that one approach applied consistently across the city will not achieve the best outcomes overall. The proposal to create a different service delivery model for selected areas where the local environmental conditions are particularly challenging reflects the need to do more for some communities and that the balance of 'working with' / 'doing for' will have to be different here to elsewhere. Having said that, all residents are consumers, creating waste which has to be managed. Reducing that waste, for example through ensuring the fullest use of clothing, food and other consumables does bring opportunities to save money. The reuse of items and clothing that others pass on has benefit too. The strategy aims to provide more co-ordination and facilitation of ways for all people to minimise money lost through waste and helping all get the fullest value of what they do buy.

4.3 Council policies and best council plan

4.3.1 The implementation of the city's waste strategy is absolutely in line with our Best Council Plan ambitions in reducing consumption and increasing recycling in the city. The strategy has significant potential to promoting a less wasteful, more resource efficient, low carbon economy.

4.3.2 Climate Emergency

In 2016, waste accounted for 4% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions. The UK charity Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) plan to 2020 states "an urgent and radical step-change is required in how efficiently we use the world's resources. The future is about enabling countries, businesses and individuals to move away from the 'design, make, use and discard' model of the linear economy

towards a resource efficient, more circular economy. An economy in which we keep resources in productive use as many times as human ingenuity can conceive. Where we can extract the maximum value from products and materials whilst in use, then recover and recycle resources at the end of each service life.” Recent research identifies up to £100 billion worth of productivity gains for UK Plc through this approach. The challenge is for all organisations of all kinds to transform the way they work together and use fewer resources to make the products and deliver the services we all rely on.

WRAP has identified three priority areas that account for 25% of UK carbon footprint, 80% of UK water footprint and 40% of UK household waste:

- Food and drink (Estimated total UK post farm-gate food and drink waste is around 10 million tonnes per year, 70% of which could have been avoided. This is associated with around 20% of **territorial** greenhouse gas emissions)
- Clothing and textiles – (annual UK consumption accounts for 38 million tonnes of **global** carbon emissions)
- Electricals and electronics – (annual UK consumption accounts for 161 million tonnes of **global** carbon emissions)

By adopting this philosophy and by putting carbon emissions at the core of our considerations when we review the waste strategy, it has a fundamental impact on the outcome - part of this is the acknowledgement that weight-based recycling targets don't always consider carbon emissions, and that reducing waste impacts on our carbon emissions far more significantly than increasing our rate of recycling.

We have joined up our own waste city conversation with the one on climate change, in recognition of the fact that the two are inseparable issues. By joining up wherever possible it provides more opportunities to amplify the messages and help raise the carbon literacy of the city, including increasing understanding the individual's understanding of how they should best manage their own household waste.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The implementation of the City's strategy will not require additional corporate funding to deliver and costs will be managed within the Directorate.
- 4.4.2 The waste strategy is principally about how the city uses its resources and how we can value those more in practice to get best value. Whilst this is not primarily in pecuniary terms, the waste strategy is nevertheless built on optimising the use of what we have, enabling us to reduce unnecessary consumption of new products and the expense associated with that.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 This report presents a waste management strategy for the city. A key risk is that it becomes seen as a plan for the Council alone to work through and implement, greatly limiting the range and depth of change needed. To help avoid this, we are

encouraging the city not just to respond to our questions, but to participate and shape the conversation, being supported by but not visibly lead by the Council. The intention is to continue to engage individuals, communities and partners to help shape but ultimately own the actions which will lead to meaningful change and reduced environmental impacts. The city conversation on waste is already showing that the people of Leeds understand and accept that they themselves have a role to play alongside producers and retailers etc to make a real difference in this work. Results are emerging showing an acceptance that the city cannot look nor expect the Council alone to remedy the long term impact of poor waste management on our environment.

- 4.6.2 Whilst we are seeing good early engagement, with residents and business etc willing to make pledges to change, this has to be translated into sustained behaviour change for the strategy to have the impact that's needed. This will need continued engagement and involvement with the public especially and the work over the summer on the climate emergency presents an additional opportunity to reinforce the necessary messages to ensure continued profile and interest.
- 4.6.3 There are strong connections between our carbon emissions as a city and how waste is created and managed locally. The aim for the city to become carbon neutral by 2030 can be furthered from a waste management perspective primarily by a focus on reducing rather than processing waste. This signals a change in what is traditionally seen to be waste management from the very narrow view of Councils collecting household waste to recycle as much as possible. The need for better understanding and acceptance that good waste management is not to produce quite so much waste at all is a real leap for some and will require simple and effective communications to help make that shift.
- 4.6.4 This report has made reference to the intention of Central Government to direct LAs on waste streams to be collected from kerbside and also on systems for householders to follow, aiming for greater national consistency and therefore improved quality of recyclate material collected. Also, Government intends to research and introduce new impact-based performance measures for recycling outcomes and is consulting on the introduction of mandatory targets on waste reduction. The promise of funding to cover net costs from changes needed to comply with the national strategy means the city strategy does not propose to add to the current kerbside collection in Leeds at this time. This has to be considered at a later date and the review and refresh of the strategy by 2021 at the latest will provide an opportunity to do that. The risk of doing otherwise is of course to invest in new containers, reset communications to households and change the local waste processing infrastructure all to discover the national direction takes us in a different direction in several years' time.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The waste strategy proposed for the city has taken a much broader perspective than previous versions. The strategy aims to be owned and taken forward by various sectors in the city, with the Council playing a full role in its own waste management services but also giving leadership to co-ordinate and influence efforts locally to ensure the greatest return. How that return is measured is a key consideration and we are proposing that major reductions in the carbon impacts of waste generated in Leeds is a key feature of how we measure success. The

strategy aims to reduce waste volumes generated in Leeds and increase reuse and recycling in the city, prioritising materials offering the greatest carbon savings.

- 5.2 The national position on funding and legislation which will significantly affect how households present their waste and how LAs will have to collect and process it remains unclear. Government consultations on this subject closed in May and announcements are awaited before any firm decisions are made about additional collection services in Leeds. In that context, the plan for the next two years is to revitalise our current collection infrastructure and to widen but simplify our communication with residents to get the most from what is currently in place. In parallel, we will also focus on work with residents and local partners to minimise the waste generated, including through encouraging more thoughtful purchasing and marketing practice and us all reusing items as much as possible.

6.0 **Recommendations**

- 6.1 To consider and approve the interim waste strategy for the city at para 3.5 and to receive a comprehensive updated strategy by 2021.

7.0 **Background documents¹**

- 7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.