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Chair, Environment, Housing &
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Dear George Eustice

Over the last year we have jointly led our respective Scrutiny Committees at Leeds City Council in examining some of the challenges facing the future of waste services in our city.

Scrutiny members are keen to see local modelling of proposals for future waste services progressed at pace to ensure best value and best service to our citizens, as well as alignment with the Council's broader strategic priorities as set out in the recently adopted Best City Ambition.

Achieving meaningful progress towards carbon neutrality in Leeds by 2030 is an integral part of that broad strategic framework and it is the view of both of our cross-party committees that the design of future waste services should be explicitly reflective of that ambition.

Equally, that overarching strategy for the city places significant emphasis on the importance of partnership working. As we look to fulfill local and national aspirations for the future ways in which we manage the city's waste, it is the view of scrutiny members that the Council should be seeking to engage with partners from all sectors.

However, without further detailed guidance from Government about the responsibilities for local authorities set out in the National Resources and Waste Strategy, robust practical planning for future services remains difficult.

The commitment from Government to fund all new burdens on local authorities brought about through the implementation of the national strategy and the £300m included in the 2021 Spending Review have been welcomed. However, decisions about the way in which we reduce, recycle and process our waste will still have a direct impact upon the Council's financial planning, as well as carbon-related implications as we respond to the Climate Emergency declared by Leeds City Council in 2019.

As you will appreciate, regardless of the commitment to respond with urgency to the challenge of re-shaping our waste services, it will inevitably take time to adapt to changes required by statutory guidance, establish the necessary infrastructure to facilitate new collections and frequencies, as well as to communicate changes to householders.

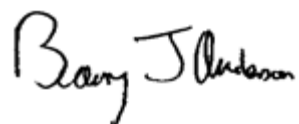
The National Resource and Waste Strategy also puts significant emphasis on the ambition to achieve a more consistent collection offer across the country, which increases the need for updated integrated waste strategies at a local and regional level. It is important that we understand the full detail of the new nationally set requirements so as to be in a position to take complementary decisions regionally about how various services are re-modelled, and about the contracts and infrastructure required to support those changes. For example, in addition to proposals such as a national deposit return scheme (DRS) that would have a significant effect on glass collection, we need clarity about requirements for garden waste collections.

Furthermore, within this context we are also keen to understand the effect of delays in securing Royal Assent for the Environment Bill on key milestones, which had originally been intended to come into force in 2023 – including the introduction of a deposit return scheme, mandatory food waste collections and extended producer responsibility.

Our Scrutiny Committees are committed to ongoing engagement with local services to ensure future waste management in our city delivers the ambitions of the National Resources and Waste Strategy for the benefit of Leeds citizens. With this in mind, we would now like to see any necessary secondary legislation swiftly progressed and clarity provided to local authorities about their specific obligations under new legislation.

We would welcome assurances that the Government is committed to providing that information in the very near future and we trust that any proposals brought forward will be led by the science of reducing the carbon impact of our waste.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Anderson". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Councillor Barry Anderson
Chair, Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Scopes". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Councillor Andrew Scopes,
Chair, Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Board