



APSE briefing 19-16

Resources and Waste Strategy – Ministry of Housing

Communities and Local Government announce inquiry into impact on local authorities

This briefing is provided to all APSE member authorities but will be of particular interest to those officers responsible for waste collection, waste reduction, re-use and recycling collections.

Key Issues:

The Government has launched four major consultations on key aims within its Resources and Waste Strategy (2018).

- A consistent set of materials to be collected for recycling by local authorities (England only)
- A deposit return scheme (DRS) for beverage containers.
- A 'plastics tax' on packaging containing less than 30% recycled plastic.
- Extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging waste.

These consultations aim to radically change the way the UK produces and manages materials which can either become waste or re-usable resources.

All of the proposals aim to support each other and deliver a consistent UK wide approach which will result in a collaborative and beneficial approach for manufacturers, retailers, consumers and reprocessors with regards to reducing waste and recycling.

However, key to the proposals is the ability to deliver on the changes and the financial impact this may have on the different stakeholders.

As a result of these concerns and in particular the impacts the strategy proposals could have on local authorities, the **MHCLG committee** intends to undertake a short inquiry and invite written submissions on the basis of the following Terms of Reference:

- What the financial implications are for local authorities of the Government's Waste Strategy.
- What the likely effects will be on the recycling rates of local authorities.
- How provisions in the strategy may affect existing contracts for waste collection and disposal.
- Should waste services be standardised across England or should there continue to be flexibilities for local authorities.
- What the opportunities are for closer joint working between authorities, particularly in

Background

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) as part of its Resources and Waste Strategy (2018), the first government document on waste and recycling since 2012, is consulting on **four key measures** contained within the strategy:

- Extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging waste.
- A consistent set of materials to be collected for recycling by local authorities (England only)
- A deposit return scheme (DRS) for beverage containers.
- A 'plastics tax' on packaging containing less than 30% recycled plastic.

The strategy proposals will impact on services that are the responsibility of local authorities, such as food waste collections, the provision of recycling collections for households and businesses and the frequency of residual waste collections.

Detail

Following the announcement of the strategy it has become clear that many of the proposals contained within could have significant impacts on local authority waste services.

Perhaps the most obvious is the suggestion that household and business waste collections should have greater consistency in order to make it easier for residents and businesses to understand what waste they can recycle, thus increasing the amount of materials recycled and by association improving the quality of materials collected by reducing contamination levels.

This will be achieved by having a core set of materials to be collected in as far as practicable, the same colour of containers across England. They are also proposing a weekly food collection and a minimum residual waste collection of every two weeks. Added to this is the suggestion that where garden waste can be collected, it should be provided free of charge fortnightly with a limit up to 240 litres.

The separate collections of dry recyclables are also proposed where feasible, in order to again promote quality of recyclables and reduce contamination

In order to deliver these changes, Government is asking whether they should set statutory guidance on minimum service standards, which they would review every few years.

In order to promote the strategy proposals, improved communication programmes would be supported by government to help local authorities communicate more effectively on recycling. These would be largely provided by WRAP and Recycle Now.

To monitor progress, Government is proposing the introduction of non-binding performance indicators for local authorities to monitor and highlight where services can be improved to deliver higher recycling rates and minimise waste. Other indicators being considered include contamination levels and service delivery.

Regarding consistency of collections Government is proposing to support greater partnership working between authorities to improve waste management and higher recycling levels.

In relation to business waste, Government is consulting on whether such organisations should be legally required to separate recyclable waste to make it easier to collect. Similarly if a business produces sufficient food waste they should be made to make arrangements for its recycling.

Government has pledged to fully fund measures “new burdens” such as for food waste collection. The Environment Secretary Michael Gove has promised to offer “hundreds of millions” of pounds of funding to local authorities to boost recycling rates, which will be “harvested” from extended producer responsibility legislation initially set out in the Waste and Resources Strategy.

In light of these proposals and promises, the Chair of the MHCLG Committee inquiry, Clive Betts MP, said:

“It is important that there is a comprehensive strategy to increase the levels of recycling. But ahead of placing greater responsibilities on local authorities we must first look at their ability to meet them. With budgets shrinking, and acute challenges elsewhere, is there capacity to tackle increased demands on waste services?”

“We will also be looking at how appropriate a one-size-fits-all approach will be, and if there would be benefits to allowing local authorities some flexibility to meet the specific waste challenges in their area.”

The Committee is inviting submissions on:

- What the financial implications are for local authorities of the Government’s Waste Strategy.
- What the likely effects will be on the recycling rates of local authorities.
- How provisions in the strategy may affect existing contracts for waste collection and disposal.
- Should waste services be standardised across England or should there continue to be flexibilities for local authorities.
- What the opportunities are for closer joint-working between authorities, particularly in two-tier areas.

The deadline for written submissions is 26 April 2019.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/housing-communities-and-local-government-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/implications-waste--17-19/commons-written-submission-form/>

APSE Comment

APSE welcomes any proposals which can reduce waste, recycle and improve the quality of recyclables collected, as well as improving the recyclability of materials being placed onto the market.

Through the strategy proposals there does appear to be a good deal of joined up thinking taking place which could help achieve many of the aims contained within the document. However there needs to be a realisation that local authorities are not starting with a blank sheet of paper. There are many long term disposal arrangements in place, which have required significant investment or are wrapped up in complex contracts, which determine collection methods at the kerbside. Whilst many of the strategy proposals could lead to a much more coherent waste strategy at a local level, it needs to be recognised fully that this could prove costly and take a significant amount of time to achieve. Therefore Central Government will need to fully fund the implementation of any changes it wishes to make, as many of the proposals will have significant impacts on the finances of local authorities at a time when they are under continuing pressures. Therefore the decision to hold a select committee on the impacts of the strategy proposals on such matters is welcome.

APSE itself is holding an advisory group dedicated to looking at the Resource and Waste Strategy consultations and will be sending a composite response based on the comments from those local authorities who have registered an interest in attending.

APSE would be interested to receive any comments member authorities have on the Resources and Waste Strategy or the queries being asked by the MHCLG Inquiry in order to build up a clearer picture of not only members views on the aims of the strategy but also the deliverability of those aims.

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