

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Waste Strategy Working Group** held in Committee Room 1, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, and via Microsoft Teams, on Monday 28 April 2025 at 3.30 pm.

Present:

Mr L Fraser (remote)
Mr A Graham
Mr R Gunn (remote)

Mrs J Hendry (remote)
Mr H Morrison (remote)

In attendance:

Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead - Waste Strategy and Operations
Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Strategic Improvement Team
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Mr H Morrison in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Baldrey, Mr G MacKenzie and Ms M Smith.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Waste Strategy Working Group held on 8 November 2024, which had been approved by the Communities and Place Committee on 27 November 2024, had been circulated and were **NOTED**.

4. Waste Strategy

The Strategic Lead - Waste Strategy and Operations provided a verbal update explaining that the service was now in a position to produce a formal Waste Strategy document that would cover the years 2025-2030, having taken the decision not to progress with building an Energy from Waste (EfW) facility. This strategy would include, recycling, glass banks, household waste, collection service design, increasing statutory requirements, education, service to businesses, reducing quantities of residual waste, decarbonising residual waste, waste haulage, collection route planning and health and safety. As parts of the document were completed they would be taken to the Waste Strategy Working Group to seek input from Members.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the difficulty of making up days lost due to breakdowns of refuse vehicles should be taken into account when planning collection routes;

- the problems caused by an aging fleet were highlighted; and
- information was sought, and provided, on the length of the current residual waste contract, the possibility of having more soft plastic collection points in rural areas, recruitment and staff turnover within the service, and how the five-year Waste Strategy would be monitored.

The Working Group **NOTED** the position.

5. UK Emissions Trading Scheme

The Strategic Lead - Waste Strategy and Operations provided a verbal update on the UK Emissions Trading Scheme including the following main points:-

- under the UK Emissions Trading Scheme, emitters had to pay for every tonne of CO2 produced;
- EfW facilities would be included in this scheme from January 2026;
- the inclusion of EfW facilities was intended to give a signal to emitters to decarbonise waste by reducing plastics and artificial fibres entering the residual waste stream, by separating soft plastics from residual waste, or the Energy from Waste operator choosing to capture and store the excess CO2 during the waste treatment process;
- currently there were not sufficient markets for the recycling of soft plastics to allow this to be done on a household level but hopefully recycling of soft plastics would be able to be offered in the future; and
- the cost of the Emissions Trading Scheme would be broadly similar to that of landfill tax and would introduce a significant additional cost to waste processing, likely in excess of £100 per tonne for between 50,000 and 60,000 tonnes of residual waste.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on what happened to the soft plastics collected for recycling by supermarkets; and
- on the point being raised it was confirmed that people should be advised to continue taking their soft plastics to supermarkets for recycling, and it was questioned whether further advertisement of this service was needed.

The Working Group **NOTED** the position.

6. Contracts Update

The Strategic Lead - Waste Strategy and Operations provided a verbal update highlighting the importance of contracts to the Waste Management Service, including the following main points:-

- the service currently had 23 contracts in place for services including residual waste, container recycling, paper and cardboard recycling, food waste and haulage; and
- the service was currently working on tenders for a new Waste Haulage contract and assessing tenders for the planned industrial shredders which would be operational in the Longman and Seater Waste Transfer Stations in June 2025.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on the number of lorries taking waste from the Seater Waste Transfer Station to the EfW facility in Dunbar, the reliability of haulage contracts and any penalties incurred for not performing as expected, the possibility of using trailers on eight-wheeled vehicles to allow waste from Lochinver to go to the Longman Waste Transfer Station rather than the Seater Waste Transfer Station, the costs of the three biggest contracts, and waste composition analysis; and
- the problem of waste not being separated in roadside and public bins, especially those outside fast-food restaurants, was highlighted.

The Working Group **NOTED** the position.

7. Waste Transfer Stations Update

The Project Manager, Strategic Improvement Team, provided a presentation on the current position in respect of Waste Transfer Stations in Highland.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the Waste Transfer Stations in Sutherland worked well and made life easier;
- information was sought, and provided, on the amount of waste processed by each of the new or refurbished Waste Transfer Stations;
- on the point being raised it was confirmed that phase two of this project would involve refurbishing existing smaller Waste Transfer Stations which were now over 20 years old, and that this could be a potential use of the extended producer contribution money although that was yet to be agreed; and
- it was highlighted that glass bottle banks were being uplifted on a regular basis due to two new vehicles becoming operational.

The Working Group **NOTED** the presentation.

The meeting concluded at 4.30 pm.