

# Surrey Heath Borough Council

## Executive

17<sup>th</sup> January 2023

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### SEP 2025: A partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling

<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr Colin Dougan, Environment & Health
<b>Strategic Director/Head of Service</b>	Nick Steevens
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<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Date Portfolio Holder signed off the report</b>	23 December 2022
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All

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#### Summary and purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek approval on the partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling in Surrey for the next three years through the adoption of the Surrey Environment Partnership's SEP 2025 Strategy. SEP 2025 seeks to provide a clear strategic direction for the Surrey Environment Partnership until 2025 to help manage Surrey's recycling and waste in the most efficient, effective, economical and sustainable way.

#### Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that the SEP 2025 be adopted, as set out in the approach document in Annex 1.

#### 1. Background and Supporting Information

- 1.1 Surrey Environment Partnership (SEP) continuously strives to improve collection and disposal services in Surrey and aspires to be among the best nationally on all key performance indicators.
- 1.2 SEP is made up of the 11 district and borough councils and Surrey County Council (SCC). It was formed originally in 2009 to overcome the challenges of two-tier service delivery and aims to manage Surrey's recycling and waste in the most efficient, effective, economical, and sustainable way possible.

- 1.3 Since the Resources and Waste Strategy (RaWS) for England was published in December 2018, the Government has consulted on a number of the strategy's ambitions across a range of subjects. Whilst the outcome of those consultations are awaited, Surrey's growing population, increasing numbers of households, and changes in the types of waste produced by our residents means change is a certainty. However, the exact direction of the change and the impact it will have on Surrey Heath's collection and disposal services remains unclear.
- 1.4 SEP 2025 has been developed to bridge the gap between the existing out-of-date Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) and further clarity from central government. It reflects the vision of SEP and provides clear strategic direction for the partnership to 2025 and a longer-term vision that allows SEP to continue to follow the waste hierarchy and work towards zero waste<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.5 SEP's plan (the JMWMS) outlined the approach to achieving this. The JMWMS was scheduled to continue until 2024-25. However, it was last updated in 2015 and is considered to be 'out of date'. The key policy to support the RaWS is still emerging and therefore, the review of the JMWMS has been postponed until the national policy direction is clearer.

### **Emerging policy**

- 1.6 RaWS will fundamentally change how recycling and waste services will be funded and delivered in the future, and to that end has set out several proposed policy reforms including the following key measures:
- Invoke the 'polluter pays' principle through **extended producer responsibility (EPR)** for packaging to ensure producers of products bear financial responsibility for the management of the waste stage of a product's life cycle (except ground litter). The Government has committed to introducing this from April 2024.
  - Introduce a **deposit return scheme (DRS)** for drinks containers to reward residents for bringing back bottles and encourage them not to litter; thereby increasing the quality and quantity of recycling. The scheme is to include cans and plastic bottles (not glass) and is still under consideration for implementation from late 2024.
  - Improve recycling rates by ensuring **consistency in household and business recycling** collections. Key proposals include the collection of the same dry recyclable materials (glass, metal, plastic and paper and card) as separately as possible, collection of additional dry recycling such as cartons and plastic films and flexibles, collection of food waste separately at least once a week, and collection of garden waste for free or for a maximum cost. These measures are still under consideration for

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<sup>1</sup> means that at least 90% of operational waste has been reduced, reused, repurposed or recycled compared to the original baseline.

implementation from 2023-24, but likely to be delayed to coincide with EPR.

- 1.7 The measures in RaWS alongside other plans have set out the following key strategic ambitions to be achieved nationally over the next 30 years:
- Increase the municipal recycling rate to 55% by 2025 and 65% by 2035.
  - Business fleet owners and operators work towards 100% of vehicle fleets being zero emission by 2030, or earlier where markets allow (COP26 ambition).
  - A 50% reduction in per capita residual waste (excluding major mineral wastes) by 2042 from 2019 levels (proposed).

### **Current performance**

- 1.8 In Surrey significant achievements have been made possible by working together as a partnership; the most notable being our improved recycling rate, which in 2010-11 was 46.4% (13<sup>th</sup> highest nationally) and by 2020-21 was 55.1% (3<sup>rd</sup> highest nationally).
- 1.9 Despite this, it's now the right time to revisit how the eleven Districts & Boroughs and the County work together, considering some of the challenges we face including:
- **Emerging national policy** – There is a need to align with the policies coming through via RaWS. Whilst the plans aren't exactly clear yet, they will fundamentally change the way recycling and waste services are funded and delivered.
  - **Reducing carbon at pace** - All Surrey authorities have set a target for reaching net-zero as an organisation and recognise the carbon that recycling and waste collection and disposal operations omit, and the role that preventing them will play in tackling climate change.
  - **Increasing population and number of households** - Surrey's population could rise to over 1.3m by 2041<sup>2</sup>, which could translate into tens of thousands of new houses being constructed resulting in more recycling and waste and therefore more pressure on collection and disposal services.
  - **Budget pressures** - Surrey authorities are facing unprecedented financial challenges most recently from the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living, essentially having to do more with less.
  - **Infrastructure limitations** - There are a lack of processing facilities in the county, which means a lot of recycling and waste is dealt with outside of Surrey driving up cost and emissions.

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<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics

- **Stalling performance** - Recycling rates levelled off back in 2016/17 with Surrey now remaining around the 55%. A big coordinated effort will be required to meet the national 65% recycling rate target by 2035.

## 2. Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 In Surrey about £105 million<sup>3</sup> is spent each year collecting, managing and processing recycling and waste. By increasing the amount of waste prevented and the proportion recycled in the County it enables the cost of this service to reduce. It also benefits the environment; less raw materials are required, saving energy, emissions and protecting natural resources.
- 2.2 Adopting SEP 2025 will enable Surrey Heath to work in partnership with other Surrey authorities to reduce costs where possible whilst increasing performance and still providing a high-quality service to our residents. It will also ensure as a partnership, that Surrey's authorities are well prepared to manage the changes that will need to be introduced as a result of RaWS in the most efficient and effective way.

## 3. Proposal and Alternative Options

- 3.1 Whilst Surrey Heath already has a strong recycling performance, a partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling in Surrey for the next three years will ensure Surrey Heath can align with the Government's ambitions of a 55% recycling rate by 2025 and 65% by 2035. There are suggestions that government may require Surrey as a high performing County to go beyond these targets. Striving to go beyond national targets where possible and planning for decarbonisation of our vehicle fleets and infrastructure to reduce emissions is the shorter term objective alongside a longer term move towards net zero emissions. The approach will:
- Bridge the gap ahead of further clarity from central Government.
  - Consider the anticipated changes that may result from the key emerging national policy to support RaWS.
  - Provide clear strategic direction for the next three years and a longer-term vision for the partnership that will continue to follow the waste hierarchy and work towards zero waste<sup>4</sup> reducing emissions in the process. This will aid the future development of a new JMWMS for Surrey post-2025.
  - Drive down waste (particularly food and single-use plastic (SUP) waste) and increase the quality and quantity of our recycling (including increased participation in food waste recycling).
  - Address other key priorities to promote and maximise reuse, decarbonise our waste collection and street cleansing vehicle fleet, support the

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<sup>3</sup> From the Local Authority Revenue Expenditure and Financing: 2020-21 Final Outturn, England

<sup>4</sup> means that at least 90% of operational waste has been reduced, reused, repurposed or recycled compared to the original baseline.

development of infrastructure and optimised collections, and reduce fly-tipping and littering.

- 3.2 SEP appointed Eunomia Research and Consulting to develop a long-term waste flow model for Surrey. The model was created to help the partnership understand how far pending national changes and the work the partnership does, goes towards achieving the national targets. Working with Eunomia, a range of different scenarios were reviewed to set realistic targets for the next three years (the monitoring period of SEP 2025). The partnership targets are set out in Table 1 below, and factor in measures that we think will happen as a result of RaWS. Further information can be found in the SEP 2025 document in Annex 1.

**Table 1: SEP 2025 targets**

Measure	2021-22 (unaudited <sup>5</sup> )	SEP 2025 (monitoring period)		
		2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Residual waste per household (KG)	470.95	461	449	446
Recycling rate (inc DRS)	54.43%	56%	57%	58%
Food waste capture rate	43% (last comp analysis)		48% <sup>6</sup>	
DMR contamination rate	8.9%	<8%	<8%	<8%
Waste to landfill	15.1%	<6%	<3% <sup>7</sup>	<3%

- 3.3 To address the key priorities and meet the partnership targets, delivery against the following strategic objectives and actions is required:
- **Deliver joint work programmes that focus on partnership priorities** - reduce waste, increase food waste recycling, reduce contamination to improve the quality and quantity of DMR and decarbonise vehicle fleet.
  - **Set local targets and actions** - agree annual performance indicators and individualised delivery plans for each Surrey council that will contribute towards the overall partnership targets.
  - **Exploit further opportunities to work jointly** - Build on past work and look at opportunities to carry out joint processes where viable to procure required products (vehicles and bins/containers) to introduce consistent collections as determined by emerging Government policy.

<sup>5</sup> Data for a financial year is confirmed and made available to the public once information has been validated by the WasteDataFlow team and the Environment Agency. This usually happens on the following December.

<sup>6</sup> To be measured when the next composition analysis is carried out in 2024/25

<sup>7</sup> Aligns with SCC's target set out in their waste disposal contract re-procurement

- **Respond to policy** - respond to consultations held by Government on proposed policy to ensure the collective views of each Council are heard and that SEP 2025 remains aligned.
- **Engage** positively with industry groups to raise concerns and share thoughts and ideas on future policy and its implementation.
- **Adopt best practice** - research top performing authorities in England, and feed this learning into the development of the above annual work programmes and individualised delivery plans.

### Alternative Options

3.4 The other options below have been considered and been discounted for the following reasons:

- **Do nothing** – Surrey Heath already is already considered a high-performing Borough in relation to its recycling rates, however, more can be done to increase performance meet and exceed long term national targets.
- **Update the existing JMWMS** - While the current situation with emerging national policy is still uncertain, the partnership feel it is not the right time to go through a lengthy and costly exercise to update the existing JMWMS, which would include a public consultation.

## 4. Engagement and consultation

- 4.1 A dedicated Steering Group was established to provide strategic direction, oversight and accountability for the development of SEP 2025. This group contained a mixture of waste officers and elected members (responsible for waste) from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Joint Waste Solutions (JWS), Mole Valley District Council, Spelthorne Borough Council, SCC, and Waverley Borough Council. The Steering Group met six times between February and October 2022.
- 4.2 Two rounds of meetings were held with lead officers for recycling and waste at Surrey authorities between January and July 2022 to explain the scope of SEP 2025, obtain feedback on priorities and design and discuss progress. Alongside this, updates were given at the quarterly SEP Officer Group<sup>8</sup> meetings in February, May and September. SEP officers were also given the opportunity to review and provide input on the draft approach document and appendices throughout October and at their quarterly meeting in November.
- 4.3 The relevant portfolio holders at each Surrey authority have been kept informed through their quarterly SEP Member Group<sup>9</sup> meetings in February, June and September, and via their lead SEP officer. On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022,

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<sup>8</sup> SEP is supported by a Surrey Officers Group comprising of one lead officer responsible for waste from SCC and the D&Bs.

<sup>9</sup> SCC and the D&Bs have each appointed one elected member to SEP. This is normally the Portfolio Holder (or equivalent) for the environment including waste issues.

these portfolio holders and lead officers came together at the SEP Members Group to give partnership approval to the SEP 2025 approach document.

## **5. Contribution to the Council's Five Year Strategy**

- 5.1 Adoption of SEP 2025 supports the Council's Aims set out in the Five Year Strategy, namely
- Working with our communities and partners to reduce the amount of household waste produced by increasing recycling and ensuring improved knowledge of our recycling processes, and reducing the impact of environmental crime.
  - Through the decarbonisation of waste collection and street cleaning vehicles the Borough will be working towards achieving its ambitious net-zero carbon emission target by 2030 as an organisation and contributing to making the entire borough net zero by 2050 (with the aspiration for net zero by 2030).

## **6. Resource Implications**

- 6.1 The partnership work programmes are delivered by a single officer team known as JWS in collaboration with Surrey's councils. As part of this Surrey's councils have some responsibility to help support the delivery of the work programme.
- 6.2 Surrey councils will be required to commit some officer resource to help deliver the key actions from SEP 2025 including the individual authority delivery plans.
- 6.3 Adopting SEP 2025 will enable Surrey's councils to work more closely to improve performance and manage recycling and waste in a way that offers best value to the Surrey taxpayer.
- 6.4 The delivery of SEP 2025 will be supported by the partnership budget, which is set and agreed annually by lead officers and relevant portfolio holders for recycling and waste at Surrey' authorities.

## **7. Section 151 Officer Comments:**

- 7.1 No comments to add to the information in the report.

## **8. Legal and Governance Issues**

- 8.1 The Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003 requires all local authorities in a two tier system to have in place a joint strategy for the management of waste from households, to review it and keep the strategy up to date.
- 8.2 SEP 2025 provides an up to date strategy for Surrey for the next 3 years and until the national direction on emerging policy via RaWS is clear. At the start of 2025 (the final year for SEP 2025) the partnership will begin work on

developing a new Surrey JMWMS, at which point further clarity from Government on the RaWS measures which are set to start from 2024-25 will be clear. Once the Surrey JMWMS is drafted, consulted on, approved and adopted, this will be the new plan for partnership working from 2026.

- 8.3 Whilst not a direct relation to SEP 2025, the Government introduced the **Environment Act 2021** in November 2021 that makes provision for most of the described targets and gives them the legislative power to introduce the measures from RaWS above. The act will also make some changes to existing legislations to enable consistency in collections.

## **9. Monitoring Officer Comments:**

- 9.1 Under the Council Scheme of Delegation, the adoption of SEP 2025 is reserved to the Council's Executive.

## **10. Other Considerations and Impacts**

### **Environment and Climate Change**

- 10.1 SEP 2025 is likely to have beneficial climate change and carbon emissions implications, for example; reducing waste arisings and recycling material rather than disposing of it reduces the carbon impact of producing materials and associated emissions from transportation and disposal.
- 10.2 One of the key projects within SEP 2025 will be to develop an infrastructure and transport plan that enables us to comply with the RaWS and key emerging policy; and decarbonise waste collection and street cleansing vehicle fleets ideally by 2030 but in line with existing local authority policies.

### **Equalities and Human Rights**

- 10.3 There are no direct equalities implications resulting from the high level content of this report and the SEP 2025 approach document. However, individual equality impact assessments will be carried out on projects that form part of SEP 2025 where applicable.

### **Risk Management**

- 10.4 If not all partners adopt SEP 2025 it would impact on the ability of the partnership to work closely to improve performance and manage recycling and waste in a way that offers best value to the Surrey taxpayer. However, this risk has been mitigated by the engagement carried out, which has involved all lead officers of SEP including relevant portfolio holders as well as the dedicated Steering Group setup for SEP 2025.

### **Community Engagement**

- 10.5 Partnership communications are agreed by SEP and delivered by JWS. Various campaigns and activities have been and continue to be delivered to educate and encourage residents and their children to take action to reduce, reuse and recycle quality material. The JWS team share toolkits for SEP activities via the Surrey Comms Group for partner communications teams to use.
- 10.6 It is likely that national communications campaigns will be developed for the changes resulting from RaWS via the charity known as the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). However, local campaigns will need to be delivered to communicate these changes especially given that it's very unlikely that there will be complete consistency in collection amongst local authorities. In the first instance it is recommended that these discussions start off within SEP to see if and where this could be joined up and coordinated.

## **Annexes**

1. SEP 2025

## **Background Papers**