

PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 23 September 2024.

PRESENT: Councillors D Branson (Chair), J Banks (Vice-Chair), J Cooke, C Cooper, J Ewan, D Jackson, J Kabuye and A Romaine

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors S Platt and J Ryles

OFFICERS: G Field, J McNally, J Dixon and K Bargewell

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor L Young

24/20 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, introductions were made, and the Fire Evacuation Procedure explained.

24/21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

24/22 **MINUTES - PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL - 2 SEPTEMBER 2024**

The minutes of the Place Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 2 September 2024 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

24/23 **WASTE MANAGEMENT FINAL REPORT - DRAFT**

A copy of the Draft Final Report on Waste Management had been circulated with the agenda.

Members discussed the information provided and suggested conclusions and recommendations for inclusion in the Final Report.

AGREED that:

1. The following conclusions were approved for inclusion in the report.
 - A. The Panel found that, in 2022/23, Middlesbrough had one of the highest rates of local authority collected waste; household waste; and household waste per person amongst its local, regional and nearest Cipfa neighbours. The amount of residual waste collected by Middlesbrough in 2022/23 has increased from the previous year and is above the regional and national average.
 - B. The percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting in Middlesbrough in 2022/23 has reduced from the previous year and is below the regional, nearest Cipfa neighbours and national average. A reduction in recycling rates in Middlesbrough is also due to the amount of waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting that is contaminated. This is significantly higher in Middlesbrough than the regional, nearest Cipfa neighbours and national average. Locally, Middlesbrough and Stockton have the highest rates of residual waste, per person, and poorest recycling rates. Both councils operated a weekly residual waste collection service which supports the theory that, in general, weekly residual waste collections result in poorer recycling rates, however, Middlesbrough moved to a fortnightly collection model in August 2024.
 - C. The Panel recognises the significant financial pressures under which the Council is placed and notes the cost of residual waste disposal has increased year on year. With delays in the procurement of the new energy from waste facility, it is anticipated that gate fees are set to double by 2026, meaning that it is crucial to reduce the amount of residual waste being sent for disposal to reduce disposal costs. The cost

of disposing of recyclable materials through the various streams is significantly lower than those disposal costs for residual waste which is a factor in the necessity to drive up recycling as well as improving the Council's contribution to reducing the impact of climate change.

- D. The Panel is supportive of the Council's implementation of a move to fortnightly collections for residual waste in line with most other councils in England. It is hoped this will make householders think twice about the amounts of residual waste they are generating and drive-up recycling rates. In turn, by doing so, this will ease some of the financial pressures on the service by reducing residual waste disposal costs.
 - E. The Panel acknowledges, however, that Middlesbrough has a high proportion of terraced properties and accepts that it can be more difficult for those households to recycle with limited outdoor space/storage for various waste streams. Additionally, these properties lack gardens and outdoor green space so produce none or very little green waste which contributes to recycling rates. New and future housing developments tended to have gardens and green spaces so it is possible that, over time, there will be a gradual increase in green waste produced and also an improvement in the recycling rates of other materials as residents have more space for storage.
 - F. The Panel recognises the issues around identifying what can and cannot be recycled and welcomes the good work already being undertaken by the Service Area in relation to educating and assisting households with this and also the work undertaken by volunteer groups across Middlesbrough.
 - G. The Panel supports the implementation of the chargeable green waste collection service (implemented in May 2024). The subscription service has proved to be popular with residents and take up has far exceeded expectations (double projected take-up), in turn, generating additional income (standing at £915,820 as of August 2024).
 - H. Compared to its nearest Cipfa neighbours, Middlesbrough has the second lowest number of fly-tipping incidents, but one of the highest locally and the Panel recognises the increase in enforcement action that has taken place making Middlesbrough the best performing local authority in the Tees Valley in relation to enforcement action against fly-tippers (**72** FPNs issued in relation to 2,553 reported incidents during 2022/23).
 - I. The Panel recognises that fly-tipping is costly to the Council in terms of clearing and pursuing enforcement action and welcomes the Council's efforts to increase environmental enforcement activity through the creation of a dedicated, co-located team.
 - J. Middlesbrough operates a popular bulky waste collection service and is one of a few local authorities in England that offers a free service. The current system operates on two levels, with a chargeable option to speed up collection waiting times. This is a non-statutory service and the Panel found that in 2022/23 the cost to the Council of providing the service (£128,000) far exceeded the income it generated (£22,000). As part of the Council's budget setting process, approval was given to implement a fully chargeable service.
 - K. In light of increasing waste disposal costs, the Panel supports the implementation of a fully chargeable bulky waste collection service, again bringing Middlesbrough in line with the majority of councils in England.
 - L. The Panel acknowledges that food waste collections must be implemented by 31 March 2026 and notes that such collections will contribute to increasing recycling rates in Middlesbrough.
 - M. Many Councils that perform well on recycling are situated in areas with ample green spaces and properties with gardens. In addition, some of the better performing councils already collect food waste - including Welsh local authorities who have collected food waste for some time.
2. The following recommendations were approved for inclusion in the report.

- A. To maximise participation in recycling, the Panel recommends that the Service area continues to work with experts in the field to develop a comprehensive communication and community engagement plan informing households about the changes that have taken place and future changes regarding all waste collections and how they can make a difference by recycling. This should include:-
 - I. A video on the Council website and social media accounts showing what happens to our recycling, from collection to processing at the recycling plant, with clear information on each of the waste streams (recycling, residual, green waste and future food waste), which bin/receptacle materials should be placed in, together with details about how to access the green waste subscription service and bulky waste collections and associated charges.
 - II. A clear, pictorial leaflet to be distributed to households (potentially with annual Council Tax bill), and made available in public buildings (community hubs, libraries, etc) illustrating which materials can be placed in each bin, and a list of items that cannot be recycled. This should be replicated on the Council's website, in a prominent location, and social media accounts, and also be made available in languages other than English.
 - B. That the Service area develops a programme of education and outreach work with key partners, volunteers, and community groups, to tackle low recycling rates, contamination and fly-tipping in hot spot areas.
 - C. That customer satisfaction, in relation to waste collection and recycling services (including green waste collection and bulky waste collections if applicable) be monitored through the Council's existing residents' survey. Feedback will assist the Service Area to monitor and evaluate outcomes such as identifying good practice and any recurrent issues.
 - D. To review the Council's Green Strategy and relevant policies - particularly in relation to planning and new housing developments, to ensure that recycling and waste minimisation requirements are embedded, for example, ensuring all new housing developments are designed with the space and facilities (individual properties and communal) - to encourage sustainable waste management and promote recycling.
 - E. That the environmental enforcement work being carried out be significantly increased and that a campaign be launched within the next 12 months to raise awareness around fly-tipping and the associated penalties, including information for householders around using only licensed waste carriers.
 - F. That the Service Area provides the Scrutiny Panel with an update on progress in relation to all of the recommendations, within the next 12 months.
3. The final report will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for consideration.

24/24

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 7 October 2024 at 4.30pm

24/25

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.

None