

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Zero Waste Management Sub Committee
DATE	22 November 2016
INTERIM DIRECTOR	Marc Cole
TITLE OF REPORT	Charter for Household Recycling in Scotland
REPORT NUMBER	ZWSC/16/7678
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to review the content of the Scottish Government's Charter for Household Recycling in Scotland (Recycling Charter) and associated code of practice and their implications for Aberdeen City Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Zero Waste Management Sub-Committee:

1. Notes that the aims and content of the Recycling Charter align with the Aberdeen City Waste Strategy
2. Notes that in signing the Recycling Charter, the Council commits to 'design our household collection services to take account of the Code of Practice for the variety of housing types and geography in our community. In doing so, over time, we will establish common collection systems'.
3. Notes that formally signing up to the Charter will not commit the Council to any expenditure, only to exploring the options developed from a transition plan to be developed with Zero Waste Scotland.
4. Notes that the current and developing collection system does not match that of the Code of Practice and that the timeframe required to adopt fully the collections methodology is likely to be long without significant external funding to offset investment already made.
5. Recommends to the Finance Policy and Resources Committee on 1 December 2016 that Aberdeen City Council signs the Recycling Charter.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There will be no direct financial implications from this report. By committing to the Recycling Charter there may be costs and benefits for the Council. These are laid out in Sections 5.5 and 5.6 below.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Sustainability and environmental. Adopting common policies and waste management practices will facilitate common understanding of householder's involvement in recycling activities and encourage greater participation.

Resources. Adoption of common policies and practices will streamline the development of policy and standardise communications. As a result, fewer resources will be required in comparison to each authority developing its own approach.

5. BACKGROUND/ MAIN ISSUES

5.1 Introduction

Zero Waste Plan

In 2010, the Scottish Government developed its Zero Waste Plan as a blueprint for sustainable waste management. Since 2010 and the establishment of Zero Waste Scotland as its delivery body, the government has further developed national policy through the introduction of the concept of the Circular Economy and the introduction of the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012. Embedded in the government's approach is a strong push towards the movement of resources away from a 'use and dispose' culture to one where value is created through reuse, remanufacture and recycling of high quality materials. The Recycling Charter and associated Code of Practice is the product of this approach focussing on the household waste stream.

Recycling Charter

The Charter is a short document (included at Appendix 1) that sets out high level principles for recycling and waste management service delivery. It falls in line with the waste hierarchy (prioritising waste prevention, re-use, recycling and then recovery) and strives to encourage commitment to increasing participation in services, improved resource management, sustainable employment and investment in the economy.

The Charter has 4 bullet points, broadly summarised these state:

- Maximise capture and improve quality of recyclable waste
- Encourage participation in recycling and re-use

- Operate safely and train staff
- Develop and implement a Code of Practice

The concept of a Recycling Charter for Scotland is welcomed, and we generally believe this is at the right level - setting out the key principles without being restrictive on the way these are achieved.

5.2 Charter Development and Adoption Process

The driving force behind the charter was the Zero Waste Task Group, established by the Scottish Government which included local authority membership. Aberdeen City Council contributed to the development of the Charter and Code of Practice, however, officers' views on the fundamental issue of recycling collection systems was not reflected in the Code of Practice (more detail on this below).

The Charter and principle of developing a Code of Practice (CoP) was agreed by the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) on 28th November 2015. There was no direct or specific engagement from the Scottish Government with the Scottish Local Government Partnership (SLGP) on the development of the Charter or the Code of Practice. Officers from all SLGP members did contribute to a 2-day workshop developing the Code of Practice in October 2015. The Code of Practice was published in final form by Zero Waste Scotland in March 2016 (Appendix 2).

To date it is understood that approx. 20 Local Authorities have either signed the Charter or indicated their intention to do so.

There has been no discussion across the Scottish Local Government Partnership on this matter that officers are aware of and each authority is developing its own response. Renfrewshire and South Lanarkshire Councils have signed the Charter, Glasgow City Council are yet to decide.

5.3 Issues for Aberdeen City Council

The Recycling Charter sets out 21 commitments, many of which are already compatible with Aberdeen City Council Strategy and Policy. For example, maximising access to recycling services, being consistent, reducing capacity for non-recyclable waste and partnership working are all areas where the city is already making excellent progress.

The Code of Practice is a much more extensive document of 43 pages and takes a much more prescriptive approach to what is expected of signatory authorities. The Code of Practice sets out requirements that are defined as either "essential" or "desirable".

Waste and Recycling Service officers have undertaken a review of the Essential Requirements in the CoP and consider that all are compatible with our strategy, policies or operational practices, with the exception of some of those set out in Section 3 - Designing household waste & recycling services.

Underpinning this section is the preference for a 'three bin' recycling collection service with one for paper and card, a second for plastics, cartons and metals and a third for glass. In effect, this approach means that each household will have five separate waste (and containers) streams to manage when organic and non-recyclable waste are added to the recycling streams.

In a densely urban environment such as Aberdeen, officers do not see how such a system can be implemented and still meet the clear requirement under the 2012 legislation to provide recycling collections to all households for all the specified materials. In section 3.4.3.1 dealing with tenemental or flatted properties, the Code of Practice indicates that it is not essential to collect glass from every property but it is acceptable to expect a householder to carry glass, the densest of all recycling materials up to 1 km from their home to recycle it. Zero Waste Scotland as authors of the Code of Practice appear to be condoning or even encouraging a breach of the 2012 regulations. The approach also accepts that householders in flatted or tenemental properties can be provided with a sub-standard recycling collection service in comparison to those in individual houses with room for 5 containers.

Notwithstanding the issue of glass recycling, the use of a 3 recycling bin system supplemented by three-colour glass recycling points represents a significant increase in the number of containers on streets or in/around flats and tenemental properties. Current experience of introducing the three bin (mixed recycling, organic and non-recyclable waste) system in Aberdeen has proven very challenging. In private courtyard flatted properties especially, it is highly unlikely that factors and residents will sacrifice further parking and amenity land without significant backlash to the Council.

Aberdeen City Council has adopted the fully mixed recycling system, supported by a high quality Materials Recycling Facility at Altens East, as the means to ensure full compliance with the 2012 regulations and officers consider this approach will be demonstrated to achieve both high volume and high quality recycling in the city.

In committing to the charter, the Council agrees to undertake a review of its current activities and consider how they compare with the CoP. Whilst this is achievable, the investment made in new services and infrastructure clearly establishes a high bar for a business case to be made to move away from our current and developing delivery model. It is understood that Zero Waste Scotland is in a position to assist local

authorities to undertake this review and business case analysis, however, their resources are limited and potentially committed to other authorities that have already entered into the process and show more compatibility with the 3-bin model.

Other essential criteria in the CoP are broadly compatible with the Council's current or developing policies and practices.

5.4 Risks and Benefits of Signing Recycling Charter

Risk:

Expectation to change services at ACC's cost. It should be made clear that signing the Charter does not commit the Council to any course of action but will allow the Council to access support from Zero Waste Scotland to develop a transition plan. This will highlight any cost effective changes required to move towards a system consistent with the Code of Practice. If viable, the Transition Plan would develop an implementation plan detailing timescales and financial considerations. Formally signing up to the Charter will not commit the Council to any expenditure, only to exploring the options developed from the transition plan. As a result, it is not considered that signing the Charter represents a significant financial risk to the Council.

Benefits:

- Engagement in the future development of policies in CoP
- Potential funding support especially for communications activities
- Alignment of services and policies with other LAs will facilitate more efficient working and potential for shared services

5.5 Risk and Benefits of not Signing Recycling Charter

Risk:

- Loss of influence on future waste policy. The Code of Practice will set the standard for household waste management across Scotland in coming years. It is intended to be an evolving document taking account of changing policy, technical and service solutions. Those signed up to the Charter will be in a position to influence the evolution of the CoP, whereas those 'outside' are unlikely to have a strong voice..
- Loss of funding opportunities. Zero Waste Scotland has indicated that no ZWS funding will likely be considered for authorities that have not signed the Charter. Aberdeen City Council has benefited from significant capital funding for food waste collections and the introduction of communal mixed recycling services in tenemental areas in recent years (value in excess of £1.3M)

Benefits:

- The Council is not required to adopt CoP. The current (and foreseeable) incompatibility of collection systems aside, there are few elements of the CoP that differ from the Council's policies or strategy, therefore this benefit is considered small.
- Financial. No financial benefits are apparent in comparison with signing the charter as the charter does not commit the Council to undertaking any service change.

5.6 Conclusion

On balance, signing the Charter provides more opportunities for the Council than risks.

6. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience –

Adopting the common policies outlined in the CoP will help current householders understand how this and other Scottish local Authorities will provide services and what expectations there are of householders. Common provision of services in areas such as materials collected and capacity of residual bins will avoid current concern over variable service provision across local authority boundaries.

Improving Staff Experience –

Adoption of the Code of Practice ensures that the city Waste and Recycling Team remain in the mainstream of policy development in Scotland and can be confident in having a strong voice in developing policies and practices that meet the needs of the city.

Improving our use of Resources –

There will be no negative financial consequences of signing the Charter, the Council is not committed to changing its current collection operations. By signing, there is opportunity to secure funding and support for mutually beneficial activities from Zero Waste Scotland that would otherwise not be available.

Corporate -

Adoption of the Charter helps us to work towards achieving the Smarter Environment (natural resources) element of the Smarter City vision by helping to manage waste effectively and in line with UK and European legislative requirements by improving the efficiency of our collections thereby reducing our costs and carbon footprint.

Public –

It is expected that signing the Charter will lead to more common approaches to managing waste across Scotland and therefore make it easier for householders to understand how to manage their waste.

An EHRIA is not required as there are no service changes arising from this report. A PIA is not required for this report.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Sections 5.4 and 5.5 consider the risk implications.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 Recycling Charter

Appendix 2 Code of Practice

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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