

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**CABINET EXECUTIVE
17th December 2024**

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Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys**

REPORT TITLE: Powys Sustainable Resource Strategy 2025 to 2030

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To seek approval to proceed with an engagement exercise to move forward with the Powys Sustainable Resources Strategy.
- 1.2. 'Resource' in this context refers to the waste and recycling collected, sorted and sent for processing by Powys Country Council. As all material is either re-used, recycled or used for energy recovery, the term 'waste and recycling' is an outdated one and does not reflect the current situation and future aspirations. In Wales the 'Circular Economy' is now driving forward the need to save resources and not waste them.
- 1.3. The recycling rate in Powys has improved considerably over the past 10 years and is now one of the highest performing Councils in Wales at a projected 69% for 2024/25. However, to reach the Welsh Government's Statutory Recycling Target of 70% and avoid any potential fines, further improvements are required, and these are outlined in the Strategy.
- 1.4. There are a number of policy changes that all local authorities will need to adapt to, including Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), Workplace Recycling Regulations, as well as decarbonisation and net zero objectives.
- 1.5. The Strategy has been developed in partnership with WRAP Cymru and Local Partnerships, both of which work on behalf of Welsh Government.
- 1.6. The Strategy is in line with the Welsh Government's 'blueprint' method for collecting and processing resources and is part of the business case to secure support with capital funding for infrastructure development from Welsh Government.

2. Background

- 2.1. Powys has improved its recycling rate from 52.5% in 2013/14 to 68.5% in 2023/24, a significant achievement. This has been possible due to the rollout of the kerbside collection service, reduced frequency of residual collections and improvements at Household Waste Recycling Centres. This has been supported by a Communications and Awareness campaign and the willingness of our residents and businesses to get on board.
- 2.2. Whilst Powys County Council has not had an individual Waste and Recycling Strategy for several years, it has followed the clear direction of the Welsh Government's blueprint for collection and processing of the material collected. This is in line with their Towards Zero Waste and Beyond Recycling Strategies.
- 2.3. There are a number of future challenges for local authorities as well as achieving the Welsh Government Statutory Recycling Target (SRT) of 70% for 2024/25 and beyond. The introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for producers of packaging waste will have a considerable impact on how local authorities manage materials as well as a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) and an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) which will impact on material sent for Energy From Waste. The Strategy seeks to mitigate against these challenges and where possible seek out the opportunities they present.
- 2.4. In order to realise its aspirations, Welsh Government are working with all Local Authorities to ensure that clear strategies are in place. They are providing resources to do this via WRAP Cymru and Local Partnerships at no cost to the Councils. It should be noted that Wales is currently second in the World in terms of its recycling rate, and this is testament to the collaborative working between Welsh Government and Local Authorities.
- 2.5. The Strategy has been developed via a working group consisting of Officers in Powys as well as experts from WRAP and Local Partnerships. This has allowed best practice to be drawn upon from other authorities as well as ensuring the local needs and circumstances are considered. Engagement is the next step in sharing the Strategy to a wider range of stakeholders.
- 2.6. Central to the Strategy is the principles of a Circular Economy and the Waste Hierarchy, ensuring that waste is prevented wherever possible, followed by a greater emphasis on re-use. Whatever is left will then be recycled and finally sent for energy recovery. Landfilling of material would only occur in exceptional rare circumstances. This is why the Strategy is presented as one for 'Resources' as it goes beyond the limitations that 'Waste and Recycling' would impose.
- 2.7. Powys, like all local authorities, will need to significantly invest in its bulking facilities in order to ensure they have sufficient capacity to increase the range of materials collected for recycling and furthermore comply with the stringent requirements of the NRW permitting system.

This Strategy forms the first stage of the business case to Welsh Government for support with capital funding for these improvements. It does this by demonstrating a clear commitment by the authority to work towards achieving the national aspirations and targets. It also provides an important framework for future investment recognising changes in technology and legislation through the development of the Circular Economy.

3. Background - Sustainable Powys

- 3.1. Public Services across the UK are under considerable pressure as demand and costs rise, far outstripping the funding that is and will be available to them over the medium term. These growing financial and workforce pressures are having an impact on the ability of public services to meet the needs of their population. Our financial modelling estimated a budget gap of more than £60m over the next 5 years.
- 3.2. In response to this challenge the Council recognises the need to transform the type and volume of services that we can offer to put the organisation on a more sustainable footing. We cannot continue to deliver services in the same way we have done so for decades. To achieve this fundamental transformation, a significant programme of change will be delivered to achieve a Sustainable Powys which is financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable. We must become more connected to the population we serve.
- 3.3. Sustainable Powys is based on a set of principles:
 - Being open minded and seeking innovative solutions, using all the expertise available
 - Delivering best possible outcomes through transformation to provide better quality services
 - Using evidence – better understand need and model future demand, if we aren't getting results, we should change
 - A continual process of learning and adapting to meet existing and long-term needs sustainably
 - Engaging early with people in agreeing, designing and delivering approaches so we listen, understand, reflect and feedback
 - Addressing the fundamental question: why do we do what we do?
 - A strategic whole system approach, with partners, communities and the people of Powys
 - Delivering outcomes that are affordable or no cost

- 3.4. This is supported by a Place-Based Planning model based on the following principles:
- We will provide a hub in each of the five core areas - anything else will only be provided if there is an approved business case to support it
 - We will utilise schools and other community assets wherever we can for community-based solutions and services
 - Travel times can be up to 1 hour to your nearest hub (even if you are a child)
 - Provision must be digitally supported
 - Public and Community transport must align each locality to the hub
- 3.5. Delivering a Sustainable Powys will ensure that we can maintain a balanced budget, support each other, and protect the environment and nature of Powys. We will make better use of collective and reduced assets across the county, break down silos between services and maximise coordination with external providers and partners. In achieving this we will have to make some difficult decisions as to how we prioritise our budget, supporting the needs of those that are most vulnerable in our County. This will be driven by focusing on the services that we are obliged to deliver in the most effective and efficient way, building a stronger, fairer, and greener future by fostering well-connected, economically resilient communities, ensuring fair access to services, tackling poverty and inequality and supporting the wellbeing of the people of Powys.

4. Advice

- 4.1. The Sustainable Resource Strategy will provide a clear direction for the Council to reach statutory targets, comply with all existing and upcoming legislation and contribute to developing the circular economy. Cabinet are therefore advised to approve an engagement exercise on the draft Strategy with all stakeholders.
- 4.2. The engagement exercise will seek the views of residents and businesses to inform how the Strategy is developed and taken forward and what we need to do to ensure that they are aware of the challenges we face so that we can take them with us on the journey ahead.
- 4.3. Having the Strategy in place will form the first stage of the business case to Welsh Government for capital investment to make the essential improvements to our infrastructure.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1. Whilst the Strategy does not go into detail in terms of its financial implications, it is clear that moving material up the waste hierarchy will contribute to offsetting the costs of providing the waste and recycling service through reduced processing costs, increasing income generated from recyclable materials, and the potential reduction in collection costs if there is less material to collect.
- 5.2. Any initiatives that are actioned as a result of the implementation of this Strategy will need to be individually assessed and agreed in terms of the financial implications.
- 5.3. For context, the Council's Waste and Recycling budget is circa £19 million. This is offset by an income of circa £5 million, made up of £1.3 million grant funding and £3.7 million from income generating services and sales of recyclable material.
- 5.4. The Strategy will ensure that the Council is in alignment with the Welsh Government's strategic ambitions and has been developed with support from WRAP and Local Partnerships (working for Welsh Government). This will allow the Council to move forward with requesting capital support for the infrastructure improvements.
- 5.5. The Head of Finance notes the contents of the report and that further detailed financial work will need to be undertaken as the initiatives within the strategy are developed further. We must be mindful that all public funds are used as cost effectively as possible to reach statutory targets and comply with all existing and upcoming legislation, it is essential we deliver these within an affordable financial envelope.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1. Legal: the recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view.
- 6.2. The Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and support the recommendation."

7. Climate Change & Nature Implications

- 7.1. The Strategy will provide a fundamental element of the Council's Climate and Nature emergency declarations. The Circular Economy is at the heart of the Strategy, moving resources up the Waste Hierarchy.
- 7.2. There is of course an environmental impact to collecting and transporting materials, but this will be mitigated by the transition to Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEV) as soon as is practicable. The Service currently has one electric Refuse Collection Vehicle (eRCV) part funded as a trial with Welsh Government.

8. Data Protection

8.1. Whilst there are no direct implications for data protection, any operational changes that take place as a result of the Strategy would be considered as and when they are implemented.

9. Comment from local member(s)

9.1. The Strategy will be relevant to all Members.

10. Impact Assessment

10.1. Implementing the Sustainable Resource Strategy will provide a clear direction for the Council to reach the Welsh Government's Statutory Recycling Targets and maintain that performance. It will also underpin the business case to secure funding for capital infrastructure. The impact on residents will be minimal, particularly as most are already contributing to the high recycling performance. Effective communications should mitigate the impact with further measures in place to help residents who may require additional help.

11. Recommendation

11.1 To seek approval to proceed with an engagement exercise to move forward with the Powys Sustainable Resources Strategy.

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Appendix 1 – Sustainable Resources Strategy

Appendix 2 – Communications and Engagement Plan Summary

Appendix 3 – Impact Assessment