

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**24 August 2023**

**COUNCILLOR SANDRA SQUIRE - CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & COASTAL**

For the period 14 July to 24 August 2023

### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

The 4 recycling bins have been on the prom for several weeks now, I can happily report that the quality of recycling is very good so far. We are still waiting for permission from the Environment Agency to place bins along Heacham beach.

I have agreed to become a Director of Norse Environmental Waste Services Limited (NEWS) Joint Venture Company which owns the county's waste and recycling infrastructure, including the MRF at Costessey, Norwich.

Brown bins sales are up over 1000 bins this year.

Repairs on the Prom were completed mid July and the compound has been removed.

The beach safety sign has now been installed at Old Hunstanton Beach and is operational.

The regular sampling of the shellfish beds has unfortunately resulted in the closure of one of the beds (Stubborn Sand) due to poor results. Further testing will be undertaken, with 2 satisfactory tests being needed for the shellfish bed to be reopened.

Water quality in the wash and on our beaches is an ongoing concern. I was pleased to be invited by Anglian Water to tour their Heacham Water Treatment Plant with other councillors and representatives from other organisations.

### **Government Waste Policy Update**

The UK government has delayed the implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging until 2025. The original plan was to have EPR in place by 2024, but the government has said that it needs more time to finalize the details of the scheme.

There are a number of reasons why the government has delayed EPR. One reason is that there is still some uncertainty about how the scheme will work in practice. For example, it is not yet clear how the scheme will be funded, or how it will be enforced. Business groups have been lobbying hard against the proposals and the timeline.

Another reason for the delay is that the government is concerned about the impact of EPR on inflation. The government believes that EPR could lead to higher prices for consumers, and it does not want to add to the inflationary pressures as increased producer costs were likely to be passed to consumers.

- EPR was intended to fund the collection and recycling of packaging placed on the market by manufacturers and retailers. This also included street litter clearance through litter bins and street cleansing.
- Packaging waste is 47% of total household waste.
- Fees paid by producers were variable depending on how easy to recycle packaging is considered. [Products like Pringles are notoriously difficult to recycle (currently not recycled)].
- The amount of money received by each council was going to be based on efficiency and effectiveness.

The Consistency in collections was a further branch of the waste reforms which the government consulted on in 2019, the response to the consultation has been long awaited. The response has been delayed further and the government has said that it will be published in due course. That is unlikely to be any time soon.

- These proposals include requiring all local authorities to collect a core set of dry recyclable materials, making separate food waste collections mandatory, and providing clear and consistent information to householders.
- They have also proposed that garden waste collections are either 'free' or that a maximum charge is set for garden waste collections.
- The proposals re-enforce the idea that paper and card, if not all materials, are collected separately from glass unless it can be fully shown that this is not appropriate for an authority and its residents. This would mean in practice at least one more bin for each home.
- The desired outcome is more waste recycled, contamination reduced or removed as less confusion and more easily placed on the market, including new markets for extra materials, for processing of collected waste.

The government has stated that the Deposit Return Scheme will continue to proceed with implementation in 2025.

- The scheme will cover plastic bottles and cans of all sizes of less than 750ml.
- Consumers will be able to return their containers to supermarkets, convenience stores, and other designated collection points.
- The government believes that the DRS will be an effective way to reduce litter and increase recycling rates in England.

The impact of less drinks cans and plastic bottles on the finances of the MRF (owned by the councils in Norfolk) can't be assessed as much of the price paid for processing is highly dependant on the value of the materials sold, which is subject to international price fluctuations.

## **2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

We will continue to work with our partners including the Environment Agency and Anglian Water to investigate the issues with water quality and what can be done to improve it. It is a complex situation with many factors involved which will require us to work together to find solutions.

I would personally like to thank both Cllr Parish & Cllr Dark for their continued involvement and for bringing all relevant partners together over several years to investigate water quality.

I will be attending the LGA Coastal SIG Field Trip & AGM in September which will be a good opportunity to discuss coastal issues with other coastal councils.

## **3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled**

Various Portfolio briefings  
 Tour of Anglian Water Treatment Plant at Heacham  
 Corporate Performance Panel  
 Cabinet  
 Cabinet Briefing  
 Recycling initiatives meeting  
 LGA Cabinet Support Day  
 Joint Waste Contract Review & Development Board  
 Cabinet sifting  
 LGA Coastal SIG Coastal Water Quality Working Group  
 NEWS Board Meeting