

Report to	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	12 March 2020
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Brian Jones: Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment / Tony Ward: Head of Highways, Facilities & Environmental Services
Report author	Tony Ward: Head of Highways, Facilities & Environmental Services
Title	Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of taking steps to revise household waste collection, supporting the well-being objective of delivering an attractive and protected environment – Denbighshire County Council

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Auditor General for Wales is statutorily required to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when: a) setting their well-being objectives; and b) taking steps to meet them. As part of this work, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) has published a report setting out its findings from an examination of steps the Council is taking to revise household waste collection. The WAO report is attached at Appendix I.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. To provide information regarding the report by the WAO on the steps the Council is taking to revise household waste collection and compliance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Wales Act's sustainable development principle and five well-being goals.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That the Committee considers the findings of the WAO, and confirms that it is satisfied with the Council's response to the suggested opportunities for improvement identified within the WAO report.

4. Report details

4.1. The overall conclusion from the WAO report is that “The Council has started to apply the sustainable development principle in developing the step and in taking actions to deliver it. However, there are opportunities to further embed the five ways of working into its decision making and planning”.

4.2. In terms of the more detailed examination findings, the WAO concluded the following:

- “The Council’s plans for changes to the waste service are based on a sound understanding of the local and national context and it now needs to ensure that it develops a longer-term waste strategy for the period beyond the roll out of the new service in 2021 that aligns with emerging new strategies from the Welsh Government”;
- “The Council is clear about what it is trying to prevent as a result of changes to its waste and recycling arrangements, but it is still developing its plans to embed some of the behaviour changes necessary to support the roll-out of the new model and developing a benefits realisation plan for the new service”;
- “The Council understands the potential wider benefits from this Step, but the benefits are not yet well-defined within the operational plans of other council services”;
- “The Council has some well-established collaborations and has identified further opportunities as part of its delivery of this Step. However, it could do more to assess the effectiveness of arrangements that the Council does not directly fund, for example third sector or community-based collaborations”; and
- “The Council has involved local residents about the changes to waste services however, it recognises the need for more coordinated and targeted engagement prior to the service changes”.

4.3. In response to the WAO findings, the Council has developed the following potential actions in relation to the five ways of working:

i. Long Term

- develop a wider waste strategy and delivery plan that covers the whole waste service, and links to the Welsh Government strategy;
- develop a long-term communications strategy beyond 2021;
- develop a Benefits Realisation Plan that is tracked during and beyond project implementation.

ii. Prevention

- back office re-structure to compliment the service change to moving to area-based working to optimise collaboration and engagement;

- measure baseline service standards so it is understood how the changes impact on this;
- wider adoption of use of social norming to community led instruction and messages and nudges, embedded in our behaviour change strategy.

iii. Integration

- ensure actions feature in relevant service operational plans (shared actions);
- Waste and Recycling Service to work with other Council Services to identify and deliver additional benefits to Denbighshire Citizens, employees and the council as a result of the changes to the Waste Collection model and to ensure that projects are captured and monitored through the Council's business planning process where appropriate (linked to the Benefits Realisation Plan).

iv. Collaboration

- ensure any future formal arrangements with third sector organisations and community groups are recognised through an agreed Service Level Agreement (SLA).

v. Involvement

- more targeted communication with identified groups and mechanisms/channels that will be used and measured, with a view to informing future communication activities;
- consider developing community champions, particularly in areas such as West Rhyl, where community engagement and participation is often challenging;
- hard to reach/challenging properties and locations – gain an insight through focus group to help design and deliver services;
- implement engagement plan once the timing is right to do so;
- use 'engagement portal' to involve/promote service change;
- create accessible opportunities in town centres and other areas of high footfall to engage with local residents to promote pro-recycling behaviour changes and future service changes;
- through the Eco-schools' programme (Keep Wales Tidy) develop cascade learning approaches to ensure accurate messages and instructions to reach our households;
- use of internet and social media tools e.g. PlayBuzz to clarify what can and can't be recycled – using schools to help promote site;
- involve teachers through paid supply/relief cover, to develop educational material that reinforce recycling messages to DCC;

- continue to celebrate work of schools and local groups and encourage best practice sharing between them through annual awards.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

- 5.1. One of the Council's corporate priorities for 2017 to 2022 is to provide an attractive and protected environment, supporting wellbeing and economic prosperity.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1. The WAO report is about activities that the Council already carries out, or that it has budgeted to undertake as part of the project to change the way that the council manages household waste. There is a possibility that the opportunities for improvement that the Wales Audit Office has identified could result in the Council incurring additional costs, depending on the extent to which the council decides to implement them, but the intention would be to work within existing budgets and resources.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment is not required because this report is about the WAO's observations of the Council's current activities, suggested opportunities for improvement, and the Council's response to these observations. This report is not, specifically, making a recommendation that the Council changes its activities or the way it goes about them. Any new projects that are initiated as a result of this report will be impact assessed.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1. The presentation of this report is the first opportunity to consult with the Communities Scrutiny Committee. In carrying out its examination, the Wales Audit Office consulted with officers of the Council, including members of the Senior Leadership Team, as well as the Lead Member.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1. The Council has invested £1.4m as part of the 2020/21 budget process into waste service in order to recognise the pressures in this area. It is hoped that the new model when implemented will bring about efficiencies, however no assumptions have been made regarding this in the Medium Term Financial Plan. It is welcome that the service recognises the need to try and contain any future pressures within existing resources, although the risks around this are also recognised.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. There is a reputational risk (low) to the Council in the event that it decides to disregard the opportunities for improvement set out in the Wales Audit Office report.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

11.2. Section 7 of the Council's Constitution sets out Scrutiny's powers with relation to this matter