

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

Item 18 - Members' Questions

From Cllr Paul Oatway QPM - Pewsey Vale West Division

To Cllr Nick Holder - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Question (24-01)

At the Full Council meeting held on 17 October 2023, Cllr Nick Holder provided an update on the Council's response to the climate emergency.

In part of this update Cllr Holder explained how Wiltshire Council is responding to the changing requirements regarding household waste collection as part of the Environment Act and subsequent clarification from DEFRA.

Whilst Cllr Holder was doing this he was interrupted by another Member, and I am concerned not all Members were able to understand the details which were being discussed.

Can I therefore ask Cllr Holder to reiterate how this council is responding to these changing requirements?

Response:

The Environment Act 2021 is expected to have a significant impact on the household waste collection services that Wiltshire provides today. It also includes several new statutory requirements we will need to comply with. The new initiatives and requirements under the Act have been subject to significant delays with key detail only recently being made available by Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Some key changes are:

October 2025: A national Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for all drinks containers (excluding glass) - consumers will be required to pay a deposit on all drink containers in scope, to be redeemed when returned to a retailer deposit point. This scheme should lead to an increase in national recycling rates, and a reduction in local littering, but may reduce the income this council receives from the sale of the recyclable materials it currently collects at the kerbside and through the household recycling centre network.

October 2025: Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Scheme. Packaging producers will finally be made responsible for covering the costs of managing their waste packaging through waste collection services, recycling centres and litter bins.

There is potential for significant funding to be shared with councils by the EPR scheme Administrator. More details are expected in 2024, with councils told to expect to receive their first funding settlement in December 2025. As well as appropriately funding local authorities, the EPR scheme aims to encourage better packaging design to allow more recycling, and disincentivise the use of “hard to recycle” packaging items, such as black plastic food trays.

March 2026 – minimum requirement for all councils to provide recycling collections for glass bottle and jars, metal cans and tins, paper and card, and plastic containers (Wiltshire already complies with this).

Food Waste: Requirement to provide a separate weekly collection of food waste by March 2026, unless this would have a negative impact on existing waste management contracts. As this is the case in Wiltshire, we have been granted a short deferment until August 2027. The council has also received positive news from Defra on the indicative level of New Burdens Funding that we should expect to receive to allow this new service to be rolled out to Wiltshire residents.

March 2027: “flexibles plastics” such as plastic films and bread bags to be included in kerbside recycling collections, recognising that more UK-based reprocessor capacity is needed to successfully recycle this material at scale.

The officers are working hard to fully assess the impacts and opportunities arising from these significant changes, and to ensure that Wiltshire provides compliant services by the necessary deadlines. In doing so, we are confident that we shall be able to further increase our recycling rates and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill, with all of the Environmental benefits that this will deliver.

Additional comment on food waste

It is important to note that currently, food waste is typically disposed of in household waste bins and is sent to generate energy, very little if any of this waste collected at the kerbside is sent to landfill.

Between now and 2027, we will focus on encouraging residents to reduce the amount of food waste that they generate, and promoting our subsidised food waste digesters that allow households to manage the food waste they produce at home.