

Surrey Environmental Partnership (Corporate Head of Environmental Services – Helen Clark)

Synopsis of report:

Surrey Environment Partnership, SEP provide waste disposal services for all 11 Surrey County Council districts and boroughs including Runnymede Borough Council.

Since the Resources and Waste Strategy (RaWS) for England was published in December 2018, the Government has consulted on several of the strategy’s ambitions across a range of subjects, the anticipated results of which will provide policy direction.

Surrey’s growing population, increasing number of households, and changes in the types of waste produced by residents means change is a certainty. However, the exact direction of the change and the impact it will have on SEP’s collection and disposal services remain unclear.

The Surrey Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) was last updated in 2015. Although due for revision SEP have decided to wait for clarity with respect to the Resource and Waste Strategy before reviewing the JMWMS.

In the interim Surrey Environmental Partnership have developed SEP 25 to bridge the gap between the existing 2015 JMWMS and a revised future strategy to allow accommodation of further guidance from central government.

SEP 25 reflects the vision of SEP and provides a clear strategic direction for the partnership for the next three years to 2025 and a longer-term vision that will allow SEP to continue to follow the waste hierarchy and work towards zero waste.

SEP 2025 is a partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling and has been developed on behalf of all Surrey local authorities through the SEP.

Recommendation(s):

- i) Adoption of the Surrey Environmental Partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling in Surrey for the next three years known as SEP 2025; and**
- ii) Approve Runnymede Borough Council’s Service Delivery plan relating to SEP 25 (Annex 4)**

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 Surrey Environmental Partnership (SEP) is made up of Surrey County Council (SCC) and the 11 district and borough councils (D&Bs) in the county. It was formed originally in 2009 to overcome the challenges of two-tier service delivery and aims to manage Surrey's recycling and waste in the most efficient, effective, economical, and sustainable way possible.
- 1.2 SEP's plan the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) outlined the approach to achieving this. The JMWMS was meant to run until 2024-25. However, it was last updated in 2015 and is therefore considered to be 'out of date'. The key policy to support the Government's 2018 resource and waste strategy (RaWS) is still emerging and therefore, the review has been postponed until the national policy direction is clearer.

2. Report

Resource and Waste Strategy for England 2018 (RaWS)

- 2.1 RaWS was published by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in December 2018. The strategy will fundamentally change how recycling and waste services will be funded and delivered in the future, and to that end has set out several proposed policy reforms including the following key measures:
 - Invoke the 'polluter pays' principle through **extended producer responsibility (EPR)** for packaging to ensure producers of products bear financial responsibility for the management of the waste stage of a product's life cycle (except ground litter). The Government has committed to introducing this from April 2024.
 - Introduce a **deposit return scheme (DRS)** for drinks containers to reward residents for bringing back bottles and encourage them not to litter; thereby increasing the quality and quantity of recycling. The scheme is to include cans and plastic bottles (not glass) and is still under consideration for implementation from late 2024.
 - Improve recycling rates by ensuring **consistency in household and business recycling** collections. Key proposals include the collection of the same dry recyclable materials (glass, metal, plastic and paper and card) as separately as possible, collection of additional dry recycling such as cartons and plastic films and flexibles, collection of food waste separately at least once a week, and collection of garden waste for free or for a maximum cost. These measures are still under consideration for implementation from 2023-24, but likely to be delayed to coincide with EPR.
- 2.2 The measures in RaWS alongside other plans have set out the following key strategic ambitions to be achieved nationally over the next 30 years:
 - Increase the municipal recycling rate to 55% by 2025 and 65% by 2035.
 - Business fleet owners and operators work towards 100% of vehicle fleets being zero emission by 2030, or earlier where markets allow (COP26 ambition).

- 50% reduction in per capita residual waste (excluding major mineral wastes) by 2042 from 2019 levels (proposed).

Current performance within Surrey

- 2.3 Significant achievements have been made possible by working together as a partnership; the most notable being our improved recycling rate, which in 2010-11 was 46.4% (13th highest nationally) and by 2020-21 was 55.1% (3rd highest nationally).

Key challenges

- **Emerging national policy** - We need to align our policies with the policies coming from Central Government via RaWS. Whilst the plans aren't exactly clear yet, they will fundamentally change the way recycling and waste services are funded and delivered.
- **Reducing carbon at pace** - All Surrey's authorities have set a target for reaching net-zero as an organisation and recognise the carbon that recycling and waste collection and disposal operations omit, and the role that preventing them will play in tackling climate change.
- **Increasing population and number of households** - Surrey's population could rise to over 1.3m by 2041¹, which could translate into tens of thousands of new houses being constructed resulting in more recycling and waste and therefore more pressure on collection and disposal services.
- **Budget pressures** - Surrey's authorities are facing unprecedented financial challenges most recently from the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living. Essentially having to do more with less.
- **Infrastructure limitations** - There are a lack of processing facilities in the county, which means a lot of recycling and waste is dealt with outside of Surrey driving up cost and emissions.
- **Stalling performance** - Recycling rates levelled off back in 2016/17 with Surrey now remaining around the 55% mark. A big, coordinated effort will be required to meet the national 65% recycling rate target by 2035.

Proposals

- 2.4 The response to this situation is to develop a partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling in Surrey for the next three years. This will look to, as a minimum, align with the Government's ambitions such as a 55% recycling rate by 2025 and 65% by 2035. There might be a requirement as a high performing county in England to go beyond this. In any event, SEP will strive to go beyond the national targets where possible and begin to respond to decarbonisation by planning changes to our vehicle fleets and infrastructure to reduce emissions in the

¹ Office for National Statistics

shorter term and move towards net zero emissions in the longer term. The approach will be:

- Bridge the gap ahead of further clarity from central Government.
- Consider the anticipated changes that may result from the key emerging national policy to support RaWS.
- Provide clear strategic direction for the next three years and a longer-term vision for the partnership that will continue to follow the waste hierarchy and work towards zero waste² reducing emissions in the process. This will aid the future development of a new JMWMS for Surrey post-2025.
- Enable us to drive down waste (particularly food and single-use plastic (SUP) waste) and increase the quality and quantity of our recycling (including participation in food waste recycling).
- Address other key priorities to promote and maximise reuse, decarbonise our waste collection and street cleansing vehicle fleet, support the development of infrastructure and optimised collections, and reduce fly-tipping and littering.

Targets

2.5 SEP appointed Eunomia Research and Consulting to develop a long-term waste flow model for Surrey. The model was created to help the partnership understand how far pending national changes and the work the partnership does, will go towards achieving the national targets. Working with Eunomia, a range of different scenarios were reviewed to set realistic targets for the next three years (the monitoring period of SEP 2025) that keep on track in the short term to meet longer term national targets. The partnership targets are set out in **Table 1** below, and factor in measures that we think will happen as a result of RaWS. Further information can be found in the **SEP 2025 Report – Annex 5**

Table 1: SEP 2025 targets

Measure	2021-22 (unaudited ³)	SEP 2025 (monitoring period)		
		2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Residual waste per household (KG)	470.95	461	449	446
Recycling rate (inc DRS)	54.43%	56%	57%	58%
Food waste capture rate	43% (last comp analysis)		48% ⁴	
DMR contamination rate	8.9%	<8%	<8%	<8%
Waste to landfill	15.1%	<6%	<3% ⁵	<3%

² means that at least 90% of operational waste has been reduced, reused, repurposed or recycled compared to the original baseline.

³ Data for a financial year is confirmed and made available to the public once information has been validated by the WasteDataFlow team and the Environment Agency. This usually happens on the following December.

⁴ To be measured when the next composition analysis is carried out in 2024/25

⁵ Aligns with SCC's target set out in their waste disposal contract re-procurement

Strategic objectives

2.6 To address the key priorities and meet the partnership targets, we must deliver against the following strategic objectives and actions:

- **Deliver joint work programmes that focus on partnership priorities** - reduce waste, increase food waste recycling, reduce contamination to improve the quality and quantity of DMR and decarbonise our vehicle fleet.
- **Set local targets and actions** - agree annual performance indicators and individualised delivery plans for each Surrey council that will contribute towards the overall partnership targets.
- **Exploit further opportunities to work jointly** - Build on past work and look at opportunities to carry out joint processes where viable to procure required products (vehicles and bins/containers) to introduce consistent collections as determined by emerging Government policy.
- **Respond to policy** - respond to consultations held by Government on proposed policy to ensure our collective views are heard and that SEP 2025 remains aligned. Engage positively with industry groups to raise concerns and share thoughts and ideas on future policy and its implementation.
- **Adopt best practice** - research top performing authorities in England and feed this learning into the development of the above annual work programmes and individualised delivery plans.

Other options considered

2.7 The other options below have been considered and been discounted for the following reasons:

- **Do nothing** - To maintain the status quo is unlikely to give us the level of performance uplift we seek to keep on course with long term national targets.
- **Update the existing JMWMS** - While the current situation with emerging national policy is still unclear and so uncertain, the partnership feel it is not the right time to go through a lengthy and costly exercise to update the existing JMWMS, which would include a public consultation.

Engagement and consultation

2.8 A dedicated Steering Group was established to provide strategic direction, oversight and accountability for the development of SEP 2025. This group contained a mixture of waste Officers and elected Members (responsible for waste) from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Joint Waste Solutions (JWS), Mole Valley District Council, Spelthorne Borough Council, Surrey County Council and Waverley Borough Council. It met six times between February and October 2022.

- 2.9 Two rounds of meetings were held with lead officers for recycling and waste at Surrey's authorities between January and July 2022 to explain the scope of SEP 2025, obtain feedback on priorities and design and discuss progress. Alongside this, updates were given at the quarterly SEP Officer Group⁶ meetings in February, May and September. SEP officers were also given the opportunity to review and provide input on the draft approach document and appendices throughout October and at their quarterly meeting in November.
- 2.10 Portfolio holders (or equivalent) for environment including waste at Surrey's authorities have been kept informed through their quarterly SEP Member Group⁷ meetings in February, June and September, and via their lead SEP officer. On 23 November 2022, these portfolio holders and lead officers came together at the SEP Members Group to give partnership approval to the SEP 2025 approach document.

Key implications

Risk management

- 2.11 If not all partners adopt SEP 2025 it would impact on the ability of the partnership to work closely to improve performance and manage recycling and waste in a way that offers best value to the Surrey taxpayer. However, this risk has been mitigated by the engagement carried out, which has involved all lead officers of SEP including relevant portfolio holders as well as the dedicated Steering Group setup for SEP 2025.

Resource

- 2.12 The partnership work programmes are delivered by a single officer team known as Joint Waste Solutions (JWS) in collaboration with Surrey's councils. As part of this Surrey's councils have some responsibility to help support the delivery of the work programme.
- 2.13 Surrey's councils will be required to deploy some officer resource to help deliver the key actions from SEP 2025 including the individual authority delivery plans. The Service Delivery Plan developed for Runnymede is attached at Appendix 2.

Communications

- 2.14 Partnership communications are managed by SEP and delivered by JWS. Various campaigns and activities have been and continue to be delivered to educate and encourage residents and their children to take action to reduce, reuse and recycle quality material. The JWS team share toolkits for SEP activities via the Surrey Comms Group for partner communications teams to use.
- 2.15 It is likely that national communications campaigns will be developed for the changes resulting from RaWS via the charity known as the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). However, local campaigns will need to be delivered to communicate these changes especially given that it's very unlikely that there will be complete consistency in collection amongst local authorities. In the first instance it is

⁶ SEP is supported by a Surrey Officers Group comprising of one lead officer responsible for waste from SCC and the D&Bs.

⁷ SCC and the D&Bs have each appointed one elected member to SEP. This is normally the Portfolio Holder (or equivalent) for the environment including waste issues.

recommended that these discussions start off within SEP to see if and where this could be joined up and coordinated.

3. **Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 SEP 25 is aligned with the Runnymede Borough Council Climate Change Strategy approved by Full Council in October 2022. Reduction in the volume of food waste being collected will directly reduce scope one carbon emissions.
- 3.2 SEP 25 is also aligned with the Household Recycling and Waste Kerbside Collection Policy approved by Environment and sustainability Committee on the 8th July 2020.
 - To reduce the amount of household waste sent for disposal and improve the amount of household recycling
 - To reduce our carbon footprint by engaging with all stakeholders to reduce the amount of household waste transported for disposal.
 - To reduce and where possible eliminate the use of contamination at the kerbside of household waste and recyclables

4. **Resource implications/Value for Money (where applicable)**

- 4.1 Adopting SEP 2025 will enable Surrey's councils to work more closely to improve performance and manage recycling and waste in a way that offers best value to the Surrey taxpayer.
- 4.2 The delivery of SEP 2025 will be supported by the partnership budget, which is set and agreed annually by lead officers and relevant portfolio holders for recycling and waste at Surrey' authorities.

5. **Legal implications**

- 5.1 The Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003 requires all local authorities in a two-tier system to have in place a joint strategy for the management of waste from households, to review it and keep the strategy up to date.
- 5.2 As explained above, there is a Surrey JMWMS, but SEP 2025 is an extension to this for the next 3 years until the national direction on emerging policy via RaWS is clear. At the start of 2025 (the final year for SEP 2025) the partnership will begin work on developing a new Surrey JMWMS. At this point we should have further clarity from the Government on the way forward following the implementation of the RaWS measures which are set to start from 2024-25. Once the Surrey JMWMS is drafted, consulted on, approved and adopted, this will be the new plan for partnership working from 2026.
- 5.3 This isn't a direct relation to SEP 2025, but the Government introduced the **Environment Act 2021** in November 2021 that makes provision for most of the described targets and gives them the legislative power to introduce the measures from RaWS above. The act will also make some changes to existing legislations to enable consistency in collections.

6. **Equality implications**

6.1 There are no direct equalities implications resulting from the high-level content of this report and the SEP 2025 approach document. However, individual equality impact assessments will be carried out on projects that form part of SEP 2025 where applicable.

7. **Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

7.1 SEP 2025 is likely to have beneficial climate change and carbon emissions implications, for example; reducing waste arisings and recycling material rather than disposing of it reduces the carbon impact of producing materials and associated emissions from transportation and disposal.

7.2 One of the key projects within SEP 2025 will be to develop an infrastructure and transport plan that enables us to comply with the RaWS and key emerging policy; and decarbonise waste collection and street cleansing vehicle fleets ideally by 2030 but in line with existing local authority policies.

8. **Timetable for Implementation**

8.1 SEP 2025 is to be taken through individual councils' democratic processes from December 2022 to March 2023, which will hopefully result in formal adoption across SEP by April 2023.

8.2 At the same time, JWS are leading the process to design and develop individualised delivery plans with Surrey's authorities that support the delivery of SEP 2025. It's expected that these plans including the plan for Runnymede Borough Council will be signed off and ready to deliver against from April 2023.

8.3 Progress against the targets, and key actions including the annual SEP work programme and local delivery plans will be monitored quarterly and discussed the SEP Officer and Member Group meetings.

8.4 Targets and the work programme/individual delivery plans will be reviewed annually with adjustments to targets made where necessary including adding new projects to the annual SEP work programme and individual delivery plans, where required to support target achievement. This will be developed and agreed with the SEP Officers and Members Groups.

To Resolve

Background papers

Annex 1 SEP work programmes 2022-2023

Annex 2 Duties and responsibilities in accordance with relevant key legislation

Annex 3 Current performance and waste composition

Annex 4 Service Delivery Plan developed in consultation with SEP for Runnymede

Annex 5 SEP 2025 Report