



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF SERVICE DELIVERY**

**to
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
10 NOVEMBER 2022**

SOFT PLASTICS RECYCLING TRIAL (PLASTIC BAGS AND WRAPPINGS)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of a successful bid to trial a fully funded collection of Soft Plastics (Plastic bags and wrappings).
- 1.2 To set out the aims of the project including how it will operate in the district.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That Members note Maldon District Council will be participating in the collection of Soft Plastics (plastic bags and wrappings) trial from January 2023, with further expansion of the scheme expected in October 2023;
- (ii) That Officers ensure the public are supported in the trial by ensuring clear information is made available to participants working with the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Flexible plastic packaging represents nearly a quarter of all UK consumer plastic packaging but only 6% is currently recycled. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Consultation on Consistency in Household and Business Recycling proposes that plastic films and flexibles should be collected by local authorities no later than March 2027.
- 3.2 SUEZ recycling and recovery UK's practitioner service (SCOPE) has partnered with Future Recycling Ltd (Ecosurety), RECOUP and WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to undertake a flexible plastic packaging collection service pilot with a cross section of local authorities. Funded by DEFRA, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Flexible Plastic Fund (FPF). The trial will be project managed by SUEZ and run for three years.
- 3.3 The aim of the project is to trial the collection of flexible plastic packaging and seek to understand:
 - the likely and actual volumes of flexible packaging arising from households, the impact of collecting these items on current waste and recycling streams.
 - the cost, operational efficiencies and challenges associated with different types of collection methodologies, sorting processes, logistics, and reprocessing of flexible plastics.

- the success of varied communications approaches with regards to participation rates, compliance, and contamination.
- the process, challenges, and cost of reprocessing the materials once sorted, and the current and future end markets and infrastructure available and required.

4. PROJECT SUMMARY

- 4.1 The project is designed in two stages, Pioneer and Industrialisation. Maldon District Council has been chosen for the Pioneer stage which covers three local authorities and will last for three years.
- 4.2 The two other pioneer trials are Cheltenham Borough Council and South Gloucester Council with both trials covering approx. 2,000 properties and collections starting in October 2022. Initial feedback from the Cheltenham trial which started on 17 October is positive albeit early days.
- 4.3 A provisional start date for Maldon has been agreed for 30 January 2023 and the proposal is to roll out the service to approx. 25% of the district initially, approximately 7,500 properties expanding to further properties from October 2023 and the whole district in October 2024.
- 4.4 The Industrialisation stage will use learnings from the Pioneer trials and apply them to five more local authority trials starting in 2023 and a further five more trials starting in March 2024 (subject to funding).
- 4.5 The full cost of the trial is covered, financed by DEFRA, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the FPF as an open book contract. This finance will cover fixed asset costs (bins, bags, boxes, weighing systems, cages and modifications to facilities), and costs associated with storage, logistics, treatment, testing, communications, and training.

5. HOW THE SERVICE WILL OPERATE

- 5.1 Residents will be provided with separate carrier bag sized sacks to store the targeted material in. These will be placed out on their recycling collection day and initially Suez Maldon will collect these in a separate vehicle. The material will then be taken to Essex Reclamation where it is bailed up ready to be taken to their End Destination with reprocessing within the UK will be prioritised. No material will be sent outside UK or EU for sorting / reprocessing.
- 5.2 Flexible plastic packaging which can also be known as soft plastics will be targeted. These materials can be defined as a packaging structure which flexes easily and which can be made of both single and multi-layered plastic, including plastic with metallised layers. However, for ease of communicating to residents the service will be called Plastic Bag and Wrapping Recycling and below is a list of the types of material that can be collected.

	All plastic bags carrier bags salad/fruit/vegetable bags frozen food bags bread bags cereal bags flower bags		Outer layer bags and wrapping multipack toilet and kitchen roll magazine and newspaper wrapping
	Confectionery wrappers chocolate sweets biscuits cakes ice cream and chewing gum wrappers		All pouches, sachets, and packets microwaveable food baby food pet food cosmetics detergent and cleaning pouches
	Foil lined packaging crisp packets snack packets coffee bags		Plastic film and sleeves removeable film lids plastic sleeves for bottles and jars
	Cheese, fish, and meat wrapping		Bubble wrap and cling film
			Fruit and vegetable net bags

- 5.3 Currently this material goes to landfill however plastic does not decompose fully but photo-degrades into microplastics that absorb toxins and continue to pollute the environment.
- 5.4 SUEZ will work with Maldon District Council (MDC) and SUEZ Maldon to establish a data collection plan which will be delivered primarily by SUEZ Maldon and Essex Reclamation. This data will include key performance indicators including Bag set out rate, weights for both residual and recycle, contamination levels and operational costs.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

- 6.1 There will be an agreed communications plan for the project and WRAP will work with MDC to deliver communications to residents throughout the trial including a 'coming soon' flyer, a 4-page information leaflet (delivered with the bags) and a 'nudge flyer' reminding residents that these materials can now be recycled at the kerbside. Bespoke Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will also be developed for Members, customer services and Maldon Suez staff. Once the trial rounds have been selected FAQs will also be shared with other stakeholders in the areas chosen for the trial including Parish Councils.

7. GOVERNANCE

- 7.1 A local authority project board will be formed consisting of representatives from the MDC, the FPF, the SUEZ project manager, WRAP and SUEZ Maldon. A project agreement will be drafted and signed between the local authority, SUEZ and FRL

prior to the trial commencing, outlining expectations of both parties, including funding arrangements and data collection, sharing and management.

- 7.2 To oversee the project which end in March 2025, an overarching project steering board will be created, consisting of the funding parties; DEFRA, UKRI, WRAP, RECOUP and the FPF. A stakeholder consultative panel will also be developed to include value chain members including The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC), the Chartered Institute of Wastes Management (CIWM), Hubbub with representatives throughout the value chain from producers to re-processors.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The soft plastics recycling trial supports the actions within the Council's 'Create Less Waste' pledge in the adopted **Our Home, Our Future - Climate Action Strategy (2021-2030)** and the Place Thematic Strategy outcome of 'Reduce impacts of waste disposal and pollution on the environment'. This trial will allow us to work with our partners Suez to improve our understanding of the life cycle of soft plastic waste (including quantity, quality, cost, logistics and challenges). Our participation in the trial will demonstrate our commitment to reducing waste, in particular plastic and over the trial period it will contribute towards our recycling target of 68% by 2030.

9. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Additional material collected from the kerbside reducing the amount of waste going to landfill.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – None.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – None.
- (v) **Impact of Resources (human)** – Minimal officer time.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – Removal of plastics from landfill.
- (vii) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – There may be an opportunity to work with interested stakeholders in the Community to promote this new service once the routes are defined.

Background Papers: None.

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