

## Warwickshire Waste Partnership - 27th February 2007

### Joint Waste Authority Working

### Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy on behalf of the Officers Group

#### Summary

This report proposes that a working group carry out an option appraisal for closer partnership working following on from previous consideration of the options by the Partnership and the recent announcement of an additional option in the form of a statutory joint waste authority. The group would be steered by Members and would report back to the Partnership in July.

#### Recommendation

That member authorities:-

1. Support an option appraisal of forms of closer partnership in waste and recycling.
2. Agree the terms of reference of and nominate representatives to a working group.
3. Ask the working group to report to the Waste Partnership by July 2007.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 At the last management review of the Warwickshire Waste Partnership in October 2005, Members adopted a Memorandum of Understanding and agreed to review the direction of the Partnership within the next 24 months, to see if it should move in the direction of a Management Board and Joint Scrutiny Panel. This followed a seminar in January 2005, at which a range of options for closer partnership were considered and a long term preference was expressed for a joint committee and a countywide service delivery company on the Shropshire model.
- 1.2 In December 2006, the County Council adopted a Council motion that addresses closer working arrangements regarding the Waste Partnership through the possible establishment of a waste company.

- 1.3 Since the Council motion the Government has added to the range of possible options by announcing its intention to amend the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill to provide the opportunity of establishing voluntary Joint Waste Authorities. The powers form an amendment to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill.
- 1.4 In light of these commitments and developments, it is proposed that a working group be established to investigate and report back to the Partnership on the options for closer partnership and their comparative advantages and disadvantages.

## **2. Joint Waste Authorities**

- 2.1 The Government is keen for councils to unite to run waste and recycling services on a more efficient footing, benefiting from economies of scale in service provision as well as strengthening the procurement of new long-term waste contracts. On 22nd January 2007, Ruth Kelly announced proposals for new powers for English local authorities to establish a statutory Joint Waste Authority.
- 2.2 Little detail is available as yet regarding the new powers. However, it is understood that they will be entirely voluntary, for the councils to apply for rather than the government to impose. The joint arrangements could apply to waste disposal, collection and even street cleansing functions. The new powers came following recommendations made to the government by an "Innovation Forum" of local authorities.
- 2.3 Six joint waste disposal authorities are already operating in London, Merseyside and Manchester. The changes will mean other local authority partnerships will have the opportunity to set up more permanent arrangements.
- 2.4 Officials in Whitehall believe the setting up of waste partnerships will give more confidence to the private sector when dealing with council waste through long-term contracts. Dealing with a Joint Waste Authority, rather than just a voluntary partnership, will give waste companies the confidence that individual councils will not pull out of the partnership.
- 2.5 The Government also see Joint Waste Authorities avoiding the often complex decision structures of purely voluntary arrangements and suggests that these changes could make savings of up to £150 million overall.

## **3. Proposal**

- 3.1 A careful assessment of the options available to the Partnership will take some time to prepare and, given the pace of recent developments, it is thought that work should begin now to equip the Partnership to take a well considered decision as to the way forward later in the year. It is suggested that the Officer Advisory Group could constitute a working group which would appraise the options subject to the guidance of an informal group of Members nominated by the Partnership. The following terms of reference are proposed:-

- (i) To identify the options available to the members of the Warwickshire Waste Partnership for carrying out waste management functions through partnership mechanisms with independent powers
- (ii) To include the functions of waste collection, disposal and recycling
- (iii) To include consideration of policy-making and the commissioning, management and delivery of services
- (iv) To outline the legal form and powers of each option including arrangements for governance, performance management and accountability
- (v) To assess the financial, legal, policy and operational implications of each option (including “do nothing”) and their benefits and disbenefits in light of the Joint Municipal Waste Strategy
- (vi) To report to the Partnership with its findings by July 2007.

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### **Background Papers**

None.

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