Report of the Director of Place

**Climate Change & Nature Recovery Service Transformation Committee
– 17 July 2023**

The Use of Reusable Containers for Recycling

Purpose:	The report asks the Committee to give their views on the use of reusable containers instead of single use bags.
Policy Framework:	Climate Change & Nature Recovery Strategy
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that:-
1. The Committee gives their views on the use of reusable containers instead of single use bags. 2. The Committee gives their views on container types and designs.	
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1. Background

1.1 The Council provides kerbside domestic recycling collections for the following materials, using a mixture of containers:

Material	Containers
Food waste	Reusable caddies and optional liners
Garden waste	Reusable hessian sacks
Plastic bottles, tubs, & trays	Reusable hessian sacks
Paper and card	Single use green plastic bags
Cans and glass	Single use green plastic bags

1.2 The recycling system operated by the Council produces high levels of recycling, although the success of the scheme does result in the use of over 10 million single use bags a year for the collection of paper & card and cans & glass.

1.3   The use of the bags also increases the processing required, both by the Council and Material Re-processors who recycle the material.

2.   Report

2.1   The Waste Management Team is exploring options for the potential replacing of the single use bags for the collection of paper & card and cans & glass with reusable containers.   Councils which provide reusable containers usually use a mixture of hard plastic boxes and hessian sacks.

2.2   In considering the design of reusable containers which could be used to replace the current single use bags, many factors need to be taken into account including:
- Space taken up in the home
- Capacity for recyclable materials
- Weight of containers and ease of carrying and emptying for the safety of both residents and collection staff
- Impact on the streetscene
- Ease and effectiveness of sealing by residents against weather and windblown litter

2.3   The team's preferred combination is sealable hessian sacks for paper and card and a plastic box, complete with carrying handle, for glass and cans.

2.4   The preferred design of the plastic box for glass and cans would cater for the volume of material produced by the majority of households, with only a minority potentially requiring a second box. Boxes with handles can be lifted with less bending, and can be carried close to the floor. Smaller boxes can be considered for smaller households.

2.5   If a hessian sack is used for paper and card, it's size should cater for the volume of material produced by the majority of households, and ensure that it would not be too heavy to safely lift and empty, even if the contents get wet. The preferred Velcro closure system seeks the optimum balance between ease of use for residents and collection operatives, and effectiveness of sealing.

2.6   Finalising of designs for any future proposals would also be subject to input from the Collection Crews and operational Risk Assessments.

3.   Integrated Assessment Implications

3.1   The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

3.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

3.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

3.2 An IIA Screening Form has been completed with the agreed outcome that a full IIA report was not required. The IIA screening form is attached as **Appendix A**, with the outcome of the screening below:

- This is a low risk proposal which is likely to be seen as a positive change by the majority of the public. The proposal will consider the safety of operational staff, and adapt to the minority of the public that could potentially be negatively impacted by a "standard" service. Similar containers are already successfully used in Swansea for the kerbside plastic waste stream, so positive outcomes would also be expected for the switch to reusable containers on other waste streams.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 It is considered that the introduction of reusable containers to replace single use bags, on main rounds, for paper & card and glass & cans could be achieved on a cost neutral basis, or a slight cost reduction, if Welsh Government funding can be secured for the initial purchase of the containers.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: None.
Appendices: Appendix A – IIA Screening.