



Briefing 15/54 November 2015

The Charter for Household Recycling in Scotland

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in Scotland

For information only to England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Key Issues:

The Charter for Household Recycling was recently released by the joint Scottish Government/COSLA Zero Waste Taskforce with its partners Zero Waste Scotland and SEPA in order to develop more consistent recycling and reuse services across Scotland. This briefing contains:

- An overview of the Charter
- A summary of the 21 commitments of the Charter

The Charter for Household Recycling: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00486937.pdf>

The Charter

The Charter for Household Recycling is a collection of 21 commitments which aim to encourage citizens to participate in waste prevention, recycling and reuse, to ensure that they maximise quality capture of resources from waste streams, to operate their services safely and competently, as well as agreeing to develop and review a Code of Practice. The Charter specifically references local authorities and says "this charter is a clear statement of local government's intent to encourage high-levels of citizen participation in waste prevention, recycling and reuse. All of our partners will have a part to play in utilising the influence they have on our citizens to compliment this intent." The commitments are split into several sections: designing our services, deliver consistent policies, operating our services and communicating our services. The Charter also outlines the roles for citizens, partners, Scottish Government, Zero Waste Scotland, SEPA, retailers, brands and packaging manufacturers, the resource management industry and the third sector.

COSLA's spokesperson for Development, Economy and Sustainability Councillor Stephen Hagan recently announced that council leaders have agreed to consider signing the Charter and endorsed the development of the Code of Practice.

Designing our services

These commitments are primarily about unifying the definitions of materials, ensuring equal access to recycling services and reducing the capacity of waste that cannot be recycled.

Deliver consistent policies

This section's commitments are to ensure that local policies encourage citizens to recycle by providing them with the appropriate waste capacity, making sure bulky/excess waste collections encourage reuse and recycling, and to enforce corrective actions (e.g. Council waste & recycling services will not collect contaminated recycling waste containers, communicating collection advice clearly).

Operating our services

These commitments are about ensuring the operation of the service is in line with an agreed schedule, that any missed collections or complaints are recorded and acted upon, that the highest quality is attained from the management of materials, that the service takes account of the current policies on environmental crime, litter and flytipping, and that the service is carried out where the staff and public are not at risk from harm.

Communicating our services

The final section of commitments is all about the promise of clear communication, explaining to citizens what services the organisation provides and their availability in their area (as well as keeping them updated when any changes are made) and information on what can and cannot be recycled. There is also a commitment to communicate with citizens who have failed to understand how the service operates, as well as another to accurately record information about the amount of waste collected and their destinations.

Roles of the organisations involved in the Charter

- [Scottish Government](#) – “to provide the necessary policy framework to support local government in delivering the commitments in this Charter and the associated Code of Practice [and] to liaise with partners to support the local government delivery of this commitment”.
- [Zero Waste Scotland](#) – “to provide support, advice and guidance to local government that allows successful implementation of changes to services”.
- [SEPA](#) – “to advise local government on the regulatory impacts of the commitments in this Charter and the associated Code of Practice”.

The Code of Practice

The Code of Practice and associated documents are currently in draft form and have been consulted upon during the month of October. According to an announcement made by Gabriella Pieraccini, Scottish Government's Head of Zero Waste, at the Scottish Resources Conference in Glasgow on 7th of October; the final document, following any amendments made from the consultation, is likely to be released at the end of this month.

APSE Comment

APSE notes the release of the Charter for Household Recycling in Scotland and the development of the accompanying Code of Practice. The differences in current recycling services, differing enforcement of policies and general variance across local authority borders can provide a number of challenges for the achievement of local and national targets.

Depending on the contents of the “common collection systems” and other specific actions in the upcoming Code of Practice, as well as the type and length of waste contracts already in place (which may need to be renegotiated to fit with the Code of Practice), this Charter could have a significant financial cost to local authorities. While it is unlikely that many officers and councillors would disagree with the broad aims of the Charter, this is likely to be a substantial barrier to entry and APSE believes that, if possible, the allocation of national funding to bring all authorities services in line with each other would be a worthwhile long-term investment to kick-start the circular economy’s earning potential. A similar type of funding is already available from Zero Waste Scotland for authorities rolling out food waste service changes. East Lothian Council recently benefitted from this and received “capital funding for the weekly food waste collection, the provision of recycling advisors and intensive communications support to deliver a multi-channel communications campaign informing the householders of the changes to come”.

Another challenge for local authorities will be agreeing on the contents of the common collection systems in the upcoming Code of Practice, as there may be unavoidable interest in keeping their service as close as possible to its current form minimising any organisational upheaval and potential changes to their service which this might cause (e.g. rerouting/collection time changes due to different material collections, retraining staff, communicating changes to residents, new recording and reporting of information). Thus, the agreed Code of Practice should not unintentionally highlight any local authority service design as being “wrong”.

APSE’s recent publication “Waste: A brave new world” explores the need to maintain and improve recycling rates and engage residents more, at a time when recycling rates are flat-lining in many areas of the UK and the need to respond to the shift in emphasis from quantity as the main measure of performance to the quality of recyclates collected. These themes are also touched on within the commitment sections of the Charter.

APSE will continue to support local authorities through our various membership services including our research publications, advisory groups, seminars and network query service. Allowing local authorities to share experiences/ best practice and continue to discuss the up to date issues and developments within waste and recycling services. APSE Scotland’s next Waste & Recycling advisory group will take place on Friday 27th November in Perth, full details will follow via our email service and website in due course.

APSE plan to release a follow-up briefing on the accompanying Code of Practice when this is likely to be released in late November 2015.

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