

Councillor Neil Reeve, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change

Report to Full Council 11 March 2024

This report reflects the highlights of the Portfolio from Late November 2023 to End February 2024

Environmental Services

Firstly, as Portfolio Holder I wish to apologize sincerely to all residents and Councillors for the extensive disruption to the waste collection service in late January and February. It is accepted that this was unacceptable. After a difficult period, we are hoping that we are now back to collections according to the planned schedule. A new full operator licence has now been issued.

I wish to appreciate the work of the hard-working team, and their leadership, during this period. I also wish to thank our neighbouring Local Authorities, ECC. and Widdington Recycling for their assistance. Specifically, I wish to thank Braintree District Council for providing their in-house waste crews when needed. All sincerely appreciated.

A Task and Finish Group has been established by the Scrutiny Committee to analyse UDC's 'Operational Resilience', in the context of the Waste Collection disruption, but with a brief to look at all UDC's operations and services. The results of this will be made public, and will be brought to the next full Council meeting.

Going forward, we have now set our annual budget and will be increasing the number of bin crews we employ permanently, up from 10 to 11, as the population in the district rose between the 2011 and 2021 censuses from 85,000 to 95,000, so we are at the point when we simply need more people to collect from all these extra houses. We also agreed the budget proposal to bring forward, by two years, the replacement costs for the first third of our bin lorries by two years, meaning that we will have more modern and reliable vehicles which suffer fewer breakdowns, and therefore provide a more reliable service to residents all round.

I attended meetings of the Essex Waste Partnership - Member Advisory Board 12 December 2023 and 28 February 2024.

ECC Waste Strategy 2024-2054: The Consultation for this has ended on 22 Nov 2023. The consultation responses are being considered. It is planned that ECC complete implementing the comments in June 2024, with UDC Cabinet to consider in July 2024.

Recycling Centre Bookings: The ECC Consultation on this ended mid-Nov 2023. ECC Cabinet approved the new process of having to make bookings to use this service. They noted that Uttlesford were an outlier in not wanting this change.

Climate Change

The Climate and biodiversity team have been very active working through their work programme.

Preparation of the next 'Action Plan' is well advanced and will shortly be presented.

A personal climate change note

I have recently learned that 25% of the volume of our 'residual' domestic waste, the Black Bins, is made up of flexible plastic packaging. Maldon District Council and a few other District Councils nationally are conducting pilot trials (for DEFRA) to collect this waste from resident's homes. In the meantime, we (at home) are separating this waste (in our case mostly plastic foil from cat food) to take to the local supermarket for collection, and recycling. Another small step towards 'zero waste' by 2050.