WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Officer - Roads & Neighbourhood

Infrastructure, Regeneration and Economic Development
11 November 2026

Subject: Waste Strategy update

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on progress against actions set out in the Council's Waste Strategy, focusing on improving recycling performance, reducing residual waste, promoting waste minimisation and supporting environmental sustainability goals. The Action Plan is included in appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:

a) Note the progress made in delivering the Waste Strategy Action Plan

b) Approve the continued implementation of targeted actions to improve recycling performance and support waste reduction initiatives.

c) Note the preparation for legislative changes, including Extended Producer Responsibility, to enhance service efficiency and environmental outcomes.

3. Background

3.1 The Scottish Government have set out ambitious targets to achieve zero waste to landfill by December 2025. In 2023 Council adopted a waste strategy that looks at the aims of the service and the key deliverables required to achieve the ambitious targets set out by the Scottish Government.

3.2 The Scottish Government places duties on all public bodies to contribute to waste reduction targets, deliver programmes to increase resilience, and to act in a more 'Sustainable' way. The Waste Strategy is underpinned by a suite of actions which supports delivery and allow for more effective reporting.

3.3 The Waste Strategy is broken down into sections which includes:

- The development of a Communications Strategy to engage and inform communities and businesses;
- Route optimisation and operational efficiencies; and
- Changes to our waste collection to increase recycling performance

4. Main Issues

4.1 The Council adopted the Climate Change Strategy in November 2020. One of the themes focused on waste and the circular economy. To contribute towards meeting the targets locally and nationally, the Council has developed a Waste Strategy as a route map to 2030 and beyond. Our vision is an overarching Strategy that will set the foundation for a plan of action and a response to changing legislation.

4.2 The Strategy aims to maximise the environmental, community and financial benefits from the waste the Council produce, which will also help the Council to comply with the statutory obligations, as set out in the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012, which includes a ban on the landfilling of biodegradable waste (effectively this bans the landfilling of any recyclable waste collected by the Council), and working towards meeting the reuse and recycling targets set by the Scottish Government (70% recycling by 2025).

4.3 The Strategy looks at the following key principles. These are:

- **Mitigation** - Contribute to reduction targets directly, and indirectly through wider functions such as waste reduction and improved recycling performance.
- **Adaptation** - Deliver measures that reflect changing legislation and increase resilience.
- **Sustainability** - Consider social, economic, and environmental impact of all activities, policy decisions and Strategy.

4.4 The overall themes of this Strategy are:

- preventing waste at source
- enhancing recycling services to maximise recycling as close to source as possible
- maximising the value of the remaining waste
- driving efficiencies across the service
- engaging communities and ensuring services are fit for future

The activities are subject to ongoing and regular review to ensure they achieve their sustainability objectives and continue to demonstrate best value.

4.5 Successful implementation of the Waste Strategy required internal governance at both strategic and operational levels. To ensure that this Strategy is delivered effectively, a Waste Strategy Project Board has been implemented involving senior management from each Council service area, ensuring shared responsibility.

4.6 The Strategy and action plan is monitored and reviewed annually and progress on actions updated. Every 5 years it will go through a full progress review with an updated Strategy published as a result.

4.7 Waste Services will be accountable for the delivery of the Strategy and the action plan. The project board measure progress and ensures targets and objectives are being met. These are measured annually through our internal performance system.

4.8 In order to implement the actions required to improve recycling performance, Waste Services have worked in partnership with Zero Waste Scotland to model waste collections options. The options appraisal recommended a 3 weekly collection of residual waste with maintained or increased frequency of the collection of recycling material was the preferred option. The implementation of a prioritised Recycling collection model was implemented from 10th November 2025.

4.9 Operational service improvements have been delivered through the progressing of actions identified in the Waste Strategy. Route Optimisation was implemented in Autumn 2025 following communication and engagement with communities. These actions directly link to service efficiencies and improving our recycling rates and targets while reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill.

4.10 In November 2024, West Dunbartonshire Council entered into a co-operation agreement with Glasgow City Council. The agreement allows both local authorities the opportunity to share knowledge and resources while working collaboratively to achieve joint goals. This has resulted in a number of projects that has benefited both councils. One area we work closely on is the processing and disposal of our Residual waste. Joint working in this area has provided West Dunbartonshire Council with increased resilience during a period of capacity challenges in the wider waste sector.

4.11 In January 2025 an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme was introduced by the UK Government. This is an environmental policy that makes producers responsible for the costs of managing products and packaging when they become waste. Instead of Local Authorities and taxpayers covering most disposal and recycling costs, the businesses that place products or packaging on the market must contribute financially. Fees paid by producers for packaging are now being channelled back to local authorities to cover the cost of waste collection and recycling. The level of funding may reduce in future years. The first payments were announced in July 2025 and will be awarded annually depending on waste produced by each local authority. This additional funding will help ensure our infrastructure is fit for the future.

4.12 Following on from the changes to waste collection schedules, and the introduction of the route optimisation programme, we now have data from the first six monthly reporting period that highlights the following:

- 15% reduction in general waste collected (grey/green bin)
- 19% increase in dry recycling materials collected (blue bin)
- 7.6% increase in food/garden waste collected (brown bin)
- 5.7% increase in glass collected
- 10.4% increase in cardboard collected
- 14.6% increase in electrical items collected

4.13 The reduction in general waste processed and increases in all recycling areas is because of behaviour changes from residents brought about by the introduction of the recycling prioritisation project. There are some areas that continue to be challenging, particularly where communal waste collections are prevalent. Our Waste Aware team are developing updated leaflets/Communications that will be utilised to engage with residents to encourage better recycling habits in these areas.

4.14 The Waste Strategy continues to progress positively, and there will now be a focus on further service improvements, communication and partnership working that will be essential in delivering future targets and maintaining momentum.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no direct people implications arising from this report.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 Ongoing inflationary pressures continue to impact on waste collection, treatment, transport, fuel, staffing and contract costs.

6.2 The introduction of EPR is expected to provide additional funding to local authorities for the management of household waste.

6.3 Improved recycling rates have reduced the volume of residual waste requiring treatment, helping to mitigate disposal costs. As an indication during the first 9 months of this calendar year the residual treatment cost has reduced by in the region of £284k. This can't be considered in isolation from the wider waste collection however does provide an indication of the saving achieved from the new prioritising recycling collection.

6.4 Increased material capture will generate additional income from recyclable materials, although market values remain subject to fluctuation.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 All strategies are risk assessed in line with Council policy and procedures.

7.2 The most significant risks to delivery of the Waste Strategy are financial uncertainty around increasing treatment and disposal costs, and capacity issues resulting from the landfill ban.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 The Waste Strategy is intended to work towards positive engagement with all equality groups and the wider community, via partnerships, empowerment and Engagement within and outside West Dunbartonshire.

Screening and impact assessments will be carried out on the Strategy delivery as required.

9. Consultation

9.1 A public consultation on Waste was carried out via an online survey, receiving a total of 600 responses. The feedback has shaped the strategy, and particularly the communications strategy.

9.2 The trade unions have been consulted and are members of the Waste Project Board.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 This report reflects the 2022 – 2027 Strategic Plan and in particular the following

Strategic Priorities:

- Our resources are used in an environmentally sustainable way
- Our Council is adaptable and focused on delivering best value for our residents

Chief Officer: Gail MacFarlane
Service Area: Roads & Neighbourhood
Date: 26 October 2026

Person to Contact: Jenna McCrum
Waste project Lead
jenna.mccrum@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: Waste Strategy Action Plan

Background Papers: Waste Strategy 2023-2028

Wards Affected: All