

MEMBER QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER at Place Scrutiny Committee –**8 March 2018 - Questions from Councillor Musgrave**

Response to be made by Councillor Brimble Portfolio Holder Place

Question 1

Does the Portfolio Holder agree with me, that breaking a manifesto commitment to introduce food waste recycling is a pretty rubbish deal for Exeter?

Response – Councillor Brimble the Portfolio Holder Place advised that the Exeter Labour Party manifesto promised to complete the business case into food waste doorstep collection and to introduce it at the earliest opportunity. The key phrase there was the "earliest opportunity". Increasing the recycling rate and introducing a food waste collection remained a long term ambition. Like many local authorities, Exeter City Council had a budget and all the options for introducing a food waste collection were either a cost to the Council or a financial risk. The cheaper options according to the Eunomia report involved moving to a three weekly black bin collection and in one case kerbside recycling collection. He said that he was of the view that the current co-mingled recycling collection every two weeks with being processed through the MRF is the most efficient way to improve recycling rates. He had asked the Environment Secretary, Michael Gove for help to deliver the governments targets on recycling and cleaner environments. Mr Gove had responded stating that there was no money available for councils. He represented everything the Government had done to starve local government of funds to improve recycling rates, improving cleansing services and support the work of council staff.

Councillor Musgrave asked a supplementary question about the cost of the consultancy report. The Portfolio Holder Place would ensure the final figure was provided.

Question 2

How does the Portfolio Holder intend to improve the city's poor recycling rates without the introduction of food waste recycling?

Response - Councillor Brimble the Portfolio Holder Place advised that Paragraphs 9.2 – 9.5 of the Food Waste Collection report presented to the Place Scrutiny Committee on 8 March described some of the measures being taken to increase our recycling from materials other than food waste. Further details of the City Council's Recycling Plan could be found in the report to Place Scrutiny Committee in September 2017

<http://committees.exeter.gov.uk/documents/g4839/Public%20reports%20pack%2014th-Sep-2017%2017.30%20Place%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=10>.

Paragraph 9.6 of the food waste report also noted that Exeter had the fourth lowest amount of total waste collected per head in the country, and lowest outside London. Therefore the City Council's policies would concentrate on maintaining the Council's good record on waste reduction, improving the capture of the materials that was currently collected, and adding new materials to our recycling service where it was cost effective to do so.

Councillor Musgrave asked a supplementary question about the cost sharing arrangement with Devon County Council for the disposal of food waste in respect of Exeter's Energy from Waste plant. Councillor Brimble, the Portfolio Holder Place explained he would obtain more detail on the Energy from Waste plant for Councillor Musgrave.

Question 3

Does the Portfolio Holder agree with me, that food waste recycling is now a basic expectation of most ratepayers?

Response - Councillor Brimble, the Portfolio Holder Place advised that the most recent available figures from www.parliament.uk (2014/15) indicate that fewer than 45% of English local authorities offered a food waste collection and the percentage was unlikely to have increased substantially since then. Our neighbouring authorities all offer food waste collection, which may contribute to the perception that it is a widespread expectation.

Question 4

Does the Portfolio Holder agree with me, that the decision not to proceed with food waste recycling in the city is based on the addition revenue budget being allocated for the loan to the council to deliver the bus station project?

Response - Councillor Brimble, the Portfolio Holder Place stated that the Bus Station and Leisure Centre project was a completely different budget to cleansing and recycling services. As Portfolio Holder, he said that his aim had been to protect the budgets of front line services in cleansing and recycling. This was in the context of revenue support grant disappearing by 2020. The City Council had continued to protect the recycling budget and supported continued improvements to the Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF) which generates income from recycled material. The staff have been working hard recently with councils, charities and volunteers all over the South West to process Ocean plastic collection through Exeter MRF. He believed that we should place our limited budgets towards recycled material that is a revenue generator for the council such as plastic, aluminium, glass, paper, cardboard and cans. For this reason he said that he had worked alongside organisations like Row for the Ocean to ensure that all plastic is recycled in Exeter. He believed that we should aim to eliminate single use plastics in Exeter through recycling. One step that should be taken too achieve this is to introduce recycle on the go bins in the city centre to improve recycling rates.

Exeter has had the highest reduction in CO2 emissions of any city in the UK for the last decade. According to centre for cities. A reduction of 44% from 2005-2025. The Council has pursued a low carbon agenda for many years and has demonstrated a commitment to district heating, renewable energy and passivhaus construction setting excellent standards for environmental performance through the development plan. The City Council was recognised as Environment Council of the Year in 2016 and the environmental agenda needs to be seen in a far more enlightened way than simply a question of food waste.