

**Report from Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
for Environmental Well-being**

**LEAD MEMBER:** Cllr Mrs Anne Bradshaw, Chair

**LEAD OFFICER:** Tim Capper  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Jane Murray

**Summary:** This report makes recommendations arising from the work of a joint scrutiny panel established to consider the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership. The recommendations are endorsed by this Council's own Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Environment and were forwarded by the Executive to full Council for decision.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) That a Member of the Executive is appointed as a substitute for the Portfolio Holder at meetings of the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership, in order that Member representation is assured.
- 2) That this Council supports the Portfolio Holder, or his substitute, to take decisions in consultation with lead officers, with respect to the resources available to the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership

Impact on Delivering Corporate Objectives.	The reduce, reuse, recycle agenda is a key objective of the Corporate Plan.
Financial and Human Resource Implications	None of this report.
Project and Risk Management	The risk to the Council tax payer of not speeding up the decision-making process is a hefty rise in council tax or equivalent cuts in services resulting from estimated fines of £2.5-3m in 2007-2008 for failing to divert enough waste from landfill sites.
Key Decision status	None of this report

## Background

- 1.1 As part of the Cumbria Scrutiny network, a decision was taken to pilot joint scrutiny work last year. An Audit Commission report identified challenges in joint working on waste management and this was chosen as the first pilot.
- 1.2 Two meetings of the scrutiny panel have now taken place and their reports are attached at appendix 1 and 2.
- 1.3 Members will note from those reports that the pace of progress of the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership to tackle the need to divert waste from landfill sites reducing the potential for fines, first raised by the Audit Commission, continues to concern the joint scrutiny working group.
- 1.4 The Audit Commission was particularly critical of the cumbersome decision-making process which currently means that decisions of the Cumbria Strategic Waste partnership are taken in principle and then taken back to individual authorities for ratification. This can result in three-month delays to implementation. The waste management agenda in Cumbria is time-critical and it is felt that delays of this nature are both unhelpful and unnecessary.
- 1.5 The joint scrutiny working group feels that while major strategies will require the buy-in of all authorities, the implementation of those strategies should be left to the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership. The overriding concern should be the need to minimise penalties for a failure to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill sites. South Lakeland District Council has already agreed to devolve decision-making to their Portfolio Holder.
- 1.6 Over the next two years, authorities in Cumbria will collectively receive grants to the tune of £2m. There is money there to deliver the waste minimisation/reduction agenda and the Executive has already agreed to pool the grants awarded to Copeland - £58,000 this year and £61,000 next year - in order that the money can be spent in the best interests of council tax payers.
- 1.7 For Copeland, this should deliver improved civic amenity sites and further extension of the twin bin system in 2006-07. Copeland will also benefit from a county-wide waste awareness campaign, which is long overdue in the minds of the joint scrutiny working group and this Council's own Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Environmental Well-being.

- 1.8 The Audit Commission was equally critical of the Member contribution that each authority makes to the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership. Copeland was not the only authority to be singled out in this respect and there is understanding in both the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership and in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Environmental Well-being that the Portfolio Holder's work commitments do not always allow his participation.

### Recommendations

- 2.1 The recommendation to appoint a substitute should help address this criticism and, in the light of the need to speed up decision-making, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Environmental Well-being is strongly of the opinion that a substitute should come from the ranks of the Executive.
- 2.2 Supporting the Portfolio Holder, his or her substitute, and officers to take decisions on the Council's behalf as to how the resources of the Cumbria Strategic Partnership are used, will show commitment to speeding up the waste management agenda and a willingness to address issues of county-wide concern in a positive manner. The Executive has already agreed that the grants coming into Cumbria should be pooled.
- 2.3 It is accepted that a county-wide Waste Management Strategy requires the buy-in of local authorities, the implementation of the strategy should fall to the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership, which is now subject to regular scrutiny.