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| Report on | Consultation on Mandatory Digital Waste Tracking |
| Date of Meeting | 4 th April 2022 |
| Reporting Officer | Mark McAdoo, Assistant Director, Environmental Services |
| Contact Officer | Karl McGowan, Waste Disposal & Contracts Manager |

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| Is this report restricted for confidential business? | Yes | |
| If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon | No | X |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report |
| 1.1 | To inform members on the Council's proposed response to a Consultation on the Introduction of Mandatory Digital Waste Tracking |
| 2.0 | Background |
| 2.1 | <p>Northern Ireland is committed to moving towards a more circular economy, so that resources are kept in use for as long as possible, maximum value is extracted from them, waste is minimised and resource efficiency is promoted. To do this it is important that information about what waste is being produced and where it ends up is collected.</p> <p>There is currently no single or comprehensive way of tracking this, with large amounts of data either not collected or not collated centrally. Multiple IT systems collect certain elements of waste tracking data. Some are paper-based, others digital, some are run by private contractors, others by the government, and where use of existing central digital systems is non-mandatory, take up is very low. As a result, it is very difficult to determine what happens to our waste and to have a comprehensive understanding of whether it has been recycled, recovered, or disposed of.</p> <p>Joining these fragmented systems up and replacing paper-based record-keeping will make it much easier and less time consuming for legitimate waste companies to comply with reporting requirements whilst making it much harder for rogue operators to compete in the industry and commit waste crime including fly tipping, deliberate misclassification of waste, illegal waste exports and the operation of illegal waste sites.</p> <p>The Environment Act 2021 provides governments across the United Kingdom with the powers to introduce regulations to establish an electronic system for tracking waste. Whilst waste policy is a devolved matter, the UK Government and</p> |

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| | <p>devolved administrations have agreed to work together to develop a UK wide waste tracking service to provide a seamless system across the UK.</p> <p>The legislation allows for those regulations to require certain information relevant to waste tracking to be recorded onto the system and contain provisions on several areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessing the data on the waste tracking system • fees and charges • exemptions and alternative requirements for digitally excluded persons • offences and sanctions <p>The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has published a consultation on this, the purpose of which, is to present and seek thoughts on their proposals. The feedback will be used to review and refine the proposals which will then be reflected in secondary legislation and shape the digital design of the waste tracking service. This public consultation is being lead by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) with a deadline of the 15th April 2022. The consultation document can be found using the following link:</p> <p>https://consult.defra.gov.uk/environmental-quality/waste-tracking/</p> |
| 3.0 | Main Report |
| 3.1 | The proposal is to use the waste tracking service to capture the full journey of waste from the point it is produced and transferred to another person or site, to the point it reaches its end fate. Also, it seeks to harmonise the activities that are recorded in this journey for all wastes, so there is a single, comprehensive, and consistent approach which is clear to all waste holders. |
| 3.2 | The full text of the proposed response to the consultation by the Council is included as an attached document with the suggested responses highlighted in yellow. A summary of the main implications are discussed below. |
| 3.3 | As a local authority, we will not need to track waste from individual household collections. Waste will need to be recorded in the service when it arrives at a receiving site i.e. a transfer station and then further tracked in the service as required from there. Householders will not be required to use the waste tracking service, but they will still be required to take all reasonable measures available to them to ensure their waste is only transferred to an authorised person, as they do now. In the case of commercial waste collections from businesses, there will need to be a record of all waste movements from the producers' premises. |
| 3.4 | It is envisaged in the future that all waste movements and transfers (except in some cases where there are existing prenotification requirements) will be recorded on the waste tracking service in real time which means information is entered onto the service at the point waste is being moved from one place or person to another. |

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| 3.5 | Real time recording would present many benefits in terms of improving the regulator's ability to conduct effective monitoring and enforcement of those carrying out illegal activities by; reducing opportunities for data to be deliberately manipulated, enabling them to monitor sites and operators under investigation and by providing them with the information to allow them to take action to prevent illegal activity occurring in the first place. |
| 3.6 | Much of the information that was previously gathered and reported through WasteDataFlow will now be on the waste tracking service so there will no longer be a need for to report this separately. This includes quarterly permitted and licensed site returns, quarterly waste summary returns and pre-notification of hazardous waste consignment notes. Officers would welcome this development to simplify the returns process as well as eliminate most of the current paper based waste records. These developments would, however, necessitate the changing of the Councils current software / weighbridge systems as well as training of site staff and waste operatives. The cost of implementing such a new system as well as the time necessary to commission and tailor any bespoke parts of the new system may have significant cost implications for the Council. |
| 3.7 | The consultation explains that, in line with the 'polluter pays' principle, it is intended that once the electronic waste tracking service goes 'live', the costs for the ongoing operation and maintenance of the service and associated regulatory work will be met by the service users. The Environment Act 2021 includes powers to recover these costs. It is not known at this time what the likely annual costs of the system will be. |
| 3.8 | The Department is working towards a target date, of 2023 to 2024, to go live with the central digital waste tracking service. This will be dependent on the development of the IT and the transition needs of businesses. |
| 4.0 | Other Considerations |
| 4.1 | Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications |
| | <p>Financial:</p> <p>The consultation has no financial considerations at this time, however, the introduction of the proposed new system will almost certainly result in additional costs to administer the new system and update the Councils IT systems. Estimates of costs are summarised below:</p> <p>Staff Training - £10,000 Upgrade of Waste Tracking Software - £25,000 IT Hardware - £5,000</p> <p>Total - £40,000</p> |
| | <p>Human:</p> <p>None.</p> |

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| | <p>Risk Management:</p> <p>None.</p> |
| 4.2 | <p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications:</p> <p>None</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications:</p> <p>None</p> |
| 5.0 | Recommendation(s) |
| 5.1 | Members are asked to approve the proposed response to the consultation. |
| 6.0 | Documents Attached & References |
| 6.1 | Appendix 1 – Submission Document - Consultation on the Introduction of Mandatory Digital Waste Tracking |