

## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

County Council

7<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Phyl Davies, Portfolio Holder for Highways, Recycling and Assets

**SUBJECT:** Question from Jeffrey Matthews

**Powys Councillors will be fully aware of the rapid, almost weekly changes in recycling methods, technology and government regulations surrounding the waste industry. Here in Powys the recycling work is successfully done 'out of house' at the moment, and those business will bear the future costs of expensive changes in the waste industry. Because Powys's main duty is to collect waste, not to run competing businesses in the waste industry, is it a wise decision for the council to be investing huge effort and millions of pounds in such a constantly changing scenario in this time of cutbacks?**

### **Response**

There are indeed many changes happening in the waste and recycling industry and the Welsh Government has been at the forefront of those changes. The challenging statutory recycling targets have meant that Wales, if taken as an independent nation, would be third in the world when it comes to recycling. This has required local authorities to increase the quantity and quality of materials collected for recycling at the kerbside. This is why we require strategically located facilities to store this material before transferring it to third party processors.

Powys County Council, as a unitary authority, is both a waste collection and waste disposal authority, and hence has a duty to collect and dispose of / process municipal solid waste. The collection and transfer is currently carried out in house with processing and disposal through procured contracts. The Council does not directly compete with businesses on this activity. As for businesses directly bearing the cost of changes, this is currently entirely dependent on any contracts that are in place, but as a general rule risk is built into these contracts and as a result any changes in legislation will be either picked up by the local authority or by consumers. With the increase in profile of plastic waste, deposit return schemes (DRS) and extended producer responsibility are now under consideration. A DRS scheme will have the most impact on the higher value containers and is likely to have a limited reduction on quantities collected at the kerbside. Previous producer responsibility initiatives such as the one for waste electrical items have generally contributed to the cost of collecting and processing materials, but collection systems have remained with the local authorities.

It is therefore essential that the Council continues to invest in its recycling infrastructure so that we are able to continue to meet the demands of national and

international legislation and sustainably manage the waste and recycling produced by our residents.