

Submission from COSLA

COSLA welcomes the opportunity to provide written evidence to the Rural Affairs Climate Change and Environment Committee on the Zero Waste Policy Statement as we share the Scottish Government's Zero Waste vision. The key messages contained in this response have cross-party approval and were agreed by the COSLA Regeneration and Sustainable Development Executive Group. As the Regulations are currently not in statute, and there are limitations on Councils to adhere to 12 monthly budgetary cycles, COSLA believe that the work of the RACCEC is critical to ensure that a stable legislative framework is developed for Scotland.

COSLA has been encouraged by the collaborative approach taken in the last few years to bring the regulations to this stage. The policy statement reflects this approach, as many of the views highlighted by COSLA in our consultation on the Zero Waste Regulations have been taken into consideration. For example, the Policy Statement recognised the COSLA view for the need for transitional periods and longer lead in times for separate food waste collections and the ban on biodegradable waste to landfill.

COSLA recognises that these regulations need to balance flexibility with providing a degree of certainty following the principles of Better Regulation. However, given the scale of the paradigm shift required by Scotland to achieve the vision of a Zero Waste Scotland over the next few years, COSLA would welcome further supporting guidance and standards to come forward as soon as practicable following the regulations.

In particular, COSLA welcomes the development of the good practice guidance to councils with respect to collection systems, as this was a recognised need identified in COSLA and SOLACE joint response to the Zero Waste Regulations consultation. However, further details are still needed on the Waste Hierarchy Guidance, the Duty of Care Code of Practice and the MRF Quality Standards. Similarly, the Policy Statement did not make mention of the carbon metric; COSLA would welcome further clarification on the measurement and monitoring of future recycling targets.

COSLA welcomes the focus in the Policy Statement on effective, reliable and clear communication and information for householders and businesses as their support is required to see the necessary behavioural change to ensure the Zero Waste vision and targets are achieved.

As highlighted in the Business Regulatory Impact Assessment for these regulations, there are significant costs and economic opportunities for delivery the Zero Waste vision. In these times of significant financial constraint and increasing demand on services, local authorities are making a valuable contribution to recycling, avoiding further costs by sending valuable resources landfill, and ensuring vital local services are protected.