

**GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP JOINT**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Friday, 10 January 2020**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Councillor Linda Green (Gateshead Council) (Chair)

Gateshead Council Councillor Angela Douglas

South Tyneside Council Councillor Jim Foreman, Councillor Mark Walsh

Sunderland Council Councillor Amy Wilson

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Gateshead Council Colin Huntington, Marc Morley, Helen Conway

South Tyneside Council Andrew Whittaker

Sunderland Council Colin Curtis

South Tyne and  
Wear Waste Management  
Partnership Chris Wilson, Gary Smith, Fiona Swinburne

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Deborah Waller (Sunderland City Council)

**73 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2019 were agreed as a true record.

**74 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were received.

**75 FIBRE RECYCLING COLLECTION TRIAL**

The Joint Executive Committee received a presentation on the Fibre Recycling Collection Trail which has been in operation in Gateshead and South Tyneside since February 2019.

The JEC were advised that a single collection day on one round was selected in each authority and the WRAP have proved free of charge support for the initial evaluation of the trial.

The inner caddy was replaced with a 240-litre wheeled bin. Residents were asked to place all their paper and cardboard into the new bins. Everything else including cartons would go in the dark blue comingled bin. In Gateshead 1046 (1% of total households) took part and in South Tyneside 1402 (2% of total households) took part in the trial. A range of properties were chosen to represent the different properties within the boroughs to include terraced properties with small backyards, communal properties and pensioners bungalows.

The JEC were informed that the trial was proposed by Palm due to the falling paper tonnages being collected separately in the caddy and to improve the quality of the fibre overall. Income is also generated for the separately collected fibre

As the trial was requested by Palm, it is not costing the authorities any additional resources as they also provided the bins, which are now collected every 4 weeks now in alternate fortnight, therefore no additional collection vehicles or crews were required. Information to residents pre-trial included letters, leaflets, calendars, bin stickers and a series of roadshows were also delivered. Each authority had a small number of enquiries and complaints. In Gateshead, 10 households refused to take part in the trial. No households refused in South Tyneside.

The JEC were advised that a number of key achievements were recognised from the trial. Most of the fibre, around 99% is now being processed separately in the new bin, and the number of comingled bins presented at kerbside is consistent pre and post trial. However, the presentation rates for the fibre bin have dramatically increased compared to the inner caddy.

The quality of the fibre has improved as contamination has been minimal, and by improving the quality of the paper and cardboard means the contractor will be able to find a market for the material more easily and more of it can be used at the paper mill to turn into newsprint. This is important as material prices for paper have recently dropped so the better the quality of paper the easier it is to find a sustainable UK outlet.

Contamination levels have reduced within the comingled material which has improved the recycling rate from the trial area and a small amount of side waste was reported. Income levels to both Councils have increased as the percentage of material that an income is received for has increased from 17% to 44%.

Costs associated with processing the comingled material has reduced as this material has reduced from 83% to 56%.

Financial modelling had been carried out to determine the financial impact to the Councils if this service was rolled out to every household. This indicates that instead of the Council's having a considerable net cost for the processing and handling of the materials they would in fact receive a considerable net income. Any costs would be dependent on future gate fees and fibre income prices.

The JEC were advised that all householders on the trial were invited to submit comments on the new service via a short freepost questionnaire. A large percentage

responded (48% Gateshead and 25% South Tyneside) and the survey indicated a largely positive response with around 87% of residents stating they would recommend the service to family and friends.

The WRAP study has analysed the data and it clearly shows the trial is operating successfully and participation rates are consistently high. The data also shows that the trial has helped improve the quality of the material collected (especially the fibres stream).

The JEC were advised that the report also highlights some issues that would need to be considered before the trial was expanded to a larger number of households. These relate to the storage of additional bins and the frequency of collections, these were raised by some residents in the survey.

The current trial in both collection rounds will continue until March 2021. Discussions remain ongoing between partner authorities and WRAP regarding potentially expanding the trial to other parts of Gateshead and South Tyneside. However, several issues need to be resolved including cost of bins and impact on the new MRF tender process.

All 3 authorities will need to consider the results of a collections option appraisal exercise which is being provided free of charge by WRAP in conjunction with private consultants. This will identify the most economical and environmentally sustainable kerbside collection model for future years.

In addition, the councils are awaiting further clarification on the implications of the proposals identified in the Resources and Waste Strategy. The next stages of the Strategy's consultation programme are expected this year. It is anticipated that a number of the proposals could significantly impact on future kerbside collection services operated by local authorities and the materials that residents will present for collection at the kerbside.

RESOLVED - That the Joint Executive Committee noted the contents of the report

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## **CONTRACTS UPDATE**

The Joint Executive Committee received a report on the current position regarding the Residual Waste Treatment Contract and other contracts and activities managed by the Partnership.

The joint partnership team, continues to undertake several waste management functions on behalf of the partner authorities, including reviewing and verifying monthly contract reports, which detail materials processed and service issues. Once approved, invoices are processed and, where appropriate, apportioned between partner authorities within contractual timescales.

This is enabling, amongst other things, a proactive and timely approach to management of the RWTC which is operated under strict timescales. Similar benefits are also afforded to the procurement and management of other ancillary contracts, such as MRF, HWRC, and green waste composting.

Appendix A which was appended to the main report highlighted the latest 2019/20 contact year performance. During recent months, service availability has continued to be strong with plant availability 99.23% and turbine availability 98.80%.

The Joint Committee were also advised that the exercise to replace the Debt Service Reserve Account (DSRA) with a contingent Debt Service Reserve Facility (DSRF), is still progressing.

The reduction to the Unitary Charge should generate revenue savings for each partner authority and it is projected that the joint benefit will be £0.24m per annum and £4.8m over the remainder of the contract. It is hoped the exercise will be finalised this financial year.

The Joint Committee were advised that the Joint Insurance Cost Reports are provided by STWER every two years and they set out the mechanism for the insurance review procedure and sharing of insurance cost differentials. They illustrate the state of the insurance market during the term and any resulting increase or benefit from relevant insurance costs are shared between STWER and STWWMP.

The two outstanding JICRs have now been settled and the partner authorities have received a joint credit of £463,478. This was primarily due to the differences in the premiums and the PFI Insurance Market and Power and Engineering Insurance Markets having reduced rates consistently for the five years since the bid date base cost was established on 11 August 2010.

In the longer term, the position remains unclear as the exercise is linked to the base cost assumptions and any movements in the state of the insurance market in relation to our technology.

The Joint Committee were also advised that all three of the Waste Transfer Stations (WTS) have continued to remain available, with all sites accepting STWWMP contract waste without significant issues. Recycling activities are ongoing at each site, which includes the segregation of materials, such as street sweeping, wood and scrap metals.

Routine maintenance of buildings, plant and control systems continue to be delivered as planned and no issues have been identified.

The Environment Agency (EA) inspected the Campground WTS on 29 August 2019. No issues were identified during the visit.

The Joint Committee were advised that the TWTC affords provision for SUEZ to help to improve local prosperity across the partnership area by promoting vacant posts within their facilities. The Economic Development Service at Gateshead Council continues to receive information on local vacancies, which are then cascaded to partner authorities for circulation to their client base. Local vacancies are also highlighted at the Jack Crawford House and Campground Community Liaison Groups to enable opportunities to be circulated across community contacts.

At present, 77% of post holders at the South Tyne and Wear waste transfer stations and working in the management and administration of the South Tyne and Wear RWTC are residents of the partnership area. Approximately 12% of post holders at the EfW facility are residents of the partnership area.

Interviews for the post of weighbridge operator at Campground WTS were held in August and an internal candidate - a South Tyneside Resident was appointed.

Two site operative positions at Middlefields became vacant in November 2019 and two South Tyneside residents were appointed as replacement post holders.

The current EfW Operations Manager has taken a 12-month promotion secondment as Plant Manager at the SUEZ Wilton EfW. The current Technical Plant Engineer commenced an 18-month secondment as replacement Operations Manager in October.

STWWMP remains committed to an ongoing programme of community education and engagement, managed by Groundwork North East & Cumbria (GNEC) at the visitor and education centre, the energy-from-waste facility, and through outreach activities held in local schools and community settings.

Between April and November 2019, 4,790 local residents, children and young people, and community group members took part in waste awareness events, activities and site visits.

The Joint Executive Committee were advised that the MRF contracts continue to be monitored closely by the joint partnership team. This includes processing payments, holding regular contract meetings and performance reviews, and Health & Safety site inspections at the various contractor facilities to ensure that recycling performance is maximised.

Appendix B appended to the main report highlighted the latest 2019/20 performance (April – November 2019) for the materials collected by each partner authority in the kerbside 'blue bin' recycling service. The results are broken down to demonstrate the paper collected separately in the inner box and the comingled materials collected in the main section of the blue bin.

The comingled recycling tonnages in each partner authority continue to fluctuate due to several different reasons, including the development of light weight recyclable materials across the sector, householder participation and seasonal variations. However, paper tonnages collected separately in the inner caddy continue to fall year on year and is now around 11% of the overall tonnage collected by the three partner authorities.

Appendix B appended to the main report, also highlighted MRF recycling and recovery rates (for comingled materials only) since Quarter 1 2018/19. Recycling performance has generally remained at similar levels in each partner authority. Sunderland City Council continue to identify actions to help increase their recycling rates and reduce contamination rates, to bring these levels in line with Gateshead and South Tyneside.

The recycling trial that commenced in February 2019 on a single collection round in both Gateshead and South Tyneside is enabling around 2,400 households to recycle paper and cardboard materials together in a separate, additional, wheeled bin. Details of the tonnage of paper and cardboard (known as mixed fibre) that has been collected since the start of trial.

The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) has undertaken an initial evaluation of the trial. The evaluation found that:

- Following the implementation of the trial, almost all the fibre presented for collection (99%) is now contained in the separate fibre bin. This has enabled separately presented fibre levels to rise from an average 33.03 kg per household (paper only) to 82.35 kg per household (paper and card).
- Presentation rates for the comingled DMR bins remained consistent both pre and post-trial implementation, but the separate fibre bins recorded much higher levels of presentation when compared to the previous use of the inner caddy.
- Before the trial, inner caddy presentation rates were 41-42% in Gateshead and 40% in South Tyneside, but this has now risen to presentation rates of 79% in Gateshead and 84% in South Tyneside for the new fibre bin.
- Separating the recycling in this way protects the integrity of the fibre-based materials and improves its overall quality, which makes it more recyclable and therefore more commercially viable to the contractor because the contamination levels have been negligible.
- Reduced contamination levels within the DMR presented in the existing blue bins and less than 1% of recycling related side waste (i.e. materials presented for collection next to the bin, not contained inside) has been reported in both Gateshead and South Tyneside.
- Increased income levels that the councils receive from Palm for the fibre collected from the trial households
- Consultation with residents in the trial area highlighted a positive response to the service change.

Although the trial is taking place in Gateshead and South Tyneside, the trial feedback and results will benefit all three partner authorities and will be used when evaluating future service delivery models.

The latest HWRC recycling performance for 2019/20, excluding inert material, such as rubble were tabled for information. The Joint Executive were advised that the partner authority HWRC contracts with SUEZ and Remondis are set to expire at the end of March 2020.

A joint procurement exercise is currently being undertaken and following the invitation to tender, submissions have been received and are currently being evaluated by the partner authorities. A decision is anticipated regarding appointment of the successful contractor in February 2020.

The Joint Executive Committee were also advised that the garden waste kerbside collection service resumed in all three partner authorities in April 2019. Contract

management meetings continue to be held with service providers at the various facilities, which also include Health & Safety site inspections.

The current contracts were scheduled to end on 31 March 2020, but all three partner authorities have now agreed to extend the existing arrangements until 31 March 2022.

The Joint Executive Committee also received an update on the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Contract which was awarded to Valpak Limited in December 2019. The current framework contract commenced on 1 January 2020 for a period of 36 months, with an option to extend for a further 2 x 12 months.

The contract covers the following categories of WEEE:

- Large Domestic Appliances (LDA);
- Fridges and Freezers (to include commercial type and ammonia units);
- Small Domestic Appliances (SDA);
- Visual Display Equipment;
- Fluorescent Lighting Tubes; and
- Post-Consumer Batteries

STWWMP worked in partnership with Valpak, SUEZ and GNEC to submit two successful external applications for WEEE projects, which will be rolled out during 2020 and 2021.

The Distributor Takeback Scheme, through their Funding for Local Authority WEEE Projects, awarded £119,460 to deliver a multi-faceted reduce and reuse project. The project concentrates on the delivery of repair, reuse and repurposing workshops, amnesty events and swap shops for SDA, and where this is not possible, to divert the material for recycling.

Delivery of the project will be achieved through the employment of a full-time dedicated WEEE project officer, who will arrange, promote and run the events/activities throughout the partnership area. This will be supported by a part-time PAT certified electrician, who will be responsible for providing professional electrical services at repair and reuse workshops in addition to training volunteers to provide them with the skills and knowledge to undertake repairs and PAT testing.

In addition, the WEEE Fund for small e-waste kerbside investments awarded £59,923 to deliver a concentrated kerbside recycling scheme.

The project will be delivered through a full-time officer and its key focus will be the provision localised collection activities for SDA and batteries in concentrated areas where bags will be delivered along with instructions for residents to encourage them to clear out unwanted, old, and broken SDA and place them at the edge of their property for collection on a designated day.

RESOLVED - That the Joint Executive Committee noted the contents of the report.

A presentation was given to the Joint Executive Committee on National and Local Authority waste related stories that have been in the media.

### **International Waste News**

The Joint Executive were advised that a new United Nations Environment Programme assessment of plastic waste policies has found limited packaging related policies and 'weak enforcement' are aggravating the problem of plastic pollution in South-East Asia. Over half of the land-based plastic pollution in our oceans originates from just five countries, four of which are in South-East Asia, and this pollution has more than just an environmental impact – plastic litter in Asia Pacific region alone costs its tourism, fishing and shipping industries \$1.3 billion per year.

The assessment report is the first comprehensive look at policies on packaging waste and standards in the countries in South-East Asia.

The Malaysian government has announced that it is set to publish a circular economy roadmap for plastics, which aims to provide a direction for policy and stakeholders, including state governments, and enable Malaysia to prepare for the 'next step towards sustainability' The plastic sector in Malaysia generated nearly MYR 31 billion in revenue last year, which is over £5.7 billion. In May 2019, Malaysia announced that it was sending back 3,000 tonnes of contaminated waste to countries including the UK, America, Australia and Canada after 60 shipping containers had been allegedly smuggled into illegal processing facilities.

The Joint Executive Committee were advised that UK Waste Management firm Biffa has announced that there should be a ban on the export of waste plastics as part of a drive for all plastics to be recycled in the UK, which they say, would retain the material as a resource, generate UK investment and jobs, and avoid unintended environmental problems in other countries.

A report commissioned by Biffa, says that the demonisation of plastics is also resulting in unintended consequences for UK recycling, which have the potential to make the UK's plastic problem worse. Biffa is calling for simplification in plastic packaging materials with a focus on closed-loop recycling investment to ensure that where plastic packaging is necessary, it is developed to be recyclable as possible, whether in its original form for other materials.

However, according to a new report published by the Waste and Resources Action Programme, the UK faces a plastics capacity challenge as demand for recycled content increases. The report concludes that global plastic consumption is likely to continue to grow as emerging economies continue to develop.

The Joint Executive Committee were advised that Coca-Cola has unveiled its first ever sample bottle which has been made using recovered and recycled marine plastics. About 300 sample bottles were made using 25% recycled marine plastic retrieved from the Mediterranean Sea and beaches, through a partnership between Ioniqa Technologies; Indorama Ventures; Circular Seas; and the Coca-Cola

Company. The bottles were designed and developed to show the 'transformational potential' of enhanced recycling technologies.

These are the first ever plastic bottles that have been successfully manufactured using marine plastic which can also be used for food and drink packaging. In the immediate term, Coca-Cola plans to roll out an enhanced recycling content within its products this year, which will use waste streams from existing recyclers and include previously unrecyclable plastics and lower-quality recyclables. In 2017, as part of their Sustainability Action Plan, Coca-Cola pledged that by 2025, they will collect one can or bottle for every one that is sold; ensure that all of its packaging is 100% recyclable; and ensure that at least 50% of the content of its plastic bottles will come from recycled content.

The aluminium can industry has refuted recent claims made by Coca-Cola that recycled P-E-T plastic bottles have a 'much lower' carbon footprint than the aluminium can. The Can Manufacturers Institute says that the carbon footprint of both containers is comparable, but that the aluminium can performs 'significantly better' than the P-E-T bottles on critical sustainability measures, including recycling rate, recycled content, and economic value, because aluminium beverage cans are the 'most recycled drinks package in the world'.

CMI said that the average aluminium can in the USA has a recycled content of 73%, which is significantly higher than plastic P-E-T bottles in the States, which have a recycled content of less than 10%, and that recycled cans have a positive environmental impact, because when a can is produced from recyclable materials, this saves more than 90% of the energy used and greenhouse gas emissions, when compared to making the same can from virgin material. The high economic value of aluminium was also highlighted, noting that the recent two-year average shows that the scrap aluminium can market has been worth four times that of P-E-T bottles, so all of these metrics together mean that the aluminium can is the only container that consumers can recycle with confidence and that their actions will have a significant environmental impact.

### **National Waste News**

The Joint Executive Committee were advised that research undertaken by Alupro, the aluminium packaging recycling organisation – has suggested that the introduction of an 'all-in' deposit return scheme model could result in an extra 823 million plastic bottles being produced, which will inadvertently add to plastic pollution. The research asked 2,000 UK adults to imagine that the English scheme introduced a 20 pence deposit on every can or bottle – as proposed in Scotland's DRS, which would mean that consumers would pay an up-front deposit of £4.80 on top of the purchase price for a 24-can multipack, as compared to an 80 pence for four large plastic bottles containing the same amount of liquid.

When faced with this choice, two thirds of those currently buying cans in multipacks say they would likely switch to plastic bottles. Alupro is therefore warning that attaching the same deposit fee to all sizes of containers will lead consumers to opt for the larger plastic bottles, which will also have consequences for the environment and impact on portion control because of the size of the bottles. Consumers will, of

course, be able to recoup any deposit they pay by returning the empty container to a designated collection point.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England also issued a warning that one in four bottles that litter the countryside may not be included in a DRS, and in order for a DRS to be an effective deterrent to the high volume of waste polluting our natural environment, it must cover all materials of all sizes. The CPRE say the evidence for an 'all in' model was clear within its 2109 Green Clean nationwide litter pick, which suggested that millions of drinks containers would still end up littering the countryside. The CPRE said that to boost recycling rates the only option is to include all drinks containers – which should include cartons and pouches too.

The Joint Executive Committee were advised that the environmental organisation Zero Waste Scotland is now warning that the current focus on plastics is actually a distraction from the real issue of ending the disposable throwaway culture. Four-fifth's of Scotland's carbon footprint is generated through the heat and energy that is required to grow, make, process, transport, and provide materials that are often disposed at their end-of-life. The organisation says that although well-intentioned, much of the current focus on simply eradicating plastic can replace one environmental problem with another.

Chief Executive Iain Gulland said that the power lies with people to both make changes and ask business to do more, however, it was stressed that businesses must also play their part in reducing waste. In launching the recent BBC One wildlife series 'Seven Worlds, One Planet, environmental Sir David Attenborough essentially highlighted the same message.

### **Local Authority News**

The Joint Executive Committee were advised that the Local Government Association says that the Government must 'commit' to EPR reforms and take forward proposals that ensure that producers pay for the full cost of recycling packaging if it is serious about improving recycling rates.

The LGA said that local authorities have used successful initiatives to try and increase recycling rates in their local areas. The LGA is also calling for the Government to commit to measures to charge manufacturers more to cover the end-of-life costs to councils of non-recycled packaging.

Hertfordshire County Council is considering a request from waste management company Amey to end its household waste and recycling centre contract early. Amey runs 17 HWRCs for the council, with the current eight-and-a-half year contract due to run to March 2023. The Council said that Amey have done a good job managing their HWRCs, but that they've known for some time that whilst the contract is working well, they have, in fact been losing substantial amounts of money - so have asked the Council if they can end the contract early, which has been agreed by the Council, on the condition that suitable exit terms can be negotiated.

The Council says that it is planning 'significant investments' in the network of HWRCs, and a report on the results of the management options work is expected to be presented to the council's Cabinet in February.

The Joint Executive Committee were also advised that Northern Ireland has reached the European 50% recycling target. It was announced at the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management's Northern Ireland conference last year that the country has reached a recycling rate of 50.6% and the new improved performance has been attributed to the introduction of mandatory food waste collections.

RESOLVED - That the Joint Executive Committee noted the contents of the report.

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**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Joint Executive Committee will be held on Friday 13 March 2020 at 1.30 pm in the Whickham Room, Civic Centre.