

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

**Friday, 22 September 2017**

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

Gateshead Council Councillor Angela Douglas

South Tyneside Council Councillor Allan West

Sunderland Council Councillor Michael Mordey

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Gateshead Council Anthony Alder, Fiona Swinburne, Chris Wilson, Gary Smith, Martin Harrison, Marc Morley, Anna Harrison and Rosalyn Patterson

South Tyneside Council Chris Fairhurst and Andrew Whittaker

Sunderland Council Mark Speed and Colin Curtis

**1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Foreman, Councillor Miller, Councillor Spedding and Councillor Donovan.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Angela Douglas to the meeting as new representative for Gateshead Council.

**2 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

**3 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were submitted.

**4 CONTRACTS UPDATE**

The Committee received a report on the current position regarding the Residual

Waste Treatment Contract and other contracts and activities managed by the Partnership.

It was reported that the joint partnership team signed off the 2016/17 reconciliation exercise with SUEZ and STWER and the final invoice is currently being awaited. The latest performance, April – July 2017, shows the total contract waste of 63,762.21 tonnes. Recycling performance from the Waste Transfer Stations (WTS) is 4.6%, which is above the target of 2.1%, however it was noted that this is expected to level out over the winter. It was also noted that landfill diversion rate continues to be at 100%.

A number of service issues have been encountered recently, for example a half-hourly and daily dust breach was reported to the Environment Agency. An investigation was carried out and it was found that the dust readings recorded were inaccurate and should therefore be discounted, the report was withdrawn. In June and July there were blockages due to bottom ash issues which led to minor down time. Work is ongoing to investigate the incidents and ensure chute blockages are avoided.

Shutdown periods have been scheduled for line 4; between 27 February to 22 March 2018 and for line 5; between 19 February and 7 March 2018.

It was reported that there is an opportunity to refinance the debt associated with the project and STWER has been advised that investigations into the exercise can proceed.

A meeting was held with Defra, STWER and Willis Towers Watson insurers to discuss the joint insurance cost report associated with the STWWMP PFI contract. A revised model from the insurers is currently being awaited.

In terms of the WTS all three have remained available during the year without any significant issues. New procedures for managing waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) are working well. A number of service issues have been experienced due to infringements of site rules, for example use of mobile phones, all staff have been formally reminded of site rules and procedures and some have been re-inducted. A complaint was received regarding litter from service deliveries at Campground, a review of vehicle activity on the Long Bank was carried out and it was found that only the container servicing vehicle from Cowen Road uses the road and no rubbish was escaping as all vehicles were sheeted. It was noted that observations are continuing to ensure that this remains the case. There was an inspection of Campground carried out by the Environment Agency (EA) in July following a complaint from a local resident regarding fly activity. A score of 3 was given relating to the content of the site management plan and Suez resubmitted all site management plans including pest control arrangements. A repeat visit was carried out by the EA and no issues or infestations were found.

It was reported that targeted recruitment and training is continuing to improve local prosperity across the partnership area. A number of positions were advertised for the EfW facility, however no applications were received from residents in the STWWMP area, it is thought that this is due to the location of the site. Five positions

were advertised for Jack Crawford House and Campground and all positions were filled with people from the STWWMP area.

Groundwork North East and Cumbria (GNEC) continues to manage community education and engagement through the Visitor and Education Centre. 969 children and young people have now taken part in waste awareness activities between April and August 2017, and 1027 members of local community groups have also been involved in similar activities during the same period. The Visitor and Education Centre also featured as part of the 2017 Heritage Open Days where tours of the centre could be booked.

In terms of the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) contracts, these continue to be monitored by the joint partnership team. There has been a reduction in the total amount collected for Gateshead and South Tyneside, however there is an overall increase for Sunderland which was attributed to the introduction of fortnightly refuse collection. MRF recycling and recovery rates for comingled materials were identified and it was noted that all MRF contracts are due to end on 31 March 2018. The Officer Project Board is currently looking at various options for appropriate arrangements thereafter.

Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) contracts have been negotiated so that South Tyneside's contract will be co-terminus with the Gateshead and Sunderland contract extensions. This will allow a joint approach between all three authorities to be considered for a new contract commencing on 1 April 2020.

It was reported that the green waste composting contracts have continued to operate without significant service issues and material quality remains at a high level.

It was suggested that consideration be given to working with the Shipley Young People's Library garden to link in with the recycling work at the Visitor and Education Centre.

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

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### **BLUE BIN RECYCLING**

The Joint Executive Committee received a presentation on the blue bin recycling process, from collection to processing.

Gateshead and South Tyneside Councils have a joint contract with Palm and Sunderland has a separate contract with J&B, with both contracts ending at the same time. It was noted that this will allow all partner authorities to come together in the future.

The mixed recycling from the blue bin is often referred to as comingled material. The recycling vehicles tip all recycling at Riverdale, Team Valley Trading Estate, for Gateshead and South Tyneside and at Monument Park in Washington for

Sunderland's recycling. Mixed materials go to the Materials Recovery Facilities (MRF) for processing, this is Palm in Teesside for Gateshead and South Tyneside and J&B in Hartlepool for Sunderland. In terms of newspapers and magazines these go direct to the paper mills at Palm Recycling, at Kings Lynn Norfolk and UPM at Deeside for Sunderland.

The Committee viewed a video taken at the MRF at Teesside which showed how the mixed recycling is processed. It was highlighted that there continues to be manual handpicking from the belt, although there is hi tech machinery to separate the materials which in turn produces high quality end product, turning waste into a resource.

It was reported that for Gateshead and South Tyneside the paper from the caddy goes direct to Palms paper mill in Norfolk, which is the widest, largest and most powerful newsprint machine in the world. It was noted that it can run at speeds of 2000 metres of paper per minute, producing 400,000 tonnes of newsprint per year. Each paper roll is 11 metres wide and can be cut to the customer size and specification.

The Committee was provided with information around what material can be accepted in the blue bin and inner caddy in order to avoid contamination issues. It was noted that this information is continuing to be publicised in the partnership area.

The costs associated with processing the recycling were outlined, it was noted that the partnership has to pay the contractor to process every tonne of mixed recycling at a set rate, however the Councils receive a substantial income payment from the contractor for every tonne of paper collected separately in the caddy. Therefore, if the amount of paper collected separately can be maximised this will help reduce the cost of recycling. It was reported that the percentage of paper collected since 2014 is reducing, this is similar to the national picture and is a result of the use of modern technology which has reduced paper readership. It was noted that the partnership continues to promote paper recycling through various communications channels and each Council provides free replacement caddies.

In terms of contamination rates for Gateshead and South Tyneside these have dropped quite significantly since 2015. Sunderland's contamination rates have increased recently due to the introduction of fortnightly collections of residual waste in April 2017. The Committee was reassured that all parties are now working hard to try and ensure the contamination rate reduces in the longer term. Committee was advised that the impact of contamination is an increased cost for the contractor to process the residual waste and also the lost revenue from the recycling. If a load contains a large amount of contamination it can be rejected at the transfer station and ends up going for disposal, which costs more than recycling. It was also confirmed that the quality of the recyclable material can affect how and where it is sold on as it is not sustainable as higher quality recyclables. In order to address the issue of contamination all three councils have employed door stepping staff to speak directly to residents. Gateshead Council has employed three Behavioural Change Officers with the aim of changing the public's behaviour towards waste and recycling. In addition, crews check bins for contamination before emptying, if there is any contamination a sticker or tag is left on the bin to inform the resident.

Communication work is ongoing through leaflets, bin stickers, press releases and information placed on websites, social media and council magazines, the Partnership also has a You Tube channel. It was also reported that staff at the transfer stations record information on contamination and remove larger items of contamination.

Committee was advised that the next steps are to agree the short term contract options up until 2021, then look at the longer term options post 2021 which will involve looking at several different scenarios including collection arrangements, one joint partnership site to build a WTS or MRF and who will operate the facility. It was also acknowledged that consideration will have to be given to the impact Brexit will have on UK legislation and how that will influence national policy and the recycling industry. It was also noted that the situation will be monitored following the announcement about China's National Sword initiative which will result in contaminated loads of imported recycling being turned back at the ports.

It was suggested that the video should be shown in schools and should also include the reuse initiatives coordinated by Groundwork from the Visitor and education Centre.. It was confirmed that Suez and Groundwork are using the You Tube videos in schools and the partnership could look at other videos to show future reuse initiatives

The point was made that currently recycling rates for the partnership are hitting a ceiling, therefore it will cost money to reach the 50% target. However if bottom ash is reclassified as recycling this would take the percentage to over 50%. It was agreed that the Chair would write a further letter to central Government around the reclassification of bottom ash as recycled material.

**RESOLVED - That the Joint Executive Committee noted the information presented.**

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## **COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

A presentation was given to the Committee on waste-related stories that have been in the media.

It was reported that there are fears over new Chinese import restrictions following an announcement from China's ministry of environmental protection that there will be a crack down on materials imported for recycling as part of the National Sword operation and inspection regime. It has been suggested that a maximum contamination rate of 0.3% will be set on all imports to China by the end of the year. This means that metal exporters could face tighter controls on both ferrous and non-ferrous loads that may also include rubber or plastic materials, and exporters of plastics could see a complete ban on some materials which may lead to a short-term glut of plastics in the UK. It was noted that the biggest impact could be on waste paper as China is an important market for many UK paper recyclers, with 3.6 million tonnes exported there last year.

It was noted that the Environment Agency has announced that England has only 6.8

years of non-hazardous landfill life. Data from permitted waste management operators in England shows a steady increase in waste treatment capacity, alongside a decrease in landfill capacity. It was reported that in 2016 England managed 203 million tonnes of waste, of which 44.7 million tonnes was landfilled. Regionally, the East of England landfilled the most, 10 million tonnes, and London the least at 2.3 million tonnes. Committee was advised that the partnership has seen none of its residual contract waste sent to landfill since 2015.

Committee recalled that Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority was seeking to exit its twenty-five year, £3.2 billion PFI contract with Viridor Laing, affecting nine councils across the Greater Manchester area. It has now been confirmed that this will take place from 29 September 2017. The Authority stated that constraints within the new EU Procurement Regulations meant that the savings identified could not be taken forward through the existing contractual arrangements, it also cited 'technical and operational challenges' within the contract. It was noted that interim arrangements have been agreed to enable the Authority to continue providing recycling and waste processing services whilst new services are procured, therefore collections will continue as normal.

It was reported that the Scottish First Minister intends to commit the country to implementing a deposit return scheme (DRS) for plastic drinks bottles. Zero Waste Scotland has been investigating design options and the associated costs and benefits of how a DRS could operate in Scotland. However, the Packaging Recycling Group Scotland has publically opposed the scheme and recommended alternative proposals that promote recycling instead. Other associations have suggested that a DRS would be too burdensome for customers and small shops.

The Committee was advised of an article that was published in the Daily Mail online which made a number of claims regarding CCTV cameras mounted on refuse collection vehicles and what councils are doing to reduce recycling contamination. A number of statements were included in the article about bin men being told to rifle through rubbish and file reports. The article also stated that CCTV is used to catch people out and record infringements carrying £60 fine, with threats of fines of £20,000 for leaving the bins out too long. Committee was reminded of the costs and impact of non-target or offensive materials within recycling loads and the ongoing communication activities the partnership delivers to improve the quantity and quality of materials residents present for recycling. It was highlighted that CCTV is installed on refuse collection vehicles in both Gateshead and Sunderland to help improve health and safety and to support investigations into complaints or service requests for missed bins, as well as providing evidence against malicious or fraudulent claims against the council. It was also highlighted that the cameras are positioned to only record images in the immediate vicinity of the vehicle and do not show a broad view of the location, so no cameras are directly intrusive of private premises.

It was reported that Tesco has recently announced that single-use carrier bags will be replaced by a new 'Bag for Life' that is made from 94% recycled plastic. The bags will cost 10p with the sales continuing to fund community projects through the existing Bags for Help scheme, which has already provided more than £33 million to over 6,400 community projects since its 2015 launch. It was noted that this follows a successful 10 week trial in Aberdeen, Dundee and Norwich where sales of bags

reduced by 25%. It was acknowledged that although Tesco now sells 1.5 billion fewer single-use plastic bags since the carrier bag charge was introduced it still sells over 700 million each year. It was also noted that online customers will still be able to opt for a single use carrier bag for their shopping, however 57% already opt for bag-less delivery. Tesco has also announced withdrawal of the single-use wine carriers, however it is lowering the price of bottle bags from £1 to 40p.

**RESOLVED** - That the Joint Executive Committee noted the information presented.

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#### **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Friday 8 December 2017 at 1.30pm.