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## GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

### SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP JOINT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Friday, 15 June 2018

**PRESENT:** Councillor Councillor Linda Green (Gateshead Council) (Chair)  
Gateshead Council Councillor Angela Douglas  
South Tyneside Council Councillor Jim Foreman  
Sunderland Council Councillor Amy Wilson

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Gateshead Council	Angela Frisby
South Tyneside Council	Tom Turmk
Sunderland Council	Mark Speed
South of Tyne & Wear Waste Management Partnership	Chris Wilson, Gary Smith, Fiona Swinburne
Suez R & R UK	Anna Bell
Groundwork	Stephen Armstrong Rachel Courtney

**APOLOGIES:**

Chris Fairhurst, Andrew Whittaker and Anthony Alder

**17 ELECTION OF CHAIR**

RESOLVED - That the Joint Executive Committee agreed that the Chair for 2018/19 would be Councillor Linda Green.

**18 ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRS**

RESOLVED - That the Joint Executive Committee agreed that the Vice Chairs for 2018-19 would be Councillor Mark Walsh and Councillor Amy Wilson.

## **19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Walsh, Councillor D Waller and Andrew Whitaker and Chris Fairhurst.

## **20 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

## **21 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were received.

## **22 RWTC CONTRACT PERFORMANCE**

The Joint Executive Committee received an update from Anna Bell, SUEZ recycling and recovery UK on residual waste treatment contract performance for 2017-18.

It was noted that overall there had been 190,144.46 tonnes of contract waste from the three local authorities, with 58,663.82 tonnes from Gateshead, 49,886.82 tonnes from South Tyneside and 81,593.82 tonnes from Sunderland. This was marginally behind forecast. However, 100% diversion from landfill had been achieved.

As far as energy from waste performance was concerned 296,854.50 tonnes overall had been processed and performance was considered to be good. There had been 190,820 MWh generated and 168,913MWh exported to the national grid which was sufficient to power 30,000 homes.

One of the milestones which had been reached was that the millionth tonne of waste had been processed since service commencement.

Health and safety performance was reported to be exceptional with no serious occurrences. Near misses had been reported and put right and there was a downward trend in accidents.

There had been one permit breach which had been associated with the waste transfer facility at Campground but this had in fact related to a blocked drain on Springwell Road.

Over the year there had been a lot of community engagement work with community liaison groups such as Campground and Jack Crawford House and feedback had been very positive regarding the visitor and education centre activities with a significant number of visits taking place.

In terms of targeted recruitment and training 71% of the Residual Waste Treatment contract support employees are residents of South of Tyne and Wear area and all posts are advertised in the South of Tyne and Wear area through the partner

authorities. A review of opportunities for apprenticeships has also taken place to see how these can be brought into the waste transfer stations.

Contract challenges for 2018-19 are around improving recycling performance; promoting “right waste”, “right bin”; reducing blockages at EfW and ensuring all waste is treated correctly e.g. WEEE, batteries.

RESOLVED                      That the Joint Executive Committee noted the information presented.

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## **WASTE AWARENESS AND RECYCLING EDUCATION IN SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR**

A presentation was given to the Committee on waste and recycling education in South Tyne and Wear by Stephen Armstrong and Rachael Courtney, Groundwork North East.

Stephen updated the Committee on the position relating to the Visitor and Education Centre project which had been running for four years now and has a full time dedicated officer, Wendy Fail, to support work with community groups and schools. The centre itself has a design which is certified as respecting the environment. A wide range of activities are co-ordinated at the Centre which hosts a number of community and school groups and these are often curriculum linked. The Centre has proved really successful with 150 / 200 school sessions per year equating to approximately 3 to 4 a week. The Centre also created a garden with a greenhouse made out of bottles from the Great North Run.

The Committee was provided with a case study of the work carried out by the Centre with St Mary’s RC School in Sunderland. The School carried out waste audits with their eco-group and managed to reduce waste in their classroom and kitchen through simple advice. In the kitchen waste was reduced from 260 Kilo per year to 75 kilo per year and in the classrooms waste was reduced from 154 kilo to 40 Kilo’s. Some of the actions leading to this drop in waste were having smaller amounts of the right food for lunch; having cutlery in the right place so it did not end up in the bin; waste free Wednesdays and carefully planned lunches.

Rachael updated the Committee on the Waste Electronics and Electrical Equipment (WEEE) project. The aim of the project was to engage with children and residents to reduce WEEE through a range of different mechanisms and built on the 2016 project in North Tyne & Wear.

There was a need for the project as it was found that there was not a great deal of public knowledge on how to manage batteries and WEEE etc. The project uses educational activities and is community and school driven using venues such as libraries and museums / road shows and competitions.

Rachael advised that in Springwell Village, Sunderland they had engaged members of the Ladybird Group and held an amnesty event where 45 local residents dropped off small WEEE following the event.

Work has been carried out primarily with primary schools via assemblies and has involved activities such as making electricity out of potatoes. The battery competition with a £500 cash prize for schools has proved popular with schools as have amnesty events in schools as a way of getting parents engaged.

Targets – see slide

Future plans – see slide

The Committee noted that recycling batteries is a big issue as these tend to be put in general bins and queried how feasible it would be to have recycling collections for batteries. Colin advised that whilst it would be feasible the cost to authorities would be prohibitive and so authorities should instead be promoting the use of recyclable batteries to the public.

It was queried whether battery recycling venues were promoted as this was important and it was suggested that consideration should be given to promoting this in the Council News.

The Committee noted that one of the big things Rachael was doing was having collection boxes for this type of waste in schools.

Colin indicated that it was recognised that electronics and electrical waste was an issue particularly at our Energy from Waste facility with problems arising due to contamination of the bottom ash from lithium batteries and this is why work is taking place to raise awareness.

The Committee noted the work being carried out in the community but considered that due to funding cuts / and the loss of some charitable community organisations the messages about recycling in the community had become diluted and lost focus. The Committee considered there were however significant opportunities to promote the recycling messages through community associations etc.

The Committee also queried whether linking work at the Education Centre in relation to recycling to other campaigns e.g. Dementia Friendly might assist with funding for projects in the future. Stephen advised that the Centre is not currently classed as dementia friendly but this was something which could be explored.

Stephen advised that if councillors were aware of specific community associations/centres who would like support / advice around recycling then Wendy Fail, as part of her outreach role, would be able to provide that if councillors provide her with the relevant information.

The Committee considered that it was important to get the message out about recycling electronics / electrical waste as a lot of damage was being done via batteries being placed in general waste.

Stephen indicated that they were planning a push on promoting this issue. Fiona advised the Committee that there would be a massive promotion amongst schools in

September in relation to rechargeable batteries and recycling with a range of prizes. Fiona agreed to contact the Joint Communications Team to see what information could be sent out to schools.

The Committee was advised that anyone who sells batteries has to have a recycling point in place and it was noted that there was a collection point in the foyer at the Civic Centre Gateshead.

The Chair stated that it would be important in schools to train a number of individuals so they could continue to train others to get the message out. The Chair queried whether there was the potential for school councils to have named people in each class and competitions between classes to engage young people in the recycling agenda.

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

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### **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.

2017/18 year end performance was reported and it was noted that once again residual waste treatment contract targets were exceeded.

It was also highlighted that the exercise to investigate the potential opportunity to refinance the debt associated with the RWTC continues to progress.

Further discussions with representatives from the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), STWER and Willis Towers Watson insurers involving the joint insurance cost report associated with the RWTC were ongoing and the Committee would be updated on the position at relevant milestones.

The total amount of materials collected by each authority during 2017-18 broken down between the paper collected separately in the inner box and the comingled materials collected in the main section of the blue bin was reported. It was noted that in Gateshead and South Tyneside, overall recycling tonnages have dropped compared to the previous year.

There has been an increase in the amount of comingled recycling collected in Sunderland which can be attributed to the introduction of fortnightly refuse collections in April 2017.

Paper tonnages continue to reduce year on year for all three partner authorities and this reflects the national trend.

The latest performance figures were also reported for 2018/19 and it was noted that Beach Street HWRC recycling performance has reduced as a result of fortnightly

refuse collections in Sunderland in April 2017. This has resulted in more residents taking their residual waste to the HWRC which cannot be recycled and has also impacted on the Campground performance.

It was also reported that all three partner authorities had recommenced garden waste kerbside collection services in March / April 2018 and there has been a recent issue with the quality of garden waste on the Gateshead contract highlighted by the contractor. This has been due to contamination from HWRC sites not kerbside collections and the Partnership have been liaising with Suez to ensure this situation improves.

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

## 25 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

A presentation was given to the Committee on local, national and local authority waste-related stories that have been in the media.

It was noted that a report to the Local Government Association (LGA)'s economy and environment board has highlighted that the additional sorting of mixed paper that would be needed to reduce contamination levels for export to China would cost one unnamed council an extra £500,000 a year and another has stated that current low paper prices would see it lose £3million a year.

Paper, card and plastic make up 46% of dry mixed recycling collected by local authorities. However, since China's restrictions took effect earlier this year, the average price of mixed paper has fallen from £93 to £10 per tonne. However, around half of the 407,000 tonnes of recovered paper exported in January 2018 went to new markets in India, Vietnam and Indonesia with the remainder sent to China.

The LGA has indicated recycling the material in the UK instead would be problematic as there was little robust evidence on the capacity of the UK recycling industry to recycle more material collected from households.

The sheer number of plastics used in packaging makes it difficult for councils to sort for recycling impacting on council's negotiating new waste collection and disposal contracts as supplier are unwilling to take 100% of the risk and therefore it would be likely to be split with councils.

MEPs in the European Parliament have recently backed ambitious and binding recycling targets set out in the EU's revised Circular Economy Package meaning that member states will be required to recycle 55% of municipal waste collected by 2025. This will rise to 60% by 2030 and 65% by 2035.

The new package was agreed by the European Council in December after Defra previously indicated it supported the Council in agreeing the revised proposals and

targets. This means that the targets will be adopted by the UK through the EU Withdrawal Bill as part of Brexit arrangements.

Defra has recently announced that David Rutley MP has been temporarily appointed as Parliamentary Under Secretary for State whilst Theresa Coffey recovers from a period of illness. The role will be unpaid and will be in addition to Mr Rutley's existing post as government whip. Mr Rutley is a former senior executive at Asda and worked as special advisor to the treasury, cabinet officer and ministry of agriculture in the last conservative government.

At the end of May, SUEZ launched its manifesto for resource productivity called "A vision for England's long-term resources and waste strategy" which it believes forms the basis of a comprehensive strategy that could see £9 billion added to the UK economy. The manifesto champions a move away from a throw-away society to a circular economy advocating that materials consumed should be viewed as precious resources that can be re-captured, re-used and recycled and suggests the UK government has a golden opportunity to kick start a resource revolution when we leave the EU.

The strategy also includes the findings of a poll around public perceptions of litter, with one in four Britons thinking that sandwich packaging or fast food containers are the main cause of litter and 18% believing it to be crisp packets or confectionary items and 14% thinking plastic bottles are to blame.

At the launch of the London Environment Strategy, Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London has announced that London waste authorities will be set minimum recycling standards to meet by 20220, including a requirement for separate waste collections.

Currently 41 % of the seven million tonnes of waste produced in the capital is recycled but by 2026 Mr Khan wants no biodegradable or recyclable waste sent to landfill and 65% of waste to be recycled which would put London well ahead of the circular economy target timeline.

The Strategy indicates that this would cut the waste stream by 20% and save £42 million from London's waste disposal bill. However, the Strategy also acknowledges that there are some formidable barriers to overcome eg the 33 waste authorities currently provide different waste and recycling collection services. However, it was noted that the London Borough of Barnet, in spite of the Strategy's requirements, has just announced plans to abandon food waste recycling. Instead it is proposed that residents dispose of their food waste in the existing residual waste bins where it will be used for energy recovery at an EfW.

In May the Treasury's call for evidence on using the tax system or charges to address single-use plastic waste closed. The consultation sought views on a range of potential tax options or chargeable actions to reduce single-use plastic including the potential development of an incineration tax, where waste companies would pay a tax on every tonne of plastic they incinerated. Responses to the consultation are still being analysed.

The European Commission is proposing new EU-wide rules to target the ten single-use plastic products most often found on Europe's beaches, which, together with lost and abandoned fishing gear, make up 70% of all marine litter items. A range of

products are planned to be banned from the market, including plastic cotton buds; cutlery; plates; straws; drink stirrers and sticks for balloons. These items can all be easily replaced by readily available and affordable alternatives. Where materials do not have straightforward alternatives the focus will be on limiting their use through national reductions in consumption; design and labelling requirements; and waste management clean-up obligations for producers.

The UK Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) has launched the UK Plastic Pact which aims to make “unnecessary” single-use plastic packaging a thing of the past. Forty two businesses, who are responsible for over 80% of the plastic packaging on products sold through UK supermarkets have signed up and agreed to a series of ambitious targets by 2025. This includes eliminating problematic or unnecessary single -use plastic packaging through redesign, innovation or reuse delivery models; 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable; 30% average recycled content across all plastic packaging.

WRAP has also announced that plastics will be the focus of the 2018 recycle week, which takes place from Monday 24 to Sunday 30 September. The annual event is now in its fifteenth year and aims to encourage the public to recycle more by demonstrating the benefits of recycling items from all around the home. The Partnership utilises the free of charge WRAP resources throughout the year and the Partnerships’ community education and engagement programme will dovetail with the specific Recycle Week resources during September. This will be further enhanced following initial discussions with intu Metrocentre about how the Partnership could support waste-related and recycling awareness events that are being planned within the centre.

Government has recently announced plans for the introduction of a deposit return scheme in England to boost recycling rates and reduce litter. A national YouGov poll revealed that nearly three quarters of British drinks consumers would be likely to return plastic bottles and aluminium cans under such as scheme with a deposit of just 10 pence. 80% of people also believe that there should be more recycling bins with nearly 40 % of people admitting they are more likely to put plastic bottles and cans in a general rubbish bin.

The LGA has highlighted that any government initiatives to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by 2024 must work alongside existing kerbside recycling services and not be viewed as an alternative if they are to be a success. 985 of local authorities currently provide a kerbside collection service that includes plastic bottles and over half of councils provide drop-off points for plastics.

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



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