

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

**Friday, 11 December 2020**

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

Gateshead Council Councillor Angela Douglas

South Tyneside Council Councillor Mark Walsh, Councillor Jim Foreman

Sunderland Council Councillor Paul Stewart

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Gateshead Council Colin Huntington, Marc Morley, Helen Conway

South Tyneside Council Andrew Whittaker

Sunderland Council Ian Richardson

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

**APOLOGIES:** Brendan McNeany

**97 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2020 were agreed as a true record.

**98 MATTERS ARISING**

The Committee wished to place upon record their thanks and appreciation to Colin Curtis who had recently retired from Sunderland City Council.

The Committee thanked Colin for his work on the Joint Executive Committee and wished him well for the future.

**99 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

**100 FUTURE KERBSIDE RECYCLING OPTIONS**

The Joint Executive Committee received a presentation on the future kerbside recycling options for the partnership, including the delivery of updated market engagement exercise, the determination of the kerbside collection model from 2022 and the development of a timeline for the full procurement of the MRF contract from 2022.

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
  - ii) That further updates will be brought to Committee for consideration in due course.

**101**

## **CONTRACTS UPDATE**

The JEC received a report, advising the Joint Executive Committee of the latest position regarding the Residual Waste Treatment Contract and other ancillary waste joint contracts and activities managed by the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership (STWWMP)

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.

### **RESIDUAL WASTE TREATMENT CONTRACT (RWTC)**

During the ongoing COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic restrictions, household waste levels have continued to remain high. However, all partner authorities have been able to maintain residual waste collections from households across STWWMP without interruption.

COVID-19 contingency measures remain in place across all SUEZ RWTC sites and no significant staffing issues have arisen. The three waste transfer stations have continued to manage the waste levels received and the EfW facility continues to operate as planned and process the waste for energy recovery.

Where possible, home working for support services has been implemented.

SUEZ have advised that they are intending to apply for funding to pursue a ground-breaking carbon capture and storage project with project partners BP. Utilising the EfW facilities at Haverton Hill and Wilton, the project is aimed at neutralising carbon through liquification so it can be returned to gas reservoirs in the sea via underground pipelines. The partner authorities have provided a letter of support for the project.

## EfW Service Update

Appendix A (which was attached to the main reports) highlights the 2020/21 contract performance for the period April-October. Plant availability has remained strong at 97.69% and turbine availability 94.88%.

Both contractual recycling and recovery performance continues to operate above target and the unprocessed landfill diversion rate remains at 100%.

The JEC were informed that the exercise to replace the Debt Service Reserve Account (DSRA) with a contingent Debt Service Reserve Facility (DSRF) was completed and closed in October. The financial model has been agreed which has resulted in a £1.69 per tonne reduction to the Band 0 price for all partner authorities. Over the remainder of the contract, this equates to an estimated saving per annum of Gateshead: £88,000; South Tyneside: £84,000; and Sunderland: £105,000.

The Annual Unitary Charge Forecast Monthly Payment has been amended for 2020/21 so the benefit can be realised immediately rather than being accounted for within the reconciliation process.

The third JICR was previously submitted by Willis Towers Watson and reviewed by STWWMP. A response from STWER is still awaited.

## 2020/21 Insurance Premium

Due to market availability, STWER requested another change in the insurance cover for the forthcoming insurance year (from 1 November). They advised that they expect the insurance premiums for Property and Business Interruption to increase by approximately 20% in comparison to last year and may rise further due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. STWER have completed the insurance cover exercise and the documentation for approval of the waiver is being reviewed by STWWMP with support from colleagues at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

## Waste Transfer Stations (WTS)

As highlighted above, all three of the WTS were fully operational between April and October. Recycling outputs from the sites include segregated street sweepings, wood, and scrap metals.

Routine maintenance of buildings, plant and control systems continues to be undertaken as scheduled at all three transfer stations.

## Targeted Recruitment and Training (TR&T)

The RWTC affords provision for SUEZ to help to improve local prosperity across the partnership area by promoting vacant posts within their facilities. Local vacancies are circulated to partner authority economic development services for circulation to their client bases. Vacancies are also highlighted at

the Jack Crawford House and Campground Community Liaison Groups to enable opportunities to be circulated across community contacts.

As a result of a promotional opportunity, the Operations Manager role at the EfW plant is currently vacant and the recruitment process is ongoing.

### Community Education and Engagement

STWWMP remains committed to an ongoing programme of community education and engagement, delivered 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.

Interviews were recently held for the new Visitor and Education Centre Co-ordinator and the successful candidate commenced employment with GNEC on 19 October.

Following the suspension of all previously planned and proposed activities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme is currently being reviewed to allow opportunities for virtual activities to be considered.

However, work has recently progressed on a competition for local school children to design a vehicle wrap for a WEEE contractor's vehicle to increase awareness of the danger of disposing batteries in both the residual and recycling waste streams.

In addition, a 'Twelve Days of Christmas Campaign' has also been launched with schools. Supported virtually by the new Visitor and Education Centre Co-ordinator, the campaign can be tailored by each school to meet their own requirements.

### Community Liaison Groups

The pandemic also continues to impact both the Campground and Jack Crawford House Community Liaison Groups and meetings are still not able to be held.

## **MATERIALS RECOVERY FACILITY (MRF) CONTRACTS**

Table A at Appendix B provides the latest 2020/21 performance for blue bin recycling (April-October). All partner authorities have continued to maintain the blue bin recycling collection service to households throughout the COVID-19 pandemic without interruption to service.

However, as with residual waste levels, the impact of the pandemic continues to see higher levels of recycling presented across the partner authorities as many residents continue to work from home.

Furthermore, the pandemic appears to be impacting on the types of materials that are being recycled and whilst the amount of paper continues to fall, there

has been an increase in cardboard packaging. For example, since the lockdown in Gateshead, cardboard materials have represented nearly a quarter of all the recycling that has been presented where previously, cardboard rarely made up more than 10% of all the recycling collected. Tonnages of glass and metals collected have also increased as consumer shopping habits have evolved during the COVID-19 restrictions.

The MRF contracts continue to be monitored closely by the joint partnership team. As highlighted above, recycling tonnages of commingled materials remain at above average levels. Therefore, frequent contract meetings/ calls are being held with contractors to discuss any mitigation that may need to be taken to ensure that the storage of material at the MRFs does not become an issue and that the sites are still able to process the additional tonnage that is being received. The contractors' updated business continuity plans have also been discussed with the joint partnership team.

Appendix B also contains Table B, which highlights MRF recycling and recovery rates (for comingled materials only) since Quarter 1 2019/20. Unfortunately, the pandemic has also affected contamination rates, which have increased in Gateshead and South Tyneside throughout this period and has resulted in a lower recycling performance in Quarter 2 2020/21. As sampling exercises are undertaken jointly, the results are the same for both partner authorities. STWWMP continues to work with the contractor to identify how performance can be improved, including ensuring material sampling methodologies are robust.

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. Table C at Appendix B provides details of the tonnage of paper and cardboard (known as mixed fibre) that has been collected since the start of the trial.

Tonnages collected through the trial have generally remained static throughout the pandemic with a slight increase in South Tyneside. The contractor has confirmed that there is a greater percentage of cardboard being collected and paper percentages have reduced.

Feedback from residents will be important when evaluating future service delivery models and benefit all three partner authorities in the longer-term.

The current partner authority MRF contracts expire at the end of March 2021 following the conclusion of the contract extension periods that were activated in 2018. The contracts cannot be routinely extended beyond this date.

Therefore, under normal circumstances the STWWMP preparation for a full tendering exercise leading to the award of a replacement MRF contract(s) for the partner authorities from 1 April 2021 would have begun soon after March 2020. Unfortunately, this was when the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic struck and the national lockdown was put in place. The unexpected disruption resulting from this public health emergency (such as the transition to remote working, realigned procurement priorities to ensure PPE could be sourced, the requirement for key staff

to maintain the delivery of frontline services, and restrictions on travel and social distancing etc.) immediately impacted on STWWMP's ability to move forward with the planned procurement exercise.

Household kerbside recycling collections are statutory waste collection services and it is critical that the partner authorities ensure that kerbside recycling collections are maintained without interruption from April 2021. Consequently, alternative options in relation to the provision of such services were considered. Following analysis of the options available and provisional discussions with a range of local MRF service providers, extending the existing contracts under the provisions of Regulation 72 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR2015) was identified as the most feasible option available to STWWMP.

Initial discussions with the current Sunderland MRF contractor, J&B Recycling, indicated that they would be prepared to enter into a new short-term contract. Unfortunately, the Gateshead and South Tyneside contractor, Palm Recycling, was not willing to accommodate such a provision.

However, the contract with Palm also includes sub-contracting arrangements with Ward Recycling Ltd (who operate the MRF at Teesside) and with Riverdale PLC at Team Valley (who operate the delivery point that receives the recycling collected by the partner authorities for onward transportation to the MRF). Both companies indicated that they would be prepared to undertake a new short-term arrangement with Gateshead and South Tyneside.

Therefore, each partner authority is in the process of finalising approval to utilise an urgent direct award under Regulation 32 (2) (c) of the PCR2015 to the existing MRF contractor for Sunderland and the current Gateshead and South Tyneside sub-contractors.

These contracts will commence on 1 April 2021 for a period of 12 months ending 31 March 2022. Initial preparations for a full tendering exercise leading to the award of a replacement longer-term MRF contract(s) for the partner authorities from 1 April 2022 have already commenced and regular discussions are being held with the Officer Project Board.

## **HOUSEHOLD WASTE AND RECYCLING CENTRE CONTRACTS**

Table A at Appendix C highlights the latest HWRC recycling performance for 2020/21 (April-October). The new way of calculating HWRC recycling performance now excludes not only inert materials (such as rubble), but also electrical waste (WEEE), low grade wood, and dry mixed recyclables/textiles etc. This means that the performance of a site appears to be lower than that of previous years.

Discussions are ongoing with SUEZ regarding the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions (such as the national lockdown when all HWRC sites were closed to the public and the subsequent restrictions on materials that were accepted on site) on the contractual recycling targets.

Over the summer months, the partner authorities have continued to undertake a

gradual easing of the restrictions in the alternative service delivery models that were originally introduced because of the pandemic.

For example, in August, sites began to accept all of the materials that were previously able to be disposed at HWRCs, such as metals, rubble, textiles and large electrical appliances. To help maintain a safe social distance, access to the gantries overlooking the skips and the number of people allowed to leave their vehicle while on site is restricted to one person at any one time. In September, the HWRC vehicle permit scheme was re-introduced and this enabled residents to apply for a permit to dispose waste using a car with a trailer.

From early November, the restriction on large vans was also lifted after the numbers of people using sites continued to ease, which meant that all vehicles which had previously been allowed access to the sites prior to the pandemic are now able to do so again. As usual, vehicles such as large vans will require a permit before being allowed on site.

When the HWRCs reopened in May, to consider traffic management issues, Gateshead and South Tyneside introduced an odd and even number plate system to help manage traffic and reduce queuing. In Sunderland, an advance booking system was introduced. As allowing larger vans on site is likely to increase dwell times due to the quantities of waste that these vehicles typically contain, to help reduce queuing both systems will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

During the summer months, to help cope with the backlog of domestic waste and recycling after the original national lockdown, all STWWMP HWRCs reopened with extended opening hours of 8am to 8pm. From 1 October, all sites returned to the normal winter opening schedule, i.e. 9am to 5pm on weekdays and from 9am to 6pm on Saturdays and Sundays in Gateshead and Sunderland, and 8am to 6pm in South Tyneside.

However, despite the easing of some of the previous restrictions highlighted above, which are aimed at returning HWRC services to as near as normal as is possible within the current pandemic situation, STWWMP continues to monitor the ongoing COVID-19 situation very closely to ensure the strict 2 metre social distancing rules continue to be followed.

As highlighted above, the short-term extraordinary extension to the Sunderland City Council HWRC contract with SUEZ is set to expire at the end of September 2021. This coincides with the development and opening of a new HWRC located in Pallion. The joint partnership team is supporting the Council in the procurement of a replacement contract to manage the new site.

## **GREEN WASTE COMPOSTING CONTRACTS**

All three partner authorities have now completed the 2020 kerbside garden waste collection season, which were extended into early December in South Tyneside and Sunderland.

No significant issues or significant contamination issues were identified during the course of collections.

Throughout the winter period, residents can continue to dispose garden waste free-of-charge at the household waste and recycling centres.

### **WASTE ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT (WEEE) CONTRACT**

The extended WEEE Reduce and Reuse project delivery timetable has now been confirmed with the funders. The team returned on a full-time basis in September and began reviewing methods of engagement to identify new methods to collect material to redistribute to vulnerable residents. This now includes the provision of packs of working small WEEE for redistribution throughout the STWWMP area through the Changing Lives Charity and to young adults coming out of care and into their new homes.

Recently, STWWMP received notification that the organisation funding the kerbside WEEE project, Material Change, had changed its name to Material Focus. The contract has now been signed and a WEEE Behavioural Change Officer appointed to deliver project activities. This includes collections of small domestic WEEE and batteries from properties in targeted estates/ areas in each partner authority area.

The project will link to the Reduce and Reuse Project by providing working small WEEE appliances that have been collected and maximise reuse opportunities.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

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### **STWWMP JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021-2025**

The Joint Executive Committee received a report providing an update on the progress of the latest refresh of the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

The Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) was agreed by each partner authority Cabinet in 2007. It covers the management of municipal waste for the period 2007–2027 and includes:

- Waste collected from households
- Recycling collections
- Waste taken to recycling banks
- Collections of bulky waste
- Street sweepings
- Collection of household clinical waste
- Commercial/trade waste collected by the local authorities
- Fly-tipped waste

- Waste accepted at household waste recycling centres

It does not consider most industrial, commercial, construction, or demolition wastes, which are generally managed by the private sector.

Whilst there is no statutory requirement for STWWMP to produce a JMWMS, the Partnership considers the publication of a strategy as 'best practice' and has committed to undertaking regular reviews, the first of which was published in January 2013.

The JEC were advised that it is important that STWWMP can ensure that the partner authorities have a relevant, top-level, waste management strategy available to them. This will support flexibility in service delivery whilst continuing to meet key aims and aspirations.

However, the current JMWMS is now significantly out of date – largely because of the significant achievements successfully delivered by the partner authorities since its publication in 2013. This includes:

- The completion of the new residual waste processing and treatment infrastructure (including the construction of the STWWMP energy-from-waste facility) and service commencement of the 25-year residual waste treatment contract;
- The development of complementary household kerbside recycling services across all three partner authorities, including the introduction of additional recyclable materials;
- The introduction of a dedicated community education and engagement programme delivered by third sector environmental regeneration charity Groundwork North East & Cumbria from our new visitor and education centre at Campground;
- The establishment of a joint partnership team to provide the Waste Disposal Authority functions on behalf of the partner authorities through the day-to-day contract management functions for the range of waste treatment and recycling contracts with external service providers; and
- The development of close and effective working relationships at all levels with SUEZ, Groundwork North East & Cumbria, and other external recycling contractors.

The refreshed JMWMS structure previously agreed by the Joint Executive Committee was initially intended to provide strategic direction for the period 2018-2022 but, for the reasons highlighted above, it has not been possible to further progress the publication of the JMWMS.

However, as the uncertainty across the waste sector is likely to continue for the near future, to ensure that high-level guidance can be provided to support decisions on future service delivery issues and inform short-to-medium term budget planning cycles, it is important that further consideration is given to reconsider the work previously undertaken based on the latest information

available and realign the five-year strategy refresh to cover the period 2021-2025.

The refreshed JMWMS has been designed to:

- Be easy to understand, follow, and enable progress to be monitored.
- Consider the context of partner authority waste services within the current financial climate and other restrictions on service delivery.
- Be clear about the priorities and not commit partner authorities to deliver actions with unknown external outcomes and/or influences.
- Be proportionate and realistic about issues that STWWMP can directly influence at different levels, e.g. nationally; within their own operational activities; and across other services within their own councils.

It is proposed that a fully designed final STWWMP JMWMS 2021-2025 is presented for consideration by Joint Executive Committee on 12 March 2021 which, if agreed, will then be published online by each partner authority later in the same month.

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
  - ii) The JEC agreed to receive the final design of the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2021-2025 for approval prior to its publication in March 2021.

## 103

### **ENVIRONMENT BILL PARLIAMENTARY PROGRESS - UPDATE**

The Joint Executive Committee received a report which provided an update on the progress of the Environment Bill through Parliament following the delay caused by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

The Environment Bill aims to ensure that England maintains and improves its environmental protections when the UK leaves the EU. It supports the delivery of the government's 25-year Environment Plan through:

- Provisions regarding targets, plans, and policies for improving the natural environment;
- The establishment of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP);
- Provisions about waste and resource efficiency;
- Provisions concerning air quality;
- Provisions for the recall of products that fail to meet environmental

- standards;
- Provisions regarding water;
- Provisions concerning nature and biodiversity;
- Provisions for conservation covenants; and
- Provisions about the regulation of chemicals; and for connected purposes.

The Bill was first introduced to Parliament in October 2019 and passed its second reading unopposed by MPs on 28 October. It subsequently progressed to the committee stage for further scrutiny and the next stages of the Parliamentary process for becoming law.

The Environment Bill Committee was due to reconvene to 'scrutinise the bill line by line' and table amendments with the aim of reporting back to Parliament on 1 December, but this process was paused following the dissolution of Parliament on 5 November for the General Election on 12 December 2019.

The Bill was subsequently reintroduced at the end of January 2020 but, once again, its progress was paused on 19 March due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

Committee discussions recommenced on 3 November 2020. Following the Bill's completion of Committee Stage, it will be further scrutinised by the whole House of Commons at Report Stage and Third Reading, after which it will then move to the House of Lords for further debate and scrutiny.

The JEC were informed that in terms of the waste and resource efficiency provisions, the Bill provides a legal framework to deliver many of the proposals identified in the national Resources and Waste Strategy (*'Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England'*), should government choose to do so. The introduction of new powers and amendments to existing legislation will have a number of implications for the resources and waste sector, especially local authority waste services.

### *Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)*

The Resources and Waste Strategy (RaWS) includes proposals to reform the UK packaging producer responsibility system, which is also known as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). This proposal will require packaging producers to pay for the full cost of managing materials at their end-of-life, i.e. the cost of collecting and sorting waste for disposal. The 'full net cost recovery' requirement of the Bill is aimed at incentivising packaging producers to eco-design products with sustainability or recycling in mind.

Under the current system, local authorities mostly meet the cost of the collection and disposal of packaging. However, recycling disposal costs fluctuate as market values fall or when material is not wanted by reprocessors on economic or market grounds. Although the Bill covers a range of topics - including packaging targets and labelling - the key aspects of EPR governance will

consider how financial contributions to the system will be redistributed towards collection services, which will likely significantly change the way that local authority waste services are funded.

### Collection Consistency

Government consider that consistency in local authority recycling collections is also vital to ensuring that a new EPR system operates effectively and eliminates confusion by making the recycling process easier.

Therefore, the Bill confirms the RaWS proposal that stipulates that a consistent set of recyclable materials will be collected at the kerbside by all local authorities across England - namely glass, metal, plastic, and paper and card.

All of these materials are already collected at the kerbside as recycling by the STWWMP partner authorities.

However, feedback from across the waste sector has expressed some concern that this initial core set of materials could be further extended through the inclusion of additional, problem materials, such as plastic film. Traditionally considered as a difficult-to-recycle material, plastic film is not currently recycled by the STWWMP partner authorities but is expected to be featured in the second round of RaWS consultation exercises in 2021.

Furthermore, other collection consistency proposals will come at a cost to STWWMP. For example, the proposed mandatory introduction of separate food waste collections will require significant financial investment from the partner authorities and the potential reintroduction of free-of-charge garden waste kerbside collection services will remove a valuable income stream.

However, the RaWS states that government will fund the net costs of any new burdens on local authorities resulting from the implementation of its proposals.

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### Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)

The Bill also allows for the introduction of a deposit return scheme where consumers will pay an up-front deposit when they purchase a drinks bottle or can, which is then redeemed on return of the used item. Depending on the DRS model selected ('all-in' or 'on-the-go'), whilst this will likely impact on littering, it will also have a significant impact on the recyclable materials currently disposed in most local authority kerbside recycling services.

In responding to the earlier RaWS consultation exercises, STWWMP highlighted that the UK local authority recycling collection system does well in terms of harvesting plastic bottles at the kerbside and that an 'all-in' model will redirect valuable materials that are already collected by the partner authorities and will impact on our recycling rates. Furthermore, the remaining 'blue bin' materials may be considered as low value recycling that are less

attractive to the market, which may impact on future procurement exercises and associated recycling reprocessing gate fees.

However, the continued media coverage regarding issues such as plastics in the sea or natural environment is likely to result in the implementation of DRS in England, although the unknown financial implications arising from the ongoing coronavirus pandemic may yet impact on the timeline associated with its introduction.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has already consulted on the three key areas of the RaWS proposals highlighted above and this has informed the publication of the Environment Bill. The pandemic has delayed a second round of RaWS consultations, which are now expected in spring 2021. It is anticipated that this will provide more detail on the specifics of these reforms and what the measures outlined in the Bill could mean for local authorities.

Therefore, at the current time, a number of key questions regarding the implementation of RaWS proposals still remain unanswered. However, as the consultation programme progresses, STWWMP will continue to work closely with the partner authorities and directly engage with government to ensure that STWWMP is best prepared for the impact of significant legislative and funding changes as recycling services and producer responsibility requirements are overhauled in the years to come.

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
  - ii) The JEC agreed to receive further updates on the progress of the Environment Bill through Parliament, as appropriate.

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

The next meeting will be held on Friday 12 March 2021 at 1.30 pm venue tba