

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

Friday, 8 September 2023

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

Gateshead Council Councillor Angela Douglas

South Tyneside Council Councillor E Gibson

Sunderland Council Councillor A Smith

IN ATTENDANCE:

Gateshead Council C Huntington; C Swinney; G Anderson

South Tyneside Council L Turvey

Sunderland Council M Morley; C Wenlock

STW WMP A Harrison; F Prentis; G Smith

Groundwork NE &
Cumbria L Farrell-Pronesti

APOLOGIES: Councillor J Foreman

Councillor C Rowntree

30 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held 9 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

32 THE WASTE AND RECYCLING VISITOR EDUCATION CENTRE

The Waste and Recycling Visitor Education Centre is approaching 10 years of operation and will be scheduling anniversary events for next year.

From May 2014 to July 2023, there were: 42,815 individuals engaged in the centre across the partnership area; 852 school sessions; 3,627 visitors to the

Centre; and 39,188 individuals engaged via outreach. While the numbers are positive, there is an acknowledgement that due to the centre's location, school trips are finding it difficult to get transportation to the centre.

Sessions are held at the centre and out in the community, including presentations, make do and mend events, litter picking, recycling Olympics, ready steady cook and more. These can be aimed at adults or children and are often tied into national campaigns or objectives. The feedback from sessions with the centre has been positive and the centre has begun posting 'feedback Friday's' to showcase positive experiences with the centre.

The centre promotes itself through a quarterly newsletter, networking events, a Facebook page, and reaching out to schools.

Future plans for the centre include continuing relationship building in the community (particularly in South Tyneside and Sunderland), looking for external funding options, increasing online presence, coordinating the 10-year anniversary programme of events, and ensuring the Centre's legacy through its work and teaching.

The JEC commended the work of the centre and discussed vape recycling. It was agreed that single-use vapes were a burden on waste and recycling facilities due to being a potential fire hazard. Consumers can return these items to where they bought them, but a lot of retailers are not fulfilling their obligations to offer a take-back service. Furthermore, due to issues with the categorisation of vapes in legislation, there are few vape recycling points across Gateshead, South Tyneside, and Sunderland. Even if disposed of properly, they are a difficult waste item to manage. Given their complexity, they need to be broken down by hand which is time consuming and expensive.

Action: Councillor Linda Green to send a letter in the role of the Chair to local MPs regarding concerns about single-use vapes.

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CONTRACTS UPDATE

The JEC received a report providing an update on the latest position regarding the Residual Waste Treatment Contract, all other ancillary waste joint contracts and activities managed by the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership (STWWMP).

The JEC received an update on the following:

- targeted recruitment and training
- community education and engagement
- community liaison groups.

The JEC received a service update on the residual waste treatment contract. Performance information relating to the current year was included in Appendix A. Operational service started well in 2023/24. Contract waste tonnages are as

expected and in line with tonnages seen in previous years. Lines 4 and 5 and the Turbine have all been available for over 99% of the period April to July. Both recycling and recovery performance are currently above target. Unprocessed landfill diversion rate for the current contract year is at 100%.

All three of the WTS have been fully operational, all sites accepting STWWMP contract waste as expected. Recycling activities are ongoing at each site, which includes the segregation of materials, such as street sweepings, wood, and scrap metals.

Routine maintenance of buildings, plant, and control systems continue to be delivered as planned and no significant issues have been identified. Regular training with staff continues to be carried out, including Loading Shovel, First Aid, Legionella and Leadership Development. There have been no complaints received regarding any of the WTS for the current period.

The third JICR was previously submitted by Willis Towers Watson and has been reviewed by STWWMP with support from colleagues at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). A response from STWER is still awaited. The fourth JICR was submitted at the end of 2021. This has highlighted a nil sharing due to the change in the insurance market. Both reports are now held up due to a lack of response on the third submission.

The JEC were advised on the materials recovery facility contracts. The blue bin recycling tonnages for 2022/23 and 2023/24 were provided in Appendix B to the report. Comingled tonnages continue to slowly come down from the peak of the pandemic, however, currently remain slightly higher than pre-pandemic levels. Separately collected paper tonnages have also declined in all three partner authorities when comparing to the same period last year. This follows a year-on-year trend with separately collected paper tonnages now being minimal. Appendix B also highlighted MRF recycling and recovery rates (for comingled materials only) since quarter 1 2020/21 up to the latest quarter.

Contamination levels in Gateshead have increased recently but have generally remained at consistent levels in Sunderland and South Tyneside in the last 12 months. STWWMP are liaising with the partner authorities and contractors to ensure any variances are investigated and discuss how contamination can be reduced within the dry mixed recycling material.

In an effort to educate residents and reduce contamination, a joint RECYCLERIGHT communications campaign ran over the summer, across the partner authorities Facebook and Twitter accounts. Daily posts over a three-week period targeted some of the more commonly contaminated items, including food waste, nappies, textiles and batteries and vapes.

STWWMP also carry out monthly audits on the input sampling at the MRFs to ensure methodologies are robust and recycling is being maximised. The Partnership are satisfied this process is being carried out in line with the MRF code of practice on sampling.

The nature of the current risk share contract means the costs to Partner

Authorities will vary monthly. The joint partnership team will continue to review and verify the monthly contract reports including the payment mechanisms, amounts payable to the contractor and service issues. Once approved, invoices are processed and paid by the relevant Authority (based on agreements between the partner authorities). The relevant partner authorities are then recharged for the amounts payable each month under that contract.

The JEC were informed that the latest Green Waste contracts which commenced on 1 April 2022 with Remondis and SUEZ are working well. The report noted that on 4 July, a 360 degree machine caught fire within the main Transfer Station Building at Remondis' site in Birtley where Gateshead and Sunderland directly deliver their green waste. The sprinkler system activated and the Fire Brigade attended. As such, the fire was quickly extinguished, with minimal damage to the building. The site was closed for 90 minutes but vehicles were able to access and tip off as soon as it reopened. The fire was caused by faulty machinery on the 360 degree plant.

The JEC was updated on social value. The Public Services (Social Value) Act came into force on 31 January 2013. It requires those who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

Social value is important to the partner authorities and is the way we identify relevant and measurable social, economic and environmental benefits for the people and communities across Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

Therefore, Contractors on the MRF, HWRC and Green Waste Composting contracts (excluding the HWRC contract in Gateshead and South Tyneside) were asked to work with the councils to achieve benefits that improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing within the boroughs, during the delivery and term of the contracts.

The Contractors have been carrying out various social value activities since these contracts commenced including:

- Employing local people on the contracts
- Volunteering on local Community Projects
- Dedicating support to get young people into work (e.g. CV advice, mock interviews, careers guidance)
- Dedicating staff hours on local school and college visits e.g. delivering careers talks, curriculum support, literacy support, safety talks.

An update will be provided in the next Contracts Update report, which will be presented to JEC in December.

The JEC was given an update on the waste electrical and electronic equipment contract.

The WEEE Compliance Scheme, Valpak continue to support in ongoing actions for the collection and processing of all categories of WEEE. NEPO have now extended this contract for 12 months and is therefore now due to expire in December 2024.

STWWMP have had discussions with NEPO and Valpak about placing more vapes containers within the Community but due to issues with the legislation they can only provide containers at Designated Collection Facilities (DCF's) which are our Household Waste Recycling Centres and Waste Transfer Stations. Industry is making representations to Government to amend the regulations to allow for a separate category for this problematic material.

The results of the latest STWWMP Audit was also presented to the JEC. As part of the 2022/23 Audit Plan, approved by Gateshead Council's Audit and Standards Committee (Gateshead as Lead Authority), the audit of STWWMP was required. The audit found control systems are operating well and no findings were raised. Given the financial spend on the contracts managed by STWWMP, it is anticipated this audit will be carried out on an annual basis.

A previous audit highlighted that the annual recycling performance should be reported to the JEC in September of each year, once Waste Data Flow returns have been validated. All local authority overall recycling performance is generated by the national Waste Data Flow database, using the definition of the former national performance indicator NI192 to calculate the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting.

The 2022/23 Annual Recycling Performance for each partner authority is as follows:

- Gateshead – 31.7%
- South Tyneside – 31.0%
- Sunderland – 30.2%

RESOLVED:

- i. **The JEC noted the report.**

34 WASTE SECTOR NEWS UPDATE

The JEC received a presentation of the waste sector news update.

An update was received on energy from waste facilities to be included in the UK Emissions Trading Scheme. The impact on local authorities is yet to be determined, however there is likely to be an increase to the current recycled waste treatment centre. Members of the JEC will be updated when more information is available.

The presentation highlighted the dangers of disposable vapes; the figures are now in the region of 5 million disposable vapes being 'thrown away' every week.

The Local Government Association is calling for a ban on single use vapes which has been supported by other waste sector groups. Key issues with vape disposal are the environmental impact, fire hazards and the cost of disposal.

A video was shown to the committee made by J&B Recycling about the impact of vapes on recycling centres.

Current commodity prices were also presented to the JEC.

35 STW WMP JEC NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held 8 December 2023 at 13:30 (venue TBC).

36 VOTE OF THANKS

The Chair wished to place upon record the thanks of the Joint Executive Committee to Helen Wade, clerk to the Committee for her work and wished her well for her forthcoming retirement.