

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

Friday, 8 December 2017

This meeting was inquorate and those members in attendance discussed the following issues

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

South Tyneside Council Councillor Allan West

IN ATTENDANCE:

Gateshead Council Anthony Alder, Fiona Swinburne, Chris Wilson, Gary Smith, Brendan McNeany and Rosalyn Patterson

South Tyneside Council Andrew Whittaker

Sunderland Council Mark Speed

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Douglas, Councillor Miller, Councillor Mordey, Councillor Foreman and substitute members Councillor Speding and Councillor Donovan.

2 MINUTES

Due to not being quorate it was recommended that the next meeting of the Joint Executive Committee confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2017 are a correct record.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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 South Tyneside has announced a new 30 month HWRC management contract, with Remondis JBT, which commenced on 1 December 2017.

The accounts for 2016/17 have been reconciled and the latest 2017/18 performance was highlighted.

During recent months there has been a number of issues, this included lost hours due to a bottom ash drop-off chute blockage. Line 4 was shut down for planned maintenance in September.

It was reported that the refinancing exercise commenced, with a lead officer from Suez being appointed to manage the exercise, financial and legal advisers have also been confirmed.

An insurance review is ongoing and a response regarding a revised model from the insurers is expected to be received soon.

A recruitment exercise is also underway to replace a technical engineer and site manager at Jack Crawford House.

It was noted that between April and October 2017 1,600 children and young people took part in waste awareness activities, including Joseph Swan Academy, Albany Primary School, Keelman's Way School and the Jewish Boys School in Gateshead.

It was reported that the Partnership has been shortlisted as a finalist in the Public / Private Partnership category at the Local Government Chronicle Awards 2018 following the successful WEEE Reduce, Reuse and Recycle project. Also, additional funding of £75,000 has been received to deliver a further dedicated WEEE project building on the work already carried out.

MRF performance was highlighted and it was noted that there has been an increase in the amount of collection. All MRF contracts are due to end 31 March 2018 and preferred options have been identified.

It was noted that Cllr Mordey received media coverage which highlighted the issue of contamination that all three Councils are dealing with.

It was also confirmed that, in relation to the refinancing exercise, it is an ideal time to secure a better deal on the debt. Suez has implemented phase one to go to the market and a financial consultant and legal consultants have been appointed who have an extensive knowledge of the project and the market. Committee was advised that there will be some gain as a result of the refinancing exercise, although the size of that gain is not yet known.

RESOLVED - That the Joint Executive Committee noted the progress of the project.

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

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

It was noted that the Department for International Trade has urged the European Commission's Market Access Advisory Committee to take action over China's recycling import restrictions suggesting it is contravening international rules. Plastics Recyclers Europe said that whilst the National Sword operation is 'creating turmoil' it is as a result of years of badly collected and sorted waste within the EU, with an excess of low-quality plastics sent there for re-processing because such materials do not meet the EU's own quality requirements and standards. It was reported that China has changed its original proposals by increasing the contamination rate from 0.3% to 0.5%. However, this is still less than the current 1.5% limit, this will be adopted on 31 December 2017 but not come into force until 1 March 2018.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove recently stated that he was unaware of the impact of China's ban on the UK but he was confident that UK waste industry could cope. However, a recycling trade body has called for urgent investment in the UK to tackle the expected stockpiling of recyclate after the ban. Resources Minister, Therese Coffey, stated that the ban give an opportunity to reprocess more here, however she has faced criticism by other MPs and the Environmental Audit Committee for the Government's lack of immediacy in dealing with the ramifications of the ban.

A recent episode of BBC's Blue Planet II documentary series highlighted life in the open ocean, and highlighted the issue of plastic waste within the ocean. This included the journey of a female pilot whale and her new born calf which sadly died after being poisoned by its mother's microbead-polluted milk. It was reported that researchers have even found sea creatures living in the deepest seas with plastic in their stomachs. However, the British Plastics Federation claim that there is no supporting evidence that the whale death was linked to waste plastics and that no autopsy had been carried out. The Committee noted the high-profile that the issue of plastic pollution has featured across the media recently, and that this will hopefully increase the responsible recycling of plastic materials.

It was reported that the autumn budget included several environmental announcements, including confirmation that the government will launch a call for evidence in 2018 on a tax system for single-use plastics, aimed at reducing the amount of plastics waste. It is thought that this will include packaging and bubble wrap, takeaway boxes and throwaway coffee cups. This builds on the introduction of the plastic bag levy which has led to an 80% reduction in plastic bags since 2015. The budget also announced that £30m extra funding over the next four years will be provided to help the Environment Agency tackle waste crime and that illegal waste operators will be liable for Landfill Tax. It was reported that a cross-industry group of packaging manufacturers, retailers, material reprocessors, led by recycling charity Recoup, has agreed a roadmap to enable the recycling of all black plastic packaging by the end of 2018. It was noted that many retailers use black plastic trays because they are the most efficient for ready meals but it a non-target material for this partnership because the carbon black pigment is made up of mixing several colours together and it absorbs infra-red light and thus cannot be optically sorted by the

infra-red detection machinery at the MRF. The roadmap aims to introduce the use of a detectable pigment, new technology solutions to sort existing black plastic materials and implement opportunities to change from black packaging to an alternative colour.

Committee was advised that, according to the Environmental Policy Forum, the progress of the Brexit talks mean that the time to effectively transpose EU environmental legislation into UK law is running out. However, Michael Gove has outlined plans to set up an independent commission-like-body to oversee environmental standards in England and hold the government to account after Brexit. There is no indication as to how this new body will work with existing regulatory authorities such as the Environment Agency.

At a recent Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee conference, Therese Coffey stated that her department was 'on a mission' to stimulate some secondary material markets to boost recycling and that she was hopeful for extra cash to extend food waste collections, although no agreement reached has been reached yet in terms of funding. She also highlighted Sunderland City Council's efforts to increase from low recycling rates. In addition a number of areas were touched on, including; collection consistency, waste crime and the efforts to have incinerator bottom ash included in national recycling figures.

It was also reported that local authorities could save up to £35m per year if a deposit return scheme for drinks containers is introduced in England, according to the campaign group Keep Britain Tidy. However, many councils have expressed fears that such schemes will cut their recycling revenue as residents would favour a deposit return scheme ahead of using household kerbside recycling. The report found that Councils could make savings elsewhere, such as lower costs in dealing with litter and lower landfill charges, although the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee suggested that the savings outlined in the report are unlikely to be achieved and called for investment to be made in kerbside collections as an alternative.

It was noted that the latest figures published by the Health and Safety Executive showed that the number of fatal injuries to workers in the waste sector in 2016/17 was 14, which is almost double the average of the last five years. However this is largely explained by a single incident at a scrap metal facility which resulted in five deaths after a partition wall collapsed. It was reported that there has been a total of 39 deaths since 2012/13. The statistics show that the most common reason for waste sector fatalities are due to; being struck by a moving vehicle, contact with machinery and being struck by an object. In addition there are over 5,000 non-fatal injuries that occur each year. The Environmental Services Association said that these latest statistics do not reflect the progress made in recent years.

In local news the Sunderland Echo featured Cllr Mordey's visit to the J&B MRF in Hartlepool to highlight the issue of contamination. During the visit the material sent for reprocessing included what appeared to be a dead ferret which gave a focus for subsequent media coverage.

RESOLVED - That the Joint Executive Committee noted the information

presented.

6 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Friday 16 March 2018 at 1.30pm.