

## SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP

### JOINT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**FRIDAY 2 OCTOBER 2015**

**In Attendance:** Councillor Linda Green in the Chair (Gateshead Council)

**Members:**

Gateshead Council - Councillor G Haley  
 Sunderland Council - Councillor M Mordey  
 South Tyneside Council - Councillor A West and Cllr A Kerr

**Officers:**

Gateshead Council - Tony Alder, Fiona Swinburne, Martin Harrison, Gary Smith, Chris Wilson and Rosalyn White  
 South Tyneside Council - Andrew Whittaker  
 Sunderland City Council - Les Clark and Mark Speed

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Miller and Councillor Foreman.

#### **2. THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY REGULATION PROCESS**

Representatives from the Environment Agency attended the meeting to outline some of the work that is carried out with local authorities. Examples of how work with local authorities has been effective when regulating innovative waste treatment processes was provided to Committee.

Work on the Greenlight Anaerobic Digestion Plant started in 2010, this operates largely on food industry wastes, can produce 5MW of electricity and has the ability to clean gas and inject it direct to the gas grid as biomethane. This technology was new in the country when the project began in 2010, with construction starting in 2013 and the permit applied for in 2014. Bioconstruct run the site which is built on mixed use industrial area which is close to residential areas also. It was noted that this is different from what the constructors were used to as usually such plants are based in very rural locations. Issues with regards to odours started in December 2014 and by Easter, when the site was running at full capacity, complaints were received by the Environment Agency and the local authority about the smell. Reports of sewage and rotten meat smells were received and work was

carried out with Environmental Health Officers at the local authority to investigate the complaints. Joint site visits were held and it was found that odours were emanating from the site during deliveries, a joint approach was also taken to provide feedback and information to the public. It was found that there were issues with the treatment system of storage tanks with foul displacement air not being treated adequately in the biofilter.

Work was carried out to replace the media used in the system to wood and pumice mix and initial signs indicate that this is working well. It was noted that this was a good example of when the Environment Agency and a local authority have worked well together to prevent problems escalating.

Another example was provided which involved the North Tees MRF located at Seal Sands Industrial Estate, the site is run by Impetus and produces a fuel from refuse for the neighbouring Air Products Gasification plant. This is the first of its type in the work and it was acknowledged that there were some teething problems. It was noted that the site has just started to take waste, the plant takes 2,000 tonnes of refuse per day with a potential of taking 4,000 tonnes per day possible.

The location of the site is near Seal Sands chemical plant near the town of Port Clarence, therefore there are risks involved. It was recognised that the volume of refuse can create odour and fly problems, however no complaints have been received regarding those issues, although it was acknowledged that may be due to the location. However, one issue was raised by local residents from Port Clarence about refuse vehicle traffic through the town causing odour and general disturbance. Stockton Council received the complaints and contacted the Environment Agency who helped the local authority to work with the operator to agree alternative routes to the plant which avoided residential properties. The operator, Impetus, also implemented enforcement for drivers not using the correct route.

It was acknowledged that more work is needed with local authorities at the planning stage and the Environment Agency is working on ensuring more robust replies are given to consultations.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the information provided.

#### **4. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

#### **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were submitted.

#### **6. CONTRACTS UPDATE**

The Committee received a report on the current position regarding the Residual Waste Treatment Contract (RWTC) and other contracts and activities managed by the Partnership.

It was reported that from 1 April 2015 until the end of June 2015 48,373 tonnes of contract waste was managed under the RWTC, with 48,222 tonnes of this waste being delivered to

the EfW facility. It was noted that there has been a 96.4% landfill diversion rate and the turbine has achieved 100% availability during the period.

Committee was advised that annual minor shutdown will take place in October, but will be staggered closure and no third party waste will be accepted during this period. During major shutdown Suez will be looking to divert waste to another EfW facility instead of landfill.

In terms of recruitment it was confirmed that 8 staff from within the Partnership area are currently employed at the EfW facility which equates to 19% of the total staff.

In relation to the Visitor and Education Centre various events have been held and Councillors were advised of these in the briefing that was previously circulated. A promotional event was also held for Councillors at the Visitor and Education Centre on 11 September. Community Liaison Groups are continuing to be held for Campground and Jack Crawford House which continue to be very positive.

It was reported that Gateshead and South Tyneside Councils are 18 months into the MRF contract with Palm Recycling. Compared to the same quarter last year there has been a 1.3% increase in the tonnage delivered by Gateshead, 2.1% increase from South Tyneside and 0.2% from Sunderland.

In terms of the Household Waste Recycling Contracts (HWRC), recycling performance figures for April until June 2015 for Gateshead and Sunderland contracts were; Campground - 69%, Cowen Road – 60% and Beach Street – 69%. It was noted that the previous average was 30%, therefore there has been significant improvement. It was reported that work is ongoing with Suez to improve communications around HWRC usage. A press release is being produced to explain how HWRCs operate and to give practical advice.

It was noted that the Committee had previously requested to be informed of regular events and members were advised that briefings were now underway, with the first sent out last week.

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

## **7. UNITE AND GMB ISSUES WITH SITA**

It was reported that meetings have been held with the Leaders of Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead Councils and representatives from Unite Trade Union. The meeting focused on activity of the SITA Energy from Waste site in Teesside, which will be dealing with waste from Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority and is due for commissioning in April 2016.

A number of allegations have been made around practices at the site around; importing foreign workers and paying them below the national minimum wage, poor welfare facilities and poor attention to health and safety.

Unite and GMB have requested support from all local authorities working with SITA to request a forensic salary auditor. A meeting was held on 9 September with Gateshead Council officers where the Unions made a number of misinformed statements regarding the partnerships contract with SITA and the procurement process. Statements were made

that the partnership has no control over recruitment, however the last 50% of jobs secured were for residents within the partnership area.

SITA asked its sub-contractors to look at their sub-contracts, as a result three complied and two were removed from site.

It was proposed therefore that the Joint Executive Committee write to SITA highlighting the allegations that have been made, requesting a formal meeting with the Director of the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership and Senior Officers from the Partner Authorities, to understand if the allegations are correct and what SITA's response is to this.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Joint Executive Committee endorsed the proposal.
  - (ii) That the Joint Executive Committee agreed to receive an update report at its next meeting.

## **8. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

A presentation was given to the Committee on the ongoing communications work and national stories that have been in the media.

It was reported that Middlesbrough kerbside recycling service has been taken in-house following a dispute between Biffa and its material reprocessor which made the contract unsustainable.

It was noted that 14 arrests were made in connection to landfill tax fraud following an investigation by HMRC, the Environment Agency and Police.

The British Transplant Games were hosted by NewcastleGateshead in the summer and a number of recycling events were held to coincide with the games.

It was reported that Nordic Recycling, bought by SITA in 2014, entered insolvency in July 2015. As a result, Thurrock Council is considering legal action against Suez because of an increase in costs.

The Environment Agency is in the process of contacting unregistered MRF sites following the mandatory MRF Code of Practice reporting, however Palm Paper Ltd and J&B Recycling are already registered.

It was noted that Rory Stewart has been appointed as Resources Minister. Committee was reminded that the 5p plastic bag levy comes into force on 5 October.

In relation to the Community Liaison Groups it was confirmed that the last meeting of the Campground Group was held on 14 July, with the new representative from GVOC, Ian Blake, in the Chair. The Group toured the HWRC and received a WTS update. The next meeting will be held on 24 November. The last meeting of Jack Crawford House Community Liaison Group was held on 23 July, representatives from the Environment Agency attended and the Group received a site redevelopment update. The next meeting will be held on 3 December.

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

**9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Friday 11 December 2015 at 1.30pm.