

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

Friday, 30 April 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Linda Green (Gateshead Council) (Chair)
Gateshead Council Councillor Angela Douglas,
South Tyneside Council Councillor Mark Walsh and Councillor Jim Foreman
Sunderland Council Councillor Paul Stewart

IN ATTENDANCE:

Gateshead Council Marc Morley, Helen Conway
South Tyneside Council Stuart Wright, John Tindale
Sunderland Council Graham Scanlon, Anthony Alder
South Tyne & Wear
Waste Management
Partnership Chris Wilson, Fiona Swinburne

105 MINUTES

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

106 MATTERS ARISING

The Committee wished to place upon record their thanks and appreciation to Andy Whittaker who had recently retired from South Tyneside Council.

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

107 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

108 CONTRACTS UPDATE

The Joint Executive Committee received a report which advised 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. All partner authorities have been able to maintain normal residual waste collections from households across STWWMP without interruption.

The JEC were advised that in recent months, the EfW has become a key facility for the management of waste arising from the new COVID-19 lateral flow test centres located in Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland. Guidance issued by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) confirmed that the waste should be classified as chemical, not clinical waste. This enabled the separately collected material to be directly delivered to the EfW by the partner authorities on a weekly basis following temporary permission from the Environment Agency (EA) for the facility to accept such waste, which must be processed within 24 hours of delivery.

The reopening of schools following the publication of the lockdown roadmap and easing of COVID-19 restrictions resulted in a change to the disposal guidance for lateral flow tests waste arising from schools and businesses, which can now be disposed within the general residual waste stream. However, such material produced by universities and official COVID-19 lateral flow test centres must still be managed as per the original DHSC guidance.

The JEC received an update on the EfW Service Update including appendices attached to the main report highlighting contract performance for the period April 2020 to February 2021 and average plant availability.

The JEC were advised that the third JICR was previously submitted by Willis Towers Watson and has been reviewed by STWWMP and support from colleagues at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) a response from STWER is still awaited.

STWWMP continue to review the previous request received from STWER for

changes to the insurance cover.

STWER had already indicated that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant increases to insurance costs. Any potential issue around additional costs will be raised at the Liaison Committee meeting as further information from STWER is required.

The JEC were advised that all three of the WTS were fully operational between November and January. Recycling outputs from the sites include segregated street sweepings, wood and scrap metals. Routine maintenance of buildings, plant and control systems was undertaken as scheduled during this period.

However, unfortunately, in recent months incidents of fires have become an increasing risk within all aspects of waste-related operations. The most serious incident occurred at the Campground WTS when an alarm was raised by the fire detection and monitoring company of 0225 on Sunday 28 February. The exact cause of the fire may never be known, but initial feedback suggests that the fire broke out in some general waste that had been delivered to the WTS from the HWRC sites.

At the time of writing this report, JEC were advised that the WTS remains closed and the contingency arrangements are operating effectively. Tipping away costs will continue to be met by SUEZ for all vehicles diverted to the contingency sites during the closure of the Campground WTS.

On 9 March, the Middlefields WTS also experienced a fire within the waste in the tipping hall. Fortunately, the fire started in late afternoon when the site was still operational and could be dealt with by the staff on site. In moving waste during routine operations, friction from the loading shovel vehicle bucket damaged a battery that had been disposed within the residual waste stream, which exploded and caused the surrounding waste materials to ignite.

Once extinguished, the small amount of waste was placed in the quarantine area over night in a bucket of water. An inspection of the material the following day revealed a mobile phone battery and charger.

Targeted Recruitment and Training (TR&T)

The JEC were advised that following an interview process for the vacant role of EfW Operations Manager an internal appointment has now been made.

Community Education and Engagement

The JEC were advised that whilst both onsite and outreach activities remain suspended because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the visitor and education centre co-ordinator has designed a page to promote the community education and engagement programme on the North East Services for Schools website, which details a range of services that schools across the partner authority can access.

The first of a series of newsletters was issued in January 2021 with the second being circulated in April 2021.

Work is ongoing to develop a programme of online activities that can take place whilst the current pandemic restrictions remain in place, which included a programme of Easter related activities in which several schools participated. To further support the preparation of future engagement activities, a survey has been issued to seek views from local schools and community groups about the most effective methods of engagement as the route map to lift COVID-19 restrictions progresses. This will ascertain their future plans for recycling, waste management and sustainability education.

The JEC were also advised that the ongoing pandemic restrictions continue to impact both the Campground and Jack Crawford House Community Liaison Groups and no meetings have been able to be held.

Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) Contracts

The JEC were advised that the risk of fires within household recycling loads is also a significant issue and a small fire occurred in a Gateshead Council recycling collection vehicle (RCV) on 17 March. Fortunately the crew were able to act swiftly and an onboard fire extinguisher prevented a more serious situation from occurring, but the actual cause of the fire could not be subsequently identified.

Table A at Appendix B advised the JEC of the latest 2020/21 performance for blue bin recycling (April 2020 – February 2021). 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. This has been compounded by the usual seasonal rise in recyclable materials that are presented over the festive period.

The MRF contracts continue to be monitored closely by the joint partnership team, 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 MRF's does not become an issue and that the sites are still able to process the additional tonnage that is being received.

The JEC were advised that 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. 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.

Having entered into short term MRF household recycling contract with Ward Recycling Ltd and Riverdale PLC, the STWWMP received reports on 19 February 2021 that Ward Recycling were experiencing financial difficulties and would cease

trading imminently. Following urgent consultation, a 13 month contract until 31 March 2022 with Re-Gen Waste has now been arranged and these interim arrangements do not impact on the ongoing preparations of a full STWWMP tendering exercise leading to the award of longer-term MRF contract(s) from 1 April 2022.

Household Waste and Recycling Centres Contracts

The JEC were advised that the Campground WTS also impacted on the availability of the HWRC, which is located at the same site. This meant that, unfortunately, access to the HWRC was unavailable and the site was close to service users on both 28 February and 1 March.

Access to the HWRC reopened on 2 March and to prevent future occurrences of fires arising from the disposal of electrical and electronic materials at the HWRC, a number of site improvements were agreed and implemented with immediate effect. All HWRCs reintroduced summer opening hours on 1 April 2021. However, to manage the significant queues that were being experienced at both Campground and Cowen Road HWRCs, which were disrupting the public highway, Gateshead Council extended the opening hours at both sites ahead of schedule and from 24 March residents were able to access the HWRCs from 0800 to 2000.

To address increased queuing at the Recycling Village, South Tyneside, additional traffic management staff have been employed on a temporary basis and opening hours have also been increased (from 0800 each morning).

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 the new HWRC located at Pallion. The joint partnership team is continuing to support Sunderland City Council in the procurement of a new contract for the management of the new site.

Green Waste Composting Contracts

The 2021 garden waste kerbside collection services commenced for households that have subscribed to the service in late March/early April

The 2021 collection season is the final year of the previously agreed extension period to the current green waste composting contracts. Therefore, new contracts are required from 1 April 2022 and the joint partnership team will lead in the delivery of a full procurement exercise later this year.

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Contract

The JEC were advised that the WEEE Reduce and Reuse project delivery team were furloughed on a part time basis in February and returned full-time on 12 April. The team is reviewing methods of engagement to identify new methods to collect materials for redistribution to vulnerable residents. This now includes the provision of packs of working small WEEE for redistribution throughout STWWMP area by the Changing Lives Charity and to young adults coming out of care and into their new

homes.

The kerbside WEEE project Behavioural Change Officer began the delivery of project activities in early November 2020. Using the Material Focus artwork, project stickers and bags have been designed to support the commencement of kerbside collections of SDA and batteries from households in key areas across Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

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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STW WMP JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021-2025

The JEC's approval was sought for the publication of the refreshed South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

The previous review of the JMWMS was undertaken during 2012 for publication at the beginning of 2013. Therefore, the current JMWMS can now be considered as significantly out of date, largely due to the significant successes that have been achieved in recent years.

The JMWMS 2021-2025 was attached at Appendix A for information and 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.

The structure for the refreshed JMWMS was agreed by the JEC on 16 March 2018. This also confirmed a new approach to the strategy's presentation which retained, yet simplified, the previous strategic objectives, and replaced commitments to specific actions and activities with over-arching service delivery themes. This approach is aimed at ensuring that the partner authorities can still achieve STWWMP's aims and aspirations with flexibility in how services are delivered and within the resources that are available.

The JEC were advised that the previously agreed refreshed JMWMS structure was initially intended to provide strategic direction for the period 2018-2022, but it is now

proposed that the refreshed JMWMS will cover the period 2021-2025.

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
 - ii) The JEC agreed the final design and content of the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2021-2025 as attached at Appendix A; and
 - iii) The JEC agreed that each partner authority publish online the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2021-2025.

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WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR ENGLAND

The JEC received an update following the publication of the Waste Management Plan for England.

Published on 27 January 2021 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Plan's core aim – as specified in the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 – is to bring together all current waste management policies within a single, national document. The legislation dictates that the Plan must be updated every 6 years.

The Plan draws on a number of plans and strategies that are issued across a range of government departments, such as the:

- Clean Growth Strategy;
- Industrial Strategy;
- Litter Strategy;
- UK Plan for Shipments of Wastes;
- National Policy Statements for Hazardous Waste and for Renewable Energy Infrastructure; and
- Resources and Waste Strategy (RaWS)

The JEC were informed that the plan does not contain any new requirements or policy changes. However, it does update government thinking on key issues, including Energy from Waste, Recycling, and Extended Producer Responsibility. The Plan also confirms that Defra is currently considering five other waste streams where EPR could be introduced to improve waste management i.e. Textiles, Bulky Waste, Certain materials in the construction and demolition sector; vehicle tyres, and fishing gear.

The JEC were also advised that the Environment Bill will now not receive Royal Assent until autumn 2021, indicating that the delay is due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The JEC were advised that there are no immediate implications for local authorities arising from its publication.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

RESOURCES AND WASTE STRATEGY CONSULTATIONS

The JEC were updated following the publication of the latest consultation exercises arising from the national resources and waste strategy proposals.

The JEC previously received reports regarding the first consultation exercises:

- On 14 June 2019, highlighting the STWWMP responses to the three consultation exercises; and
- On 13 September 2019, providing an overview of the consultation outcomes that were published by Defra.

On 25 March 2021, government published the next series of consultation exercises, which covered two topics:

- Introducing a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for Packaging

However, the anticipated third consultation exercise updating the previous proposals regarding the introduction of consistent recycling collections for all households and businesses remains delayed, with government recently announcing that its publication has been held back until after the local elections that are taking place in May. No additional details for the further delay have been provided.

This is a particularly significant consultation exercise for local authorities as further clarification is expected around key proposals, such as the provision of free-of-charge garden waste collections to all households with gardens and mandatory separate collection of food waste.

DRS Consultation

The JEC were advised that whilst government remains committed to delivering on its commitments to introduce a DRS, it also recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the economy and society. This has resulted in many people reassessing their values, decisions, and priorities in both the immediate and longer term. Therefore, it is now anticipated that the introduction of a DRS in England, Wales and Northern Ireland will now be delayed until later 2024 at the earliest.

EPR Consultation

The joint EPR consultation has been issued by all four United Kingdom governments and contains 104 questions in total.

In 2019, approximately 11.7 million tonnes of packaging was placed on the UK market. The proposals being covered in this consultation are concerned with reforms to the packaging waste regulations, which have been in place since 1997. Initial

reforms were outlined in the first consultation, which seek to transform the current PRN (packaging waste recovery note) system to ensure packaging manufacture pay for the full costs of managing the disposal of their packaging waste at its end of life, with higher fees being levelled if packaging is harder to reuse or recycle.

One of the key principles for extending producer responsibility for packaging is to enable fair and transparent payments to local authorities for the cost of collecting and disposing packaging waste from both the residual and recycling waste streams.

The JEC were advised that stakeholders are invited to respond to the consultation exercises within a ten and a half week period, with both consultation exercises closing at 23.45 on 4 June 2021.

The joint partnership team will now develop a series of internal consultation exercises aimed at developing a joint partnership response to each consultation. This will include direct discussions with elected members/portfolio holders and senior service managers in each of the partner authorities.

The process will also involve close working with all current external waste service providers, and public sector waste organisations, such as the LARAC and the National Association of Waste Disposal Officers (NAWDO).

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
 - ii) The JEC agreed to receive further updates on the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership submissions to the Deposit Return Scheme and Extended Producer Responsibility consultation exercises, as appropriate.

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DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Friday 11 June 2021 at 1.30 pm venue to be advised in due course.