

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

Friday, 23 September 2016

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

South Tyneside Council Councillor Alan West

Sunderland Council Councillor Michael Mordey

IN ATTENDANCE:

Gateshead Council Colin Huntington, Fiona Swinburne, Chris Wilson, Gary Smith, Martin Harrison and Rosalyn Patterson

South Tyneside Council Andrew Whittaker

Sunderland Council Les Clark, Mark Speed and Colin Curtis

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor McElroy, Councillor Foreman, Councillor Miller and Tony Alder.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2016 were agreed as 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.

Updated reconciliation proposals have been reviewed and feedback is being awaited from STWER. Performance figures were identified; recycling performance is at 4.2% against a target of 2.1%, recovery performance is 95.9% which is above the target of 95.5%. There is also 100% unprocessed landfill diversion rate.

It was reported that Sunderland City Council Planning Committee agreed to an

amendment to the Campground Waste Transfer Station planning application to allow bulk haulage vehicles to use the site's emergency road. A condition to the permission was attached that noise monitoring be undertaken within three months and that the number of vehicles using the route is recorded.

Construction work at the Visitor and Education Centre has been completed for the outdoor classroom. Infrastructure work is ongoing to construct a greenhouse out of plastic bottles. Some of the bottles discarded during the Great North Run which were received from Middlefields Waste Transfer Station will be used. It was confirmed that some of the media have already picked up on the story and opportunities to promote it further should be progressed.

It was noted that there has been a few minor outages at the EFW facility over the last year caused by blockages in the bottom ash chute. Space suits are now being used to deal with blockages quicker. Line 4 will be shut down from 26 September until 3 October and line 5 will shut down on 23 until 29 October. During the shut down Durham's waste will be redirected to other facilities so that the Partnership's waste can be accommodated.

It was confirmed that Gateshead Council's Economic and Housing Growth Service continues to receive information on vacancies. Currently 40% of the posts at the EFW facility and 70% of the post holders at the WTS's are residents of the Partnership area.

Groundwork North East and Cumbria continue to work on community engagement, from April to August 2016 1648 children and young people participated in events at the Visitor and Education Centre. 284 local residents also took part in activities. A year long project is underway around Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) which is aimed at increasing WEEE reuse and recycling rates. Various events, including roadshows, school and amnesty events, have been held between May and August 2016.

The Campground Community Liaison Group met on 12 July and the last meeting of the Jack Crawford House Community Liaison Group was 22 September. No major issues were raised at either meeting.

In terms of the two Materials Recovery Facilities (MRF) contracts the joint partnership team is in day-to-day contact with both contractors. The comingled material tonnage has decreased across the partnership and this will continue to be monitored. It was noted that South Tyneside shows an increase in the paper recycling performance, however it was acknowledged that this was from a low starting point and is catching up with the Gateshead and Sunderland position. In comparison to the same period last year there has been a decrease in recovery, however generally waste is going up. This will be looked at closer in terms of trends and seasonal peaks and troughs. It was also noted that the quality of the material collected has significantly improved, therefore it was agreed that in future, quality as well as tonnage should be reported on.

The performance of the Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRC) is continuing to exceed targets. In relation to the HWRC contract Gateshead and

Sunderland have agreed to extend their contracts so that all are aligned and a joint partnership contract can be considered at the end of the current arrangements.

In terms of the green waste composting contracts, Gateshead joint partnership team recently led a joint procurement exercise supported by the Partnership's lead procurement team and officers from partner authorities to award new contracts for the provision and operation of green waste composting facilities.

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

5 RESOURCE RECOVERY SECTOR - UPDATE

The Joint Executive Committee received a report on issues arising across the resource recovery sector. Following visits by Councillors from each of the three authorities to facilities across the UK and Europe, a number of treatment technologies were viewed. Electricity generation through energy-from-waste was found to be the most cost effective for the partnership.

A number of problems have arisen in some treatment facilities in terms of their long-term viability, for example in the plasma gasification sector due to the complex technology in comparison to other combustion techniques. It was noted that Air Products' left the sector by scrapping the Tees Valley plant, at a cost of £770m. In terms of mechanical biological treatment technology there has been long-term site closures at several facilities due to major issues such as large-scale fires.

It was reported that there has been issues with delivery of energy-from-waste PFI projects. Defra withdrew £91m PFI credits from Norfolk County Council's waste incinerator project, which led to termination of the project, the DCLG also rejected a claim for financial support to cover the contractors compensation costs. Following this, Norfolk County Council has also been criticised for its short term contractual arrangements.

In addition Cornwall Council has been criticised for its £1.1 billion waste PFI contract being outdated. Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority has been accused of breaching procurement regulations, there has also been several fires at waste facilities and delayed completion due to design faults.

Cumbria County Council has had operations suspended due to a number of issues which meant that waste was diverted to landfill. Lancashire County Council and Blackpool Council have also experienced problems.

It was noted that these examples show the effectiveness of the partnerships residual waste treatment contract.

RESOLVED - That the Joint Executive Committee noted the contents of the report.

6

'BREXIT' - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WASTE SECTOR

Following a request at the last meeting the Committee received a report on the position within the waste sector resulting from the referendum to leave the EU.

It was noted that the majority of UK environmental policy is shaped at EU level and a number of EU directives have had a significant impact on waste management and UK law. It was reported that an immediate impact of the referendum could be seen in some areas of the waste sector, such as a rise in costs for councils that export their waste as refuse derived fuel to operators in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, because transactions conducted in euros have been affected by the falling exchange rates.

It was noted that EU law will still affect the UK once Article 50 has been triggered, and EU-based directives may continue to remain part of UK law once the UK has left the Union.

The Committee was advised that at this stage it was too early to know the impact of 'Brexit' on the waste sector and further updates would be brought to the Committee as appropriate.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Joint Executive Committee noted the contents of the report.
 - (ii) That the Joint Executive Committee agreed to receive further updates regarding the implications on the waste sector of the referendum vote to leave the EU, as appropriate.

7

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

A presentation was given to the Committee on local, national and local authority waste-related stories that have been in the media.

As reported at the last meeting there has been a lot of media interest in the disrupted bin collection service in Newcastle, following changes in working practices. The unofficial dispute is now in its fifth month and the Council has ordered an independent review of its refuse collection services and working practices to compare them with arrangements in other authorities. This will include interviews with staff, managers, Trade Union representatives and Councillors will be interviewed.

It was reported that there has been a restructure in Defra, with Andrea Leadsom has been appointed as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. In addition, Therese Coffey has replaced Rory Stewart as Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Defra. The Committee was advised that the Department of Energy and Climate Change and the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills have been scrapped and replaced by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and will be led by Greg Clark.

Defra has reported that, based on the first six months following the introduction of the plastic bag levy in England, it is expected that single use plastic bags issued by supermarkets will fall by six billion over the full year. The Waste and Marine Conservation Society highlighted that the reduction will benefit the environment as a whole and sea life in particular. In addition, the charge for plastic bags has resulted in donations of more than £29m from retailers to good causes.

It was noted that the BBC submitted a freedom of information request around the amount of household waste being rejected for recycling. It was confirmed that this has risen by 84% over the last four years as a result of increased scrutiny by contractors on material quality and the introduction of the MRF Code of Practice. The Environmental Audit Committee put the findings into context and pointed out that the 338,000 tonnes being rejected is less than 3.5% of the total amount of household waste that is collected for recycling. It also reported that the amount of household waste that is recycled has increased from 9.1 million tonnes in 2010 to 10 million tonnes in 2014. It was acknowledged that, in terms of the STWWMP, contractors' interpretation of rejected or contaminated materials does not necessarily mean that they cannot be recycled. However, close work continues with contractors to develop regular communication activities to help residents understand what can and cannot be recycled.

The Committee was advised that the Daily Mail recently published a report claiming that attacks on bin men have doubled since 2013, increasing from 159 to 309 in 2016. The report states that some refuse teams have been bombarded with waste, threatened and physically assaulted. The article also attributes the attacks to homeowners being 'infuriated with complex recycling rules' and 'restrictive rubbish quotas'. It was acknowledged that, in terms of the partnership, physical attacks on collection crews are rare although they can face regular verbal abuse. Gateshead and Sunderland crews have CCTV cameras on their collection vehicles and South Tyneside is currently trialling the system, signage on the vehicle raises public awareness and discourages anti-social behaviour towards staff.

A good news story was presented to the Committee around the rescue of a 90 year old tortoise that disappeared after getting into a bag of waste. Westminster City Council used GPS software to track the collection vehicle to a waste treatment facility, where thermal imaging equipment was then used to find the tortoise safe and well.

The Committee was advised that Gateshead recently held a Members Seminar about the story of the partnership, this was very well received and will be presented to full Council. Gateshead Councillors have also asked to visit the Waste Transfer Station and EfW plant and officers are happy to make similar arrangements regarding Members Seminars and visits to facilities for Councillors from Sunderland and South Tyneside.

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

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Committee was advised that the STWWMP was a finalist in the Best Public / Private Partnership Working Initiative category at the APSE Service Awards. It was noted that to have the partnership's work recognised nationally across all aspects of the public sector is a significant achievement.

9 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Friday 9 December 2016 at 1.30pm.