

JOINT SCRUTINY PANEL OF SOMERSET WASTE BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board held in the Hobhouse Room - County Hall, on Monday 11 December 2017 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr Aldridge, Cllr M Lewis, Cllr R Lillis, Cllr Parbrok, Cllr L Perry and Cllr A Sully

Other Members present: Cllr R Lillis, Cllr D Yeomans

Apologies for absence: Cllr P Bradshaw, Cllr C Goodall, Cllr T Lock and Cllr D Loveridge

1 Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair - Agenda Item 1

There were no nominations for Chair. Cllr Mike Lewis agreed to Chair this meeting and it was agreed to appoint a Chair on a meeting by meeting basis in future. It was agreed that it was not necessary to appoint a Vice-Chair.

2 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes from the previous meeting held on 21 November 2016 - Agenda Item 4

The minutes of the meeting on 21 November 2016 were accepted as being accurate by the Panel.

4 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 5

There were no public questions.

5 Role of Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board - Agenda Item 6

The Panel considered the draft Terms of Reference.

In order to allow the Chair to be involved with setting the agenda, it was agreed to appoint a Chair for the following meeting at the end of each meeting.

It was agreed to add details regarding a quorum. The Governance manager suggested a quorum of a minimum of five Members representing at least three different authorities and this was agreed.

Following these amendments, the Panel agreed and accepted the Terms of Reference.

6 Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) Client Team Update - Agenda Item 7

The Panel considered a presentation from the Managing Director, Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP).

The presentation gave an overview of the SWP including: background information about the SWP and its vision; key cost drivers; volume trends; a business plan summary; information on the early expiry of the Kier contract; resources and a progress update on the Energy from Waste programme. The Panel were informed that there will be a phased transition to Recycle More from April 2020 onwards.

Members discussed landfill tax and it was clarified that this is a tax levied by central government. Viridor, in common with other landfill operators, do operate schemes funded by the 'Landfill Communities Fund' that use a portion of these tax receipts to fund community projects within a qualifying distance of qualifying Viridor landfill sites (Walpole and Dimmer in Somerset). Landfill tax in effect raises the cost of disposal making less environmentally damaging alternatives more cost effective in comparison. It is on this basis that SWP has agreed with Viridor to cease landfilling Somerset's household waste from 2020 and instead use it to generate electricity (and potentially heat) from an Energy from Waste plant. This delivers savings (£1.3m in the current year to SCC) as it is a lower cost solution than landfilling once the costs of landfill tax are taken into account.

The Panel discussed the reasons for the early expiry of the Kier contract and the vehicles required for the new service. They discussed the number and type of vehicles required as well as how they will be funded. The Panel heard that SWP want to engage and communicate even more effectively with customers in future.

A Member suggested that the Panel may wish to have a site visit to the anaerobic digestion plant.

The Panel noted the report and requested that a copy be sent electronically to Panel Members.

7 Performance Update - Agenda Item 8

The Panel considered a performance update presented by the Business and Governance Manager, SWP.

The Panel were informed that recycling rates have been at around 50% for some time and that SWP wants to improve upon this with the new services starting in 2020. The Business and Governance Manager summarised the key headline performance figures. RAG ratings show that these are all on track with the exception of two red areas: increased missed collections for refuse and increased repeat missed collections. It was also noted that the level of flytipping had decreased, except in Mendip.

Members questioned whether housing development was factored into business plans. Predicted data from district councils is used to inform budget and service plans. The service has experienced access difficulties on new build

housing developments and planning for waste is an area of focus for the 2018-23 SWP Business Plan.

It was confirmed that private waste disposal companies can be used to dispose of commercial and industrial waste.

A Member questioned the differing collection systems around the country and the reasons for this were discussed. It was agreed that better communication is needed to explain this to the public and also to better promote the environmental benefits of recycling.

It was confirmed that SWP does carry out benchmarking exercises with other authorities but that like for like comparison can be very difficult.

The Panel noted the report.

8 **Energy From Waste Project Update** - Agenda Item 9

The Panel considered a Member Information Sheet which summarised the Energy from Waste Programme.

The programme will be operational from April 2020 and is already delivering £1.3m annual savings to SCC. The aim of the programme is to have no waste going to landfill; instead the majority of waste will still be recycled but any residual waste will be used to generate electricity. The contract and build schedule for the programme remains on track.

The Panel noted the report.

9 **SWP Business Plan** - Agenda Item 10

The Panel considered the draft SWP Business Plan 2018-2023 presented by the Business and Governance Manager.

The Business Plan outlined the business priorities and developmental activities for the five year period of the plan but focussed on the coming year in more detail.

The Panel considered the key issues and challenges highlighted within the Plan as well as the key aims and priorities. They also considered the draft Budget Summary 2018/19.

A Member questioned whether it would be possible to approach a major retailer for sponsorship of the re-introduced Education Service for schools. It was confirmed that this had previously taken place and may be possible again in the future. The Education Service is currently being funded through the Community Sector Integration Plan fund (i.e. funded by Viridor not partner authorities).

A Member questioned whether more pressure could be placed on supermarkets to provide more recycling bins outside of stores. This has been a challenge as some issues with flytipping have put supermarkets off. Supermarkets are, however, working with the industry to reduce the amount of

packing used. They have already had some success with this and this will arguably have a greater impact.

It was confirmed that evidence suggests that the carrier bag charge has been successful and that there has been a reduction in waste as a result.

A Member questioned why waste contracts were awarded externally rather than using a Local Authority controlled company. The Panel noted that a substantial review had been undertaken to inform the Board's decision to procure rather than deliver through a Local Authority controlled company. Whilst the financial benefits of the latter were theoretically very marginally better, there are significantly increased risks for this method. On balance the decision was taken that it would be better to procure, with a Local Authority controlled company being a contingency option.

The Panel noted the report.

10 **Forward Plan for Waste Scrutiny** - Agenda Item 11

The Panel considered and noted the Somerset Waste Board and Somerset Waste Partnership Forward Plan of proposed key decisions.

Following discussion, the Panel suggested the following items be reflected in their work programme (reflecting how they can make a significant contribution to the strategic development of key issues):

- An item on risk and reward to include: how this can be shared with the contractor and how it affects future business models.
- Contracts including consideration of break clauses.
- Planning for waste in new development.
- Waste minimisation and communications and engagement
- The importance of site visits to help the Panel understand waste infrastructure (e.g. Somerset's Anaerobic Digester, Dimmer landfill/Carymoor Environmental Trust).

11 **Any other urgent items of business** - Agenda Item 12

There was a discussion of how Scrutiny meetings should fall within the meeting cycle of the Somerset Waste Board (SWB). It was agreed that the next meeting should be scheduled to take place after the February meeting of the SWB.

Cllr Liz Perry agreed to Chair the next meeting.

(The meeting ended at 12.20 pm)

CHAIRMAN