

## **JOINT SCRUTINY PANEL OF SOMERSET WASTE BOARD (VIRTUAL MEETINGS FROM JULY DUE TO CORONAVIRUS)**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board (virtual meetings from July due to Coronavirus) held in the Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting, on Thursday 30 July 2020 at 2.00 pm

**Present:** Cllr M Dunk, Cllr B Hamilton, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr T Munt and Cllr A Trollope-Bellow

**Other Members present:** None

**Apologies for absence:** Cllr J Hassall and Cllr G Kennedy

### **1 Annual Appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board - Agenda Item 1**

Nominations were invited for the Chair of Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board. Cllr Liz Leyshon nominated Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellow and this was seconded by Cllr Tessa Munt.

Members agreed by a majority vote that Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellow be appointed as Chair of Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board for 2020/21.

Nominations were then invited for the appointment of Vice Chair of Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board. Cllr Liz Leyshon nominated Cllr M Dunk for the position which was seconded by Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellow.

Members agreed by a majority vote that Cllr M Dunk be appointed as Vice-Chair for 2020/21.

### **2 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3**

Members of the Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel of Waste Board declared the following personal interests:

Cllr T Munt:	Interim Chair and Director of Whistleblowing UK
Cllr B Hamilton:	Iminster Town Council

### **3 Minutes from the previous meeting held on 12 February 2020 - Agenda Item 4**

Cllr L Leyshon asked if minute number 80, had the correct number of noughts the figure of £250,000,000, Mickey Green and Sarah Rose confirmed the figure was correct. Cllr M Dunk referred to minute number 77 regarding the additional recycling of plastic pots, tubs and trays and an increase in the amounts and

wondered how the additional recycling had occurred. Mickey Green confirmed it was the tonnage at the recycling centres.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board held on 12th February 2020 were taken as read and following endorsement by the Panel they were signed as correct by the Chair.

#### 4 **Public Question Time - Agenda Item 5**

There were no public Questions.

#### 5 **Joint Waste Scrutiny Membership, Meeting Dates and Virtual Meeting Procedure - Agenda Item 6**

The Chair invited Governance Specialist, Julia Jones, to provide a verbal update on the Joint Waste Scrutiny membership, Meeting Dates and Virtual meeting procedures. The report set out changes to board membership for 2020/21 following agreement of each partnership organisation and also the proposed meeting dates for the Board up to June 2020. In addition, it also set out the virtual meetings procedures for the Board following the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 which came into force on 4 April. The Board was asked to acknowledge the need to operate under this basis as Somerset County Council is the administering authority for the Board.

There was a discussion about Council annual meetings as most of these have been delayed and appointments to outside bodies haven't been reviewed in May as they normally would be. In the main appointments to outside bodies had rolled on. A question was asked if there was an annual meeting in later in the year with a changed membership to the scrutiny panel or the Board could it be accepted. The Governance Specialist confirmed it could as member authorities could make decisions regarding their representatives to the board and panel.

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel reviewed and commented on the report and agreed the following the recommendations to be considered by Somerset Waste Board:**

**That the Somerset Waste Board:**

**That the Somerset Waste Board:**

- 1. Notes the revised Board's membership for 2020/21 and Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board set out in Section 2 and the need for induction training for new members.**

- 2. Agrees the Board meeting dates for 2020 and 2021 set out in section 3.**
- 3. Acknowledges the need for the Board to operate under the rules set out in the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 set out in section**

## **6 Financial Reports 2019-2020 - Agenda Item 7**

The Chair invited the Finance Officer Sarah Rose to provide a verbal update on the Financial Outturn and Use of Balances 2019/20. The Board set its Annual Budget for 2019-2020 (originally totalling £46,243,485) at its meeting on 15 February 2019. The table in the report showed the variations from the budget on all the major expenditure areas the total Partnership underspend was £1,796,000 (3.9% of the original budget). The overall position for District partners is an underspend of £512,000. This is a significant movement of £432,000 from the £80,000 underspend reported in the last Financial Update to the Somerset Waste Board on 14 February 2020. The most significant savings to budget were reduced garden customer numbers compared to that budgeted in total across all District partners (£99,000) and reduced costs on container purchases and deliveries (£27,000). This was partially offset by recycling credits being less than that budgeted by £17,000. The disposal position improved at the end of the year, increasing the underspend on this budget area from £1,218,000 to £1,283,000. Forecasts were reprofiled throughout the year to reflect that tonnages to date were less than budgeted. There were significant waste reductions for residual waste at both the kerbside and recycling sites compared to budget. The figures did not include the Recycle More fund. It has been agreed by the board that this funding is kept separate from the continuation budget. During the year £1,241,000 was spent on the project. These costs included pre contract borrowing and implementation costs. Implementation costs include costs in relation to the termination of the Kier contract, lease and depot costs and technical advice. The request for the use of District balances in Appendix B is made on the basis that the Recycle More fund remains separate to the continuation budget. It was hoped the Partnership Audit plan would come to September's meeting board. The LGA have been in contact regarding the truck cartel claim our legal advisers are looking into the ? options and it was hoped to have an update for members for the September board meeting.

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel reviewed and commented on the report and agreed the following the recommendations to be considered by Somerset Waste Board:**

**That the Somerset Waste Board: -**

**1. Notes the financial outturn position of the Partnership overall and the individual partners' balances at year end, and the summary accounts for 2019/2020 as presented in Appendix A.**

**2. Confirms the recommendations of the partner authorities (as summarised in Appendix B), as to the use of the individual surpluses and deficits as at 31 March 2020.**

**3. Notes the outturn position of the Recycle More fund in paragraph 2.4.**

**7 Performance Monitoring Reports Q4 - Agenda Item 8**

The Chair invited Mickey Green to provide a verbal update on the Performance Report Quarter 4. The Performance report it covered the financial year April 2019 to March 2020. There were challenges of the transition away from Kier to Suez end of March as COVID-19 pandemic started. The removal of all of Keir's equipment and vehicles and bringing in new fleet of vehicles along with new ICT equipment had a significant impacted on ICT, recruitment and the Recycle More programme and the build at Avonmouth. The business plan there are more ambers than normal due to the impact of COVID-19. There has been a continued decrease in missed collections in Q4, compared to Q3 (1.068 per 1,000 collections against 1.263 in Q3). These will continue to be monitored, particularly from the start of the new contract, to see if improvements can continue to be made and whether the new 'in-cab' technology helps to reduce numbers further. There would be continuation of focusing on developing the new Customer Relationship Management system, My Waste Services, (including website changes and app). The recycling rate increased to 52.86%, up 0.46%. Over the year 90% of materials stayed in the UK. Slim My Waste Feed My Face was rolled out and there was a significant jump in Facebook followers from the beginning of the year.

The SWP Managing Director asked how other authorities had coped with COVID-19 situation and whether the Councils working together with collection and disposal had made it easier to survive though this difficult time?

The Panel were informed that the answer will be covered in the COVID-19 agenda item.

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel reviewed and commented on the report and agree the following the recommendations to be considered by Somerset Waste Board:**

## **That the Somerset Waste Board**

### **-Notes the performance results in the Fourth Quarter Performance Management Report.**

#### **8 Slim My Waste Feed My Face Campaign - Agenda Item 9**

The Chair invited Mickey Green to provide a verbal update on Slim My Waste Feed My Face Campaign, Michael Cowdell, was introduced to give an update and SWP's analysis had shown that Somerset's household rubbish bins contain over a quarter (26%) of food waste which could be recycled. Reducing the amount of food waste being sent to landfill would not only lead to a significant environmental benefit, but also generate cost savings of up to £950,000 per annum if all the food waste in the refuse bins was recycled. The Bristol Waste Company launched the 'Slim My Waste, feed my face' (SMW) campaign which focused on encouraging householders to use their food waste bins and kitchen caddy by decorating them with face stickers to reflect their householder personality. The campaign achieved significant results in raising awareness in Bristol, increasing recycling (by 16%) and reducing the amount of food waste being sent to landfill. As a result, the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) has agreed to deliver a variation of the campaign to residents in Somerset. It adopted the same format as the Bristol campaign, but the artwork was amended to reflect SWP branding and messaging and support the existing food waste collection service. All kerbside service residents received an information leaflet promoting food waste recycling, explaining why we need to recycle food waste, the benefits, how to use the face stickers and step by step guide on how to use the food waste collection service. Content on what can currently be recycled at the kerbside and HWRCs and the upcoming 'Recycle More' service changes was also included (to raise awareness across the whole of Somerset). Black bins were given an 'I'm on a no food waste diet' sticker on their lid and a bright yellow 'no food waste' measuring tape around the middle (their 'waist'). The stickers provide an ongoing visual reminder not to use their black wheelie bin for food waste. 24/25 agencies staff and eight dedicated crews delivered the packs and stickered rubbish bins, following refuse crews. Each Crew was made up of three agency staff and managed daily by SWP staff. The campaign was suspended on 18 March as Covid-19 started to have a significant impact on SWP's services (the container delivery service was suspended on 19 June). This meant that part of Sedgemoor, the western part of Somerset West & Taunton and some rural parts of other districts did not receive the campaign.

The campaign was launched on social media at the beginning of February, supported by a press release and website content. This coincided with the delivery of information packs to households across the county, district by district starting in Mendip. The initiative had already been heavily trailed in a

'wraparound' cover for the December 2019 edition of the Your Somerset newspaper which is delivered to homes across the county.

The residents were encouraged to post their stickered bin 'faces' on social media using the #FeedMyFaceSWP hashtag for the chance to win prizes. Content was proactively shared on community Facebook pages, following the delivery of packs as closely as possible. It was too early to measure achievement against this aim, and due to the significant increase in food waste tonnage under Covid, it may never be possible to identify the specific impact of the Slim My Waste Feed My Face campaign. However, the 400% increase in container demand suggests that participation increased significantly. If all these households starting to recycle food waste that would be an increase in participation of 5%. Due to, Covid-19 tonnages of other materials had also increase (though not by this proportion) and is likely to have driven increases in food waste. The campaign was expected to cost £283,000 of which £118,000 covered the design and production of the materials has also and £126,000 covered labour and fleet. SWP secured £173,000 in match funding (including from Viridor, our disposal partner) and £110,000 from Somerset County Council's Improving Lives to Prevent Demand Fund. The anticipated increased cost of food waste caddies/bins was £39k, funded from the Recycle More fund (as agreed with the Strategic Management Group).

Actual costs for design of leaflets, stickers and tape were £2,520. Print costs for 260,000 units were £58,851, giving a total of £61,371 and an underspend of £56,629. Due to the curtailment of the campaign before complete, there were also underspends in labour and fleet costs. Labour costs were £80,535, fleet costs £17,881 and consumables (e.g. PPE and building hire) £14,783, giving a total cost of £113,207 and an underspend of £12,793. This gives the total spend of £244,000 and an underspend of £69,242 against the estimated budget. A sum of £39,000 had been budgeted for the anticipated increased cost of food waste caddies/bins. With the campaign shortened, actual spend was £27,000. An underspend of £12,000.

The Panel commented on the campaign and the success, with an increase in residents using the stickers and gave its thanks to Somerset Waste Partnership for the hard work behind these achievements

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel reviewed and commented on the report and agreed the following the recommendations to be considered by Somerset Waste Board:**

**That the Somerset Waste Board:**

**- Notes the outcomes of the campaign to drive higher levels of food waste recycling through the 'Slim my Waste, Feed my Face' behavioural change campaign.**

**- Delegates authority to the Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership, in consultation with SMG, to decide whether, when and how to roll-out the campaign to the remainder of Somerset.**

**9 COVID-19 Impact on Somerset Waste Partnership - Agenda Item 10**

The Chair invited Mickey Green to provide a verbal update on the Impact of COVID-19 on Somerset Waste Partnership. Covid-19 and the measures taken to control the virus have had significant impacts on the operation of the Somerset Waste Partnership, especially as it coincided with the change in collection contractor. There had been staff absences, considerably higher tonnages, difficulty accessing many streets due to parked cars, delays to building works and ICT projects. In line with the national lockdown guidance and due to the increasing risks of the virus transmission occurring on the recycling sites, all sites were closed with effect from Monday 23rd March. Despite the lack of clear Government guidance, this approach was echoed by nearly all (at peak 98%) local authorities in the UK. There has been weekly reporting for all local authority's around the country on determinate and action. Somerset Waste Partnership set up and shared meetings across the South West authorities.

Following Government guidance received on the 5th May, regarding the opening of sites to accept waste. 11 strategically placed sites on 11th May were reopened. There were a number of restrictions imposed that included;

- A reduced range of materials accepted to reduce residency time on site and any resultant off site queuing, whilst allowing the public to dispose of those items that could be constituted as a reason for an essential journey (residual, green, large domestic appliances & hazardous waste)
- Use of off-site Highway support (temporary diversions) and Police Accredited Traffic Officers, strategically placed to ensure the impacts of the essential highway routes were minimised
- Redeployment of Partner Authority Parking Services staff, acting as 'meet & greet' at the site entrances to ensure clear instructions of use were conveyed
- Extended operating hours at most sites, using a standardised opening pattern for all
- The enforcement of social distancing on site with the use of signage and barriers to prevent the 'site wander'
- An odd & even number plate system was employed to control the initial demand at the sites
- Maximum car occupancy of 2 and the wearing of gloves on site were endorsed
- No lifting assistance offered by site staff
- Trailers & large vans were omitted from access, through the initial reopening stage.

Between the 20th and 24th June all 16 sites, gradually reverted back to 'near normal' operation, with the removal of control barriers and replacement of suitable 'social distancing' messaging placed around the sites – much like the 'supermarket model'. This meant that: Commercial waste acceptance, charged for commodity (hardcore, soil, tyres, asbestos, plasterboard, etc) and finally, from Saturday 27th June access for trailers & large vans at any time during opening time, were re-introduced. The only materials that are currently not being accepted on site are items for reuse, given the associated additional handling requirements. Work continues to resolve these issues, with the expectation that from 1st August there maybe a reintroducing of reuse option at all of the sites, including the reopening of the Taunton reuse shop.

SWP has followed its Business Continuity Plan throughout and aimed to be robust but reasonable with contractors. Considering options and rejections, the national response to, and the risks posed by, Covid-19 have placed all our staff (working for Kier/Suez, Viridor or directly for SWP) under incredible pressure. The gratitude shown by the public towards key workers, including those dealing with their rubbish, was warmly welcomed by SWP and helped motivate staff who were working incredibly hard to maintain services. There have been a few noticeable impacts with regard to the tonnages handled at the kerbside, since the national lockdown and the temporary closure of Somerset's recycling sites. Residual waste being presented at the kerbside rose by 3% (an extra 11 tonnes per day) in April and by 5% (an extra 18 tonnes per day) during May. The green waste collection service was reinstated from the 11th May and as can be seen by the exponential rise (46% or an extra 52 tonnes per day) from the same period last year, there was a pent-up demand. Broadly speaking, recycling, refuse, assisted collection and clinical waste collections held up well through the Covid-19 first wave – they remained broadly at the level experienced under Kier and Suez are working to improve performance (whilst still coping with the ongoing challenges of Covid-19).

Garden waste was re-introduced on 11th May with the new routes; however, this was not undertaken effectively as the route mapping was not as efficient as it should have been. The reintroduction of this service also highlighted a few underlying ICT integration/data issues that meant that where customers tried to report issues, they were not to rectified as quickly as normal. Whilst 50% additional resources were initially deployed on the service (to cope with heavy tonnage and high levels of presentation after the service was suspended) this had been increased to over 100% additional resource, particularly on narrow access vehicles. A re-route of the garden waste service was undertaken on 6 July to address the underlying issues and hence improve performance. A different roll-out Recycle More programme results in costs for Districts as the current service package is more expensive than the previous, and for the County because the expected disposal savings are not realised. Costs are estimated at £494k for SCC and £1.806m for Districts.



The most significant move in the type of material fly tipped relates to that recorded as 'black bags' which has seen a rise from 15% last year to 25% during this period. We have also been monitoring the number of reported nuisance bonfire events through the 13-week period, these showing a total of 208 reported incidents, with an average of 16 per week or 4 per District area per week. SWP are confident that the best decisions were made, given the uncertainties of the first wave of Covid-19, It should be noted that any future wave affecting Somerset could look very different or example potentially higher levels of staff absence (e.g. due to track and trace impacting on a higher proportion of the workforce) or local lockdowns. It is also likely to have cost implications, and whilst plans are being developed that minimise these, we cannot realistically eliminate them. SWP has undertaken an internal lesson-learned exercise, reviewed this with SMG and with our contractors (Viridor and Suez).

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel thanked Somerset Waste Partnership through its efforts during the pandemic and recognised its hard work, there was a discussion about Councils reporting to HMCLG on lost income or additional cost and ensuring no chance of double reporting was happening. A member informed the panel about freecycle events that happen the first weekend of each month. The Panel were also discussing an increase in the numbers of bonfires were being reported to Environmental health. There were impacts on fly tipping in terms of that were still being worked through as charity shops were still closed and people were dumping stuff outside of the shops. Through the climate change work there was a focus on fly tipping and one of the partner officers were leading on the project looking at the Hertfordshire approach.

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel reviewed and commented on the report and agreed the following the recommendations to be considered by Somerset Waste Board:**

**That the Somerset Waste Board:**

- 1. Notes the considerable impact that Covid-19 has had on SWP**
- 2. Endorse the additional spend necessary to date to maintain critical services and authorises the Managing Director, in consultation with SMG and s151 officers, to ensure appropriate funding arrangements are in place to ensure that critical services are maintained.**

10 **Revised Timetable for Recycle More Rollout - Agenda Item 11**

The Chair invited Mickey Green to provide a verbal update on the Revised Recycle More Roll-Out Timetable. On 9 April 2020 the Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership took the decision to delay the roll-out of Recycle

More due to the serious, unprecedented and uncertain impact that Covid-19 was having on waste services. The Revised timetable has been compressed to 4 Phases (Rather than 5) it will still finish at the same it as before. The report sets out how the phases are going to be implemented through the next few months. The first two phases now cover all of Mendip and South Somerset (respectively) in order to simplify communications and engagement reflecting the challenges in communicating whilst Covid-19 is still a major factor. Phases Three and four hasn't got the District alignments as Somerset Waste Partnership are still weighing up the balances in operational and drive costs. Mendip's communal properties will receive the new service ahead of or part of the June 2021 phase. Roll out for Recycle More to schools will be in Mendip and South Somerset on 28 June 2021, and schools in Sedgemoor and Somerset West & Taunton in either Sept 2021 of February 2022.

Recycle More is first and foremost about behaviour change and the Somerset Waste Board (SWB) have repeatedly emphasised the need for a major communications and engagement programme ahead of the roll-out. Somerset Waste Partnership will still deliver two critical communications through their door of every household ahead of the service change to Recycle More. Carymoor Environment Trust is developing virtual Recycle More workshop and assembly options to offer as alternatives to physical visits and to reflect social distancing and other measures to ensure the safety. The campaign will have a greater reliance on digital engagement – a service change film will be produced with, regular Facebook live sessions and similar held so that residents can ask questions. Zoom and Similar meetings will be offered to clusters of Parish Councils and similar stakeholders where face to face events were not possible.

The Panel discussed the receiving dates of the leaflet and clarified the 26<sup>th</sup> was the changeover day, and the size of wheelie bins, there would be lots of raising awareness of the change ahead of this. A fortnight before the delivery of the new blue bag will come into place for the new collection process and engaging with residents about the operation. The briefing pack will include on where the recycling will need to go into what box or bag. Mendip were the first rollout of large wheelie bins and had 240L bins delivered and other areas had 180L bins.

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel reviewed and commented on the report and agreed the following the recommendations to be considered by Somerset Waste Board:**

**That the Somerset Waste Board:**

**-Agrees the revised roll-out timetable for the new Recycle More collection service and authorises the Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership to vary the roll-out due to the significant uncertainty created by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.**

11 **Somerset Waste Board Forward Plan - Agenda Item 12**

The Panel Agreed Somerset Waste Board Forward Work Plan.

12 **Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 13**

There were no other items of business. The Chair thanked Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel and Somerset Waste Partnership for their hard work.

**(The meeting ended at Time Not Specified)**

**CHAIRMAN**