

Somerset Waste Board meeting
25 September 2020
Report for decision

Somerset Waste Partnership – Outline Business Plan 2021-2026
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Forward Plan Reference:	
Summary:	The Somerset Waste Partnership Draft Business Plan for the period 2021 to 2026 is iterated through a number of meetings, starting in September with a discussion on priority areas and approach, a draft business plan which will be presented to the Board in December 2020, partner consultation in January and February with approval from the Board to the final business plan sought in February 2021. The Business Plan approval timetable is in line with the constitutional requirements on SWP and ensures that business planning and budgeting are considered together.
Recommendations:	<p>The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considers and comments on the following recommendations in this report.</p> <p>That the Somerset Waste Board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comments on and approves the broad approach and proposed priority areas for inclusion in the Business Plan 2021-26 as set out in section 2 of the report. 2. Discuss and provide further ideas for any particular service changes, projects or programmes for potential inclusion in the Draft Plan to be approved for consultation at the December meeting.
Reasons for recommendations:	The Board is required to approve a draft business plan annually for consultation with, and approval by, the partners. Producing an outline at this stage helps the Board to identify key areas for inclusion and to direct officers to prepare more information on any area it highlights.
Links to Priorities and Impact on	

Annual Business Plan:	The Constitution requires the Board to produce a business plan on an annual basis. The business plan also seeks to align with other partner priorities, such as the joint council climate emergency strategy (SWP led on the waste and resources workstream). External factors (for example the future of local government in Somerset) may impact over the period of this business plan.
Financial, Legal and HR Implications:	The financial framework and default budget position is outlined in a separate report on the agenda. The detailed financial implications of any new areas of work, or any changes to existing services, as requested by the Board, will be provided when the Board is recommended to approve the draft plan in December.
Equalities Implications:	The Board is required to have "due regard" to our equalities duties when taking any formal decision. Equalities implications will be considered and reported for any service changes or relevant projects proposed by the Board.
Risk Assessment:	<p>There is a risk that the Business Plan may be affected by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The ongoing impact of Covid-19, which has already disrupted progress in achieving the current business plan b) Resource pressures on SWP due to the intense workload associated with bedding in the new collection contract and implementing the Recycle More service change c) Central Government policy changes, in particular those that result from the next phase of consultations on policy outlined in the Resources & Waste Strategy (in particular on Extended Producer Responsibility, Deposit Return Scheme, and Collection Consistency) d) Brexit and the uncertainty around this process and its knock-on impacts e) Funding available to implement the Climate Emergency Strategy f) The Future of Local Government in Somerset <p>Risk assessments will be undertaken for any service changes or new programmes as they are developed and the SWP risk register will be updated accordingly as part of the business planning process.</p>

1. Background

- 1.1. The Board is required to approve a draft business plan annually. The plan is rolling five-year plan and therefore the 2021-26 version will include some items already highlighted within the current plan, updated as necessary.
- 1.2. Producing an outline at this stage, along with outlining the default budget position, helps the Board to identify potential service changes or programmes for inclusion and to direct officers to further develop ideas and/or prepare more information on any area it highlights. Feedback from the Board, Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel and other engagement then informs the development of a draft Business Plan. This draft is presented to the Board in December for approval as the basis for partner consultation. Following the period of consultation, a final draft of the Business Plan is brought to the February board meeting for approval.
- 1.3. Progress against our current business plan is reported to the board at each quarterly meeting through the Performance Report. The board also receive a report at each meeting updating them on progress with mobilising the new collection contract and implementing Recycle More. The work involved in the successful implementation of Recycle More remains the highest priority area within the Business Plan, as it has been in previous years.
- 1.4. **Somerset's Climate Emergency**

The five Somerset local authorities have all declared or recognised a Climate Emergency and developed a Climate Emergency Strategy covering the county of Somerset. Waste and resources is one of 9 workstreams, and SWP's Managing Director acted as workstream lead with the officer group made up of senior officers from each partner (SMG) acting as project board. The scope of the waste and resources workstream is much broader than SWP's statutory responsibilities, as it looks at Somerset as a whole, rather than just focussing on household waste. The actions from this workstream will be fully incorporated into the 2021-26 SWP Business Plan, clearly highlighting where there are resource/funding challenges which need to be overcome.

2. Proposed Approach

- 2.1. Key issues which will inform the 2021-26 Business Plan are:

Political	The impact of withdrawal from the EU: Whilst SWP recycled 90% of its material in the UK, waste is a global business and this will have impacts, for example on recyclate prices (and hence on our share of recyclate income)
	National legislative change: Whilst SWP was recognised in the Government's National Resources and Waste Strategy and welcomes many of the proposals around consistency and extended producer

	responsibility, there are other proposals which SWP believe represent a risk to achievement of our desired outcomes (e.g. Deposit Return Schemes, free garden waste, restrictions on local authorities ability to make decisions right for their local area). Further national consultations are expected in Spring 2021 and SWP will continue to work to influence the approach taken. National changes to planning policy may impact on our ability to deliver cost-effective and high environmentally performing services.
	Future of Local Government in Somerset: Proposals for local government reorganisation may have a significant impact upon SWP, upon costs for all partners, and on delivery of the business plan.
Economic	Financial pressure on partner authorities: The financial environment in which we operate remains very tightly constrained, especially given the impact of Covid-19 on local government finance.
	Recyclate risk: SWP will share risk with its collection contractor on recyclate value. This will directly impact upon the SW:EEP fund we have to drive behavioural change
	Risk of recession: The national economic outlook (given Covid-19 and Brexit) is uncertain. Periods of recession typically see lower levels of waste as a result of lower consumption; however, the past may not be a reliable guide to the future given the uncertain impact of Covid-19.
Social	Demographic changes: Somerset's growing, and ageing population inform our planning for the future. Somerset has historically benefited from near full employment, which makes recruitment more challenging.
	Covid-19: The ongoing risks include elevated and variable tonnages collected, disruption to our recycling centres, local lockdowns, changes to our working practices (e.g. around engagement/opening black bags at recycling centres), disruption to services due to loss of staff; all of which has a cost and environmental impact and puts pressure on resources (potentially impacting on the pace we can implement measures in the business plan). On the upside, there are positive changes in behaviour (e.g. higher kerbside recycling) that we will seek to embed.
Technological	Social media: Increasing use of social media presents an opportunity to reach more people but raises expectations about speed of response.
	Big data: The ability to manipulate large data sets (be it around people's behaviour or the life cycle of resources and waste) can be powerful.
	New materials: New materials may emerge onto the market quicker than our ability to manage them at the end of their life.
Environmental	Somerset's Climate Emergency: SWP have been asked to lead the 'Waste & Resources' workstream and this provides an opportunity for us to work more closely with partners to progress our vision. However, our ability to implement further change will be constrained by resources.
	Public Awareness: Many people are much more aware of climate change and keen to do more, and frustrated if they feel they cannot do more.

- 2.2. It is proposed that the vision and values refreshed by the Board in 2018 remain unchanged, namely:

Who we are:	Somerset's Local Authorities working together as the Somerset Waste Partnership, ensuring that our household waste is reduced, collected, reused, recycled and effectively treated.
What we do:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve our environment by making every effort to ensure our household waste is not wasted but reused as a valuable resource. • Deliver excellent customer service and value for money to create a more sustainable Somerset.
What we aim to become:	An exemplar for how we manage waste as a resource, work with others and support our residents to manage their household waste and make our service the best it can be.
Our values:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insight: Working with our partners to understand how and why people behave as they do and use this knowledge to shape our service. • Collaboration: Treating everyone we work with as an equal, knowing we have greater success when we work together. • Innovation: Learning from others and constantly looking at new ways of working to give the best service we can. • Quality: Focusing on excellent customer service and making the best use of the waste we collect.

- 2.3. It is proposed that the 2021– 2026 Business plan will maintain a similar focus and approach to the current business plan, recognising the major ongoing pieces of work that remain underway:

<i>Focus</i>	Delivering excellent services	Changing behaviours	Building our capability
<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Household waste is effectively collected, reused, recycled and treated</i>	<i>People trust SWP and see waste as a resource - managing their waste properly</i>	<i>SWP has the capacity, capability and influence to deliver our vision</i>
<i>Activity</i>	Improving recycling (inc. Recycle More, schools recycling)	Campaigns (inc. plastics, fly-tipping)	Transforming systems and processes
	Increasing reuse	Looking beyond household waste	Strategy & Influence

	Improving customer service	Community Engagement	Improving partnerships
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Whilst there is much consistency with the current business plan (for example implementing Recycle More will continue until 2022, and we will continue to work with partners to ensure new homes are built with waste in mind), it is likely that the next Business Plan will have a greater focus upon:

- Setting out how we will support Somerset's joint efforts to tackle the climate emergency, including (noting that some of these will require additional resources to develop/implement):
 - Our plans to green our fleet further (including piloting electric vehicles when they are viable to inform the partial re-fleet in 2024-25) and explore other ways we can make our own operations even lower impact
 - Ensuring new homes are built with recycling and waste in mind
 - Working with schools to improve their recycling rate
 - An expanded Schools Against Waste service (including exploring how we can expand this to secondary schools)
 - Funding for 50 schools in Somerset per annum to undertake Eco-Schools assessments
 - Working with District Councils to improve 'on the go' recycling
 - Partnership working to continue to tackle fly-tipping
 - Working to improve recycling in commercial businesses and the public sector in Somerset
 - Using public sector purchasing power to improve recycling and help drive the circular economy
 - Exploring how we can work with others to ensure Somerset businesses are supported to make the right environmental choices (e.g. around packaging)
 - Developing a food strategy for Somerset which seeks to prevent food from becoming waste
- Coping with the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and recovery from it:
 - Ensuring that robust Business Continuity Plans are in place and refreshed as the science/policy changes
 - Manage the risk of cost increases due to the impact of Covid-19
 - Ensuring risk assessments and working practices are regularly reviewed in light of the changing risk
 - Ensure contingency plans are in place to mitigate the risk of Covid-19 impacting on business plan priorities (e.g. Recycle More) whilst noting that not all eventualities can be successfully mitigated for
 - Review priorities and target dates in light of the ongoing disruption that Covid-19 is causing
- Supporting Somerset residents and business to look to reuse goods and materials ahead of buying new, recycling or disposing of items:
 - A widescale understanding across Somerset that reuse is the most

- preferable option and one that should be considered ahead of recycling or disposal.
 - Ensuring many more reusable items from bulky collections and HWRCs are identified and segregated for reuse
 - Developing a database of reuse networks and groups and commissioning a piece of work to explore how we can best connect these items with the network of organisations (especially third sector organisations) that can potentially use them (inc. exploring the potential for more reuse shops either on or off-site)
- Embedding the social value, we secured from Suez (noting that minor changes may be made as we jointly review the Community Benefit Plan), including:
 - 5% of contract spend retained in Somerset, with increasing proportion spent with SMEs, micro-businesses and third sector organisations
 - Local Engagement Programme delivering 100 activities and interventions per year in deprived and poor recycling areas from 2022-23 onwards
 - 15 Community Action Groups active by 2023-24
 - 2 campaigns delivered each year to improve the capture of materials
 - Ensuring 5% of staff are in apprenticeships every year of the contract,
 - 2 work placements per year (16 in total) from 2022-23 onwards for young people, including NEETs and care leavers,
 - 2 community payback scheme placements per year (16 in total) from 2022-23 onwards for low level offenders,
 - Ensuring all staff receive dementia awareness training,
 - Employee volunteering scheme (2 days per year for 10 employees)
- Making the most of the in-cab technology and the improvements to our systems and processes to target interventions more effectively to improve recycling (through targeted education), our customer service (e.g. box replacement and avoiding littering) and how we can support communities (e.g. using the eyes and ears of collection staff to identify issues that might need referral e.g. to Adult Social Care). As part of this we will refresh our enforcement policy.
- Reviewing key areas of policy following the next stage of consultation on national waste and resources strategy (for example planning for the impact of any Extended Producer Responsibility or Deposit Return Scheme, the potential impact of consideration of garden waste charging, the routemap to recycle an even wider range of materials).

2.4. SWP set out its ambition to develop a new ambitious but realistic long-term (to 2050) waste strategy by Summer 2020 which was informed by the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and the major changes expected in national policy. Our strategy aimed to encompass:

- A strategic framework for how we approach service developments/ pressures
- Our approach to delivering excellent customer service and support (underpinned by appropriate technology)
- How we approach behaviour change, communications and engagement
- How we engage with communities, businesses, schools within Somerset

- How we work with partners on areas like littering, fly-tipping and enforcement, and food waste reduction.

SWP has made progress in defining its plans in all these areas, and these will be set out in our Business Plan 2021-26. However, it is proposed to delay development of a long-term strategy to reflect the fact that the next stage of consultation on major changes to national policy now delayed to Spring 2021 (by Covid-19), pressures on SWP resources due to Covid-19, and due to ongoing work to consider the Future of Local Government in Somerset. It is anticipated that this strategy will be developed in 2021/2022 (which will be reflected in our Business Plan), though this timetable will be contingent on the external elements which we would expect to be key drivers of our long-term strategy.

3. Consultations Undertaken

- 3.1.** Initial consultation was held with partners (via the senior officer group – SMG) on 18 August and 3 September. Further consultation with partners will take place over the Autumn. Formal partner consultation will take place in the new year, once a draft business plan has been agreed by the Board at its December meeting.

4. Background papers

- 4.1.** SWB Business Plan 2020 – 25 (as agreed by the Board in February 2020)