

Joint Scrutiny Panel of the Somerset Waste Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Panel of the Somerset Waste Board held virtually via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday 23rd September 2020 at 2.00 pm.

Present: Cllr A Trollope-Bellew (Chair) Cllr B Hamilton, Cllr J Hasall, Cllr Liz Leyshon, Cllr T Munt, Cllr Li Gibson, Cllr Michael Dunk and Cllr Garfield Kennedy

Other Members Present: Cllr S Dyke

Apologies for Absence: Cllr A Gillings

Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

None.

Minutes from the Previous Meeting on 30th July 2020 –Agenda Item 3

Cllr A Trollope-Bellew's name was spelt incorrect otherwise the Panel agreed the minutes as an accurate record.

Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were no public questions.

The Chair invited Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director Mickey Green to provide an update on the Performance Report Quarter 1 2020/2021. The report summarises the key performance indicators for the period from April 2020 to June 2020 and compares these to the same period last year.

The following was highlighted:

- Recycle More has a new timetable
- My Waste Services have been challenging during Covid-19, but key issues have been resolved.
- The key numbers have big variations due to Covid-19 (for example, household waste is down 14%), but many areas have better numbers, such as 99.6% of recycling staying in the UK, which is by far the best quarter ever.
- There have been challenges with missed collections, but this figure is much better with Suez than with Kier, and there are weekly meetings with Suez to help ameliorate this.

- The main risks are Covid-19, the delayed rollout of Recycle More, and health and safety (there was a death at a hybrid site due to a seizure); there will now be defibrillators installed at every site.

- The key focus will be on Recycle More and My Waste Services; national consultations are expected next spring; and there is still much work to be done with Suez regarding missed collections and complaints.

The Panel asked a number of questions; about materials sent to the energy-from-waste plant at Avonmouth; if items could still be re-used as before; any changes that could be made in order to recycle more plastic, despite all of the different types of plastic. It was asked if there could be tips on the SWP website regarding recycling of 'difficult' products, such as Pringles cans with multiple materials; the answer was that when it comes to non-recyclable packaging, the best action is to use your purchasing power to choose other products. It was noted that Pringles may in fact be changing their packaging due to consumer pressure. A panel member noted the significant increase in the number of Facebook users, up from 8,000 to 12,000.

It was explained that kerbside bin contents are already being sent to Avonmouth, as well as non-recyclables from recycling centres, and that very little non-recyclable waste is not being sent there, with the exception of very bulky items and some PVC materials. This is still in the commissioning phase and has not yet been handed over to Viridor, which also makes it challenging to schedule visits and to complete the plastics processing portion of the plant. The re-use items programme is back up and running, with the diversion of usable materials at recycling sites. The variety of plastic makes it difficult, and there is little that can be done to influence supermarkets; however, there will soon be a national tax on packaging that does not contain 30% recyclable materials, and producers of packaging will also be responsible for the added cost of recycling their non-recyclable packaging. Recycle More will help with the recycling of some plastics, but it is the hyper-production of plastic that makes it problematic, as well as the mislabelling of plastics where it states that it is recyclable when it actually is not. There is an effort to support businesses in making sustainable choices, including working with councils and Trading Standards.

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel recommended:

That the Somerset Waste Board notes the performance results in the First Quarter 2020/21 Performance Management Report.

The Chair invited Finance Officer Sarah Rose to provide an update on the Financial Performance Update 2020-2021. The report sets out the financial performance against the approved Annual Budget for the first 4 months of the current financial year (April to the end of July), and a forecast outturn position and the formal commencement of the budget setting process that will ultimately lead to the Annual Budget for 2021/2022.

The following was highlighted:

- The Annual Budget for 2020/2021 was originally set at the Board meeting of 14 February 2020 at £47,894,210.
- Overall, the end of July position shows that the Somerset Waste Partnership budget is forecast to be overspent by £2,205,000 (4.6% of the original budget), albeit on relatively limited actual costs in the year to date. This does not include the Recycle More roll out costs, which is accounted for separately.
- The above position includes the financial impacts of Covid-19. All partners are aware of these financial pressures and have included them on their individual MHCLG returns. All costs totalling £953,700 have been funded through Somerset County Councils MHCLG Covid19 funding.
- For District Partners there is a total of £2,376,000 of Covid-19 related additional expenditure. This is due to the delay of the roll out of Recycle More (£1,826,000) and additional collection costs which also includes some support vehicles and validation of Suez's costs by Eunomia (£550,000).
- Waste Collection estimated figures for the collection partners indicate a potential combined £2,253,000 overspend across the 4 partners at this stage. There are still some unknowns which could impact the outturn position such as the demand for replacement containers and the use of the bulky waste collection service.
- Recycle More project is kept separate from the continuation budget. At the end of 2019/20 the project balance was a deficit of £140,000. It is anticipated that during 2020/21 £2,233,000 will be spent on the roll out of the Recycle More project which will leave an anticipated deficit of £2,373,000 at outturn. Updates to the board through the year as roll out commences.
- Waste disposal costs are forecast to underspend by £48,000, this is down to waste volumes being less than budgeted. The most significant areas seeing a reduction is recycling centres and green waste at both kerbside and recycling centres. This reduction is in part offset by an overspend on head office costs (£105,000).
- The following SCC savings are built in to the 2020/21 budget totalling £361,100 including core services, contract extension, Fly-tipping compensatory scheme removal, Minimisation Cap, Slim my Waste, Feed

my Face food campaign. All these savings have either been made or are on target to be achieved by the end of the financial year except for 20% of the Slim my Waste, Feed my Face saving. This shortfall of 21,000 as a result of Covid-19 has been funded through MHCLG Covid-19 funding.

- Indicative Annual Budget for 2021-2022 - The table in the report shows the inflation and growth assumptions. During 2021/22 there will be roll out costs for Recycle More which will be managed outside of the 'core' Somerset Waste Partnership budget.
- Disposal Factors showing in the report are initial forecasts.
- The above budget excludes the costs of the roll out of Recycle More during 2021/22.

Members were also provided with an update of the Audit plan shown at appendix A due to the delay of the impact of Covid-19.

The panel were then updated on Appendix B, regarding the truck cartel claim. Member were reminded that the European Commission had discovered the existence of a truck cartel, which was detrimental to some; therefore, it became possible to attempt to recover the costs associated with this. In 2018 it was decided to go with the LGA scheme, but that turned out not to be as advertised, so other options were examined (the short list is demonstrated in the table in the appendix). After consideration, it was recommended to go with the Edwin Coe scheme (a large, reputable law firm).

The Panel asked how much could be expected to recover. The response was that there were potentially £6.7 million in qualifying purchases at the upper estimate, and the amount would be a portion of that (10-25%), so up to £1.7 million could be recovered, with part of that going to the law firm.

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel recommended:

That the Somerset Waste Board:

- 1. Notes the summary financial performance for 2020/2021 to the end of month 4 (April – July) and the potential outturn position for each partner authority.**
- 2. Considers the draft budget for 2021/2022 and the key factors that will influence the budget setting process.**
- 3. Approves the proposed approach to using our internal audit support as set out in Appendix A.**
- 4. Notes the way forward regarding the Truck Cartel claim.**

78 Revised Recycle More Roll Roll-Out Timetable- Agenda item 7

Communications Manager Mark Ford gave a presentation around the current communications and engagement taking place. He highlighted the following:

- Two leaflets will go out to all households in Mendip, the first this week as the “warmup”, and the second from the 5th of October as the pre-launch which will have more details and a collection day calendar.
- The blue bag will be delivered in October.
- If collection dates change for consumers, they will have an interim collection.
- There are new colour-coded images demonstrating what type of recycling goes into each container.
- The website has been updated and there is a dedicated page where leaflets can be download and there are FAQs.
- Regarding stakeholder engagement, they have been sent briefing packs and there is Recycle More Messenger.
- Promotional material including displays, leaflets and posters have been produced.
- Online engagement includes Facebook Q and A sessions (two out of four already completed), parish meetings (two out of three have been completed), talking café’s, and Schools Against Waste virtual assemblies and workshops.
- Support available includes the website, customer services, extra staff, and online engagement.
- Requests for more container space due to collections moving to only three times a week can be handled by calling the district councils or going online.

Colin Mercer, Contracts Manager of Somerset Waste Partnership, explained there will be additional staff and resources at SWP to assist with driving changes in consumer behaviour, as there will be an overall increase in demand for services due to the new initiatives. There will be 26 additional heads working on mobilisation of Recycle More, and Suez will have 5 additional management support staff, as well as 4 additional recycling vehicles. New routes will be optimised for better productivity, and Covid-19 readiness will be affected by changes in the contract and services, plus additional support and vehicles.

The Panel asked several questions about the following; use of carrier bags; using one box as opposed to all containers; incorrect items in containers; broken boxes/containers; delivery of blue bags: bulky cardboard.

Responses to the questions were given. People can use carrier bags in order to separate different materials, but crews will return/leave the bags for re-use. It is

acceptable to use one recycling box than all the containers, but the blue bag must have the correct items and will not be sorted by crews; glass especially should not be placed in it, and batteries and electrical items must be separate. The crews are still required to collect the boxes, but they will leave behind the incorrect items. As far as the blue bag and brown food waste bins, if there are incorrect items in these, the whole container will be rejected, and a tag will be left. It is more likely to be rejected if the items are dangerous, such as broken glass, which should be wrapped and disposed of in the wheelie bin if not taken to a recycling centre. Damaged boxes will be replaced if requested, which can be done online; crews will also identify broken boxes and leave a note saying that a new one has been ordered. Suez is being encouraged to take more care with boxes, and new technologies have been utilised to ensure that newer boxes are more resilient. Blue bags will be left on the day of recycling collection during the two weeks prior to roll-out. The amount of cardboard has increased greatly during Covid due to online orders and delivery; therefore, sometimes a support vehicle collects it at an earlier time than normal, and there are requests via notes delivered that it be put out for collection a little at a time.

The slogan "More recycling means less waste" will be used extensively in order that people don't panic about rubbish collections only once every three weeks.

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel recommended that the Somerset Waste Board

1. Notes the progress made in implementing Recycle More.

79 Proposed Fees and Charges 2021/2022– Agenda Item 8

The Chair invited Colin Mercer to provide an update on the Proposed Fees and Charges 2021/2020. The report sought members approval for fees and charges applied to waste services for which a charge may be made, for the financial year 2021/2022. Colin highlighted there were slight differences this year for Viridor (2.6%) and Suez (3.0%) because of slight differences in the indices for the two contracts. With regard to garden waste, there were large changes in the service because of the suspension of the service due to Covid-19 and there was a rebate for users, which produced a claim on the relief fund. There will also be a change in the renewal requirements, which no longer have to be on the 1st of April but at any time in the year, whenever 12 months have expired. With respect to bulky collections, the service has been improved and Biffa introduced a new service. Colin informed the Panel an impact assessment, was not required for the report.

The Panel were satisfied with the report and recommendations.

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel recommended that the Somerset Waste Board

1. Note the progress made in implementing Recycle More.

80 Outline of Business Plan 2021-2026– Agenda Item 9

The Chair invited Mickey Green to provide an update of the Outline of Business Plan 2021-2026. He gave the panel a presentation on the Somerset Waste Partnership Draft Business Plan for the period 2021 to 2026 that will be iterated through a number of meetings, starting at this meeting with a discussion on priority areas and approach. A draft business plan will be presented to the Board in December 2020, with partner consultation in January and February the final business plan presented in February 2021. The vision and values remain the same, with the key areas of focus being the delivery of excellent services, effecting a change in behaviour, and the building of capacity.

Panel members asked a number of questions including: whether clothing recycling was still occurring; the recycling of shoes and clothing has restarted, but only if they are wearable (not rags). Colin Mercer pointed out that the clothing market has changed due to low-price outlets for clothing, and people were being encouraged to utilise charity shops. If promoting the theme of rubbish to energy (as in the Avonmouth plant) would contradict and discourage recycling; it was acknowledged that this could be a possibility and would have to be considered and discussed with Viridor. The waste hierarchy was in the order of reduce, reuse, recycle and repurpose and this message would continue to be promoted. The purchase and use of electric waste trucks, like those in Cambridgeshire, was discussed; Mickey Green stated that they are having conversations with Suez about this and are waiting for an update from them by the next Board meeting. It may be a possibility in 2024 and discussions will continue, but consideration needs to be given to price (£150,000 for a non-electric vehicle, £400,000 for electric), recharging/ recovery difficulties, and lack of capacity.

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel recommended that the Somerset Waste Board:

1. Comment on and approve the broad approach and proposed priority areas for inclusion in the Business Plan 2021-26 as set out in Section 2 of the report.

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.

81 Any Other Urgent Items of Business - Agenda Item 10

There were no other items.

(The meeting ended at 3.56pm)

CHAIR