

## **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 23<sup>rd</sup> June at 2.00 pm.

**Present:** Cllr A Trollope-Bellew (Chair), Cllr M Dunk (Vice-Chair), Cllr B Hamilton, Cllr Liz Leyshon, Cllr T Munt, Cllr A Boyden, Cllr H Bruce, Cllr R Bastable, Cllr J Hassall

**Other Members Present:** Cllr D Hall, Cllr A Kendall, Cllr C Paul, Cllr J Lock and Cllr S Dyke (South Somerset District Council)

### **Annual Appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board**

Nominations were invited for the Chair of Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board. Cllr Liz Leyshon nominated Cllr Anthony Trollope Bellew, and this was seconded by Cllr Brain Hamilton.

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 2021/22.

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

Members agreed by a majority vote that Cllr M Dunk be appointed as Vice Chair for 2021/22.

### **Apologies for Absence:**

No Apologies

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

There were none declared.

### **Minutes from the Previous Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021** –Agenda Item 3

The Panel agreed the minutes as an accurate record noting to correct the spelling of the Chair's name on page one to 'Bellew'.

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

A late submission was received from Mr Pope and members were informed he had received a response in writing.

There were no further public questions.

95 **Constitutional Matters, Waste Board Membership and Meeting Dates 2021/2022**

The Chair invited Governance Specialist Julia Jones to provide a verbal update on the Constitutional Matters, Waste Board Membership and Meeting dates for 2021-22. The report summarises key dates and membership for the Somerset Waste Board and Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board.

The following was highlighted:

- Revisions in the Membership for Somerset Waste Board and Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board, after publication Mendip District Council updated the Membership and the panel were advised of the change.
- Meeting dates for the coming year.
- The change in the temporary legislation and the revised guidance procedures for face-to-face meetings/virtual meetings. The Panel will continue to meet virtually as it does not fall under the 1972 Act, however Somerset Waste Board members are required to be present and meet in person.

Panel members asked questions regarding the panel meetings and if they were still to be on the Wednesdays before the board meeting and the representatives on the panel from Mendip District Council. The Panel were informed that the meeting will take place the Wednesday before the Board meeting on a Friday and the invites will be circulated. It was confirmed that Cllr Michael Dunk and Cllr Adam Boyden were the members from Mendip District Council.

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considered and commented on the report and recommended that the Somerset Waste Board:**

- 1. Notes the revised Board's membership for 2021/22 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 2021 and 2022 set out in section**

**Acknowledges the need for the Board to again operate under the 1972 legislation and the requirement to return to face to face meetings.**

The Chair invited Strategic Finance Manager Christian Evans to provide a verbal update on the financial performance as part of the end of year financial reporting.

The following was highlighted:

(Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board- Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021)

- The total Partnership underspend was £488,700 (1.02% of the original budget). The Recycle More project work was funded from a separate project fund.
- On Collections the overall position for District partners was an overspend of £147,900.
- The final quarter of Covid-19 costs were £291,000, offset in part by the underspend on garden waste income of £120,000. The balance was a number of other small budget variances. These are to be returned (subject to board approval) and will be accounted for appropriately by partners to reflect the year to which they are attributable.
- The disposal position improved at the end of the year, resulting in an underspend on this budget area of £637,000. The underspend is largely due to reduced tonnages at the recycling sites due to their closure at the start of the financial year. Changes in kerbside tonnages were included in the balances attributable to Recycle More. This was an increase in dry recycling and food tonnages at the kerbside diverting waste away from the more expensive residual waste disposal routes.
- The outturn position also includes an underspend on the school's collection contract of £112,900 due to delays as a result of covid-19 to the roll out of enhanced recycling provision to school. The balance to be carried forward to 2021/22 as part of Somerset County Councils outturn to enable the delayed work to be carried out in 2021/22.
- All these savings were achieved by the end of the financial year except 20% of the Slim my Waste, Feed my Face saving which was funded through MHCLG Covid-19 funding as Covid impacted its deliverability.
- For 2020/21 the net position for Recycle More was an overspend of £824,200. This leaves the project fund balance at the end of the year with a deficit of £964,200 and SCC hold the debt.
- Further work was done to update the breakeven position and it was reported to a joint meeting of S151's and SMG in April that the breakeven is now anticipated to be in quarter three of 2022/23.
- The total Covid-19 additional spend for Somerset Waste Partnership for 2020/21 was £3,003,800 (£697,400 SCC, £2,306,400 District Partners). This was for the delayed roll out of Recycle More, re-opening of HWRC sites and associated costs, changes to tonnages, additional collection costs and head office costs such as PPE and the undeliverable element of the Slim my Waste, Feed my Face campaign.
- As with 2020/21 partners include these Covid-19 costs on their individual MHCLG returns and will be charged accordingly in line with the cost sharing principles set out in the Inter Authority Agreement.
- Appendix A includes shows accounts in details, Appendix B the use of balances to be approved and Appendix C the Audit Plan 2021/2022 and review of last year.

The Panel asked a few questions including:

The Garden waste creditors and debtors figures for District Councils; legal cost increases of £42,662.00 compared to last year; clarification on Appendix A on the balance sheet of useable reserves for Mendip Council which is significantly different to others authorities. The current position in regard to the current challenges Somerset Waste Partnership has along with the COVID impact; COVID-19 Funding for the County and District Councils; an explanation of why Suez show as debtor and creditor.

The Strategic Finance Manager Christian Evans explained the monies accounted from one year to the following year and once received it was distributed to the District Council. Included in this are garden waste and depo costs. It was business as usual to account for from one year to the next once revenue passed to the District Council and then distributed into the correct year. Mendip were the first area to introduce Recycle More and started early for the garden waste and therefore the money was taken early for this instead of 2020/2021. All was on target for 2022/2023 and officers were comfortable at the current position. The County and District Councils apply for COVID funding separately and use for their own elements. The details will be provided via email.

Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director Mickey Green explained to the new panel members about the dispute with the previous contractors Kier and the legal cost was high in relation to a number of issues where expert legal advice was required. Mickey agreed to have one to one meeting with new board members to provide them with the background information. There were monthly meetings with Section 151 Officers and discussions about different aspects for example COVID-19 or Recycle More. Audits took place every three years in the County Council, and Somerset Waste Partnership, with regular internal audits through the Southwest Audit Partnership.

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considered and commented on the report and recommended that 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 2020/2021 as presented in Appendix A.**
- 2. Approves 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 2021.**
- 3. Notes the outturn position of the Recycle More fund in paragraph 2.4.**
- 4. Approves the proposed approach to using our internal audit support as set out in Appendix C.**

The Chair invited Somerset Waste Partnership's Managing Director, Mickey Green to provide a verbal update on the performance report. The report covers the key performance indicators for the period from January 2021 to March 2021 and

compares these to the same period last year. The aim was for a more rounded view of performance than the previous separate reports the board received and provide greater transparency and accountability. This period was significantly affected by Covid-19.

Mr Green apologised to the residents for the severe disturbance, to services.

He then highlighted the following:

- Congratulated the staff at Somerset Waste Partnership for the dedication and work as the challenges continue including long hours and some weekend work to catch up on missed collections especially through the pandemic.
- SWP was currently working with National Association, Local Authorities and working with the waste industry to push the issues onto central government to action.
- Understandably recent service performance has been a cause for serious concern for the Board, and it was hoped listening to senior management would provide an opportunity to better understand both the causes for the service issues and the actions in place to address them.
- SUEZ had been issued with service breakdown warning notice a formal step under the contract and it was on record in regard to the poor level of service that has been provided recently.

A short presentation to the Board by senior SUEZ management Matt Canning (Somerset contractor Director) and Steve Holgate (Director of Fleet and Contract Mobilisation) followed on the current state of services and the prognosis for the near future given the severe service issues being experienced.

The following was highlighted:

- Current issues on the experience of high level of service distribution. Recycling service has been the most disrupted service, and there was an increase in complaints. Saturday working had been introduced to help mitigate this.
- Suez were experiencing similar problems as other contractors nationally regarding the national driver shortage, the pandemic and the back log of LGV test availability. There were driver and loader shortages along with staff absence and sickness.
- There were challenges in forecasting the position recognising the driver challenges, however on a positive note of 10 loaders to be trained 8 were successful but progress was slow due to the impact of COVID.
- Measures introduced included a guarantee of 22 drivers to support Somerset, an additional dedicated HR manager and recent employment of a recruiter for Somerset. An employee referral scheme had been set up and there was an increase in advertising. Bonuses were being paid, and in

the coming weeks further interviews planned. Retention methods aimed at boosting staff morale such as schemes such as Employee of the week, month, year along with crew of the week, month and year had been instigated.

The Panel asked a few questions including explanation on a CPC card; terms and conditions of staffing, whether there had been changes in existing contracts; sickness levels; pay levels for drivers and loaders and what SUEZ pay currently; any problems with holiday and leave. There was further discussion around the pay levels and incentives to encourage drivers and loaders; the extra costs that with the current workloads were affecting Somerset Waste Partnership; how many drivers and loaders had been lost due to Brexit or not renewing licenses; confirmation on the shortage of loaders and drivers; the pressures caused due to the lack of available agency workers or lost permanent staff. Managers were also asked about the formal recruitment retention policy at SUEZ; given feedback about SUEZ website which was made job application. Reassurance was sought that that the situation in Somerset has been escalated to the very highest possible level within SUEZ and everything possible to fix the current situation. There was a further suggestion about targeting ex-military drivers and approached the Armed Forces resettlement centre system and relocation packages as well as concerns around mileage payments and classification of essential workers.

Somerset Contract Director Matt Canning explained the requirements for the Certificate of Professional Competence for drivers to complete 7 hours of training per year every 5 years in order to drive LGV vehicle. When SUEZ took on the contracts all of the employees were given the options to take on SUEZ contract and the majority welcomed the new contract with more holiday entitlement plus bank holidays. Monday was day when most sickness occurred. The pay levels currently for drivers £12.23 and Loaders at £10.20 on 40 hours a week contract. It was confirmed that SUEZ are paying the additional costs. All employees last year and this year received a 2.5% pay rise and there was a loss of around 10% of drivers, the figure for loaders would be provided to the panel and board. There was a loss of both permanent staff and agency staff, and this included factors such as retirement, and staff conduct SUEZ is currently working together to put a recruitment retention policy into place and will share with the members. Mr Canning confirmed he would report back to the head of recruitment and advise the panel on the recruitment process and the support when filling in applications forms. Relocation allowance is not in the policy currently. Whilst Taunton depo is being built and staff being relocated to Bridgwater mileage payments are being claimed until till the depo is reopened.

Director of Fleet and Contract Mobilisation Steve Holgate assured members that discussions about these matters were taking place at senior levels, and the Chief Executive Officer apologised for not being in attendance today. SUEZ has full commitment, the drivers training team have been to Somerset as well as three regional fleet managers. 22 employees to support the current workloads have now been put into place for six weeks along with additional 24 drivers across the

County, and highlighted those other authorities occurred the same problems in struggling to recruit. Once the Recycle More projects has be rolled out it will free additional 10 drivers again to support the other routes. Apprenticeship programmes due to start shortly with 24 young people to be put through their licenses. SUEZ employees included a lot of ex-military such as ex air forces personnel and SUEZ have a veteran group that meet monthly.

The following was highlighted in the Performance report:

- SWP continues to see strong demand from UK based reprocessors for the high-quality materials collected For 2020-21 almost 98.0% of materials stayed in the UK, with the amount that was reprocessed in Somerset also remaining high at almost 51.0%.
- New to this quarter are two additional pages giving an overview of the ongoing General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) project and performance data for the Energy Recovery site at Avonmouth.
- This has now been updated and redesigned with SWP branding and published on the website. Meetings have also been held with district planning teams, with the guidance directly referred to in the SCC Waste Core Strategy.

A Panel Member had a question in regard to waste being exported to Thailand. Mr Green explained that this was mixed paper and cardboard and no other kerbside material. It was only 3% of the total recycling with 97% recycled in the UK.

The Contracts Manager of Somerset Waste Partnership David Oaten who manages all performance with Viridor, highlighted the following:

- in 2014 the journey started to move away from landfill work with Viridor with a contract for new waste facilities and two contract was signed.
- Since 2017 Viridor have been in the build phase one at Castle Cary and the second one being at Walpole and Avonmouth Energy from Waste Plant with impact of COVID and Brexit through the period and contract start in April 2020.
- The Avonmouth plant formally opened in June 2020 for commissioning phase.
- In December 2020 Viridor became the owners of the plant and start reporting to the Somerset Waste Board.
- There was a plan for Members to visit the site in due cause.
- A fire had taken place in the Dimer transfer station and some parts will need to be rebuilt with this being offline till end of July early August. The contingency plan was in place and waste was being rerouted to Evercreech.

The Panel were informed of the process of the Avonmouth Plan. There was a discussion about dioxins and the recording in the report.

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considered and commented on the report and recommended:**

**Somerset Waste Board notes the performance results in the Fourth Quarter 2020-21 Performance Management Report and discuss the current collection service issues and mitigation plans in place.**

90 **Recycle More update-** Agenda Item 8

The Chair invited Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director Mickey Green to provide a verbal update on Recycle More. The paper updates on the successful phase 1 roll-out, preparations for the roll-out in South Somerset given the recent service pressures.

The following was highlighted:

- The Recycle More roll out for Somerset West and Taunton area had been moved to 1<sup>st</sup> of November.
- The graph highlights recycling has increased by 20% and refuse decreased by 30%.
- In the future the communal rollouts will be done at the same time.
- The Mendip customer survey had 1,435 online responses with questions relating to the service provided and the understanding around Recycle More. Paper survey had around 600 responses
- There had been a successful delivery of the with 'Warm-up' leaflet to South Somerset homes 6 weeks before the launch. As expected, this led to a spike in container orders (with nearly 3000 individual containers being ordered the week after leaflet delivery) but online systems and South Somerset District Council (SSDC) Customer Services worked well in coping with this pressure.
- 110 bright blue bags have been delivered to district councillors, parish councillors/clerks for them to test drive.

Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director explained previous stock was being used and a sticker will be provided for a reminder about what will go in for recycling with the Recycle more rollout.

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considered and commented on the report and recommended:**

- **Somerset Waste Board notes the progress made in implementing Recycle More and the risks to the programme.**



## 91 **Updating on decarbonising Somerset Waste Partnership Operation**

The Chair invited Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director Mickey Green to provide a verbal update

The following was highlighted:

- The business case for the trial of 5 electric supervisor vans based at Evercreech depot is nearly finalised. This will be Revenue neutral to SWP the only cost will be the 12k upfront cost.
- The HVO Fuel trial to take place.
- SWP are exploring the trial of a Dennis Eagle conversion/retrofit of diesel RCV to electric (reconditioned - retains chassis and most of rear body). SWP will trial one for 6 weeks in Somerset (predominantly Bridgwater area) from late June.
- The main purpose of this trial is to ensure that it is operationally viable so ahead of the partial refleet in 2024
- It has been agreed that the Taunton and Evercreech depots are the priority for exploring alternative sources of electricity given their high and stable demand for electricity because of their sorting and baling equipment. An initial options appraisal by SUEZ identified photovoltaics (PV) as the most viable option. SUEZ have undertaken a procurement to identify a preferred bidder (Olympus –based in Exeter)
- The Avonmouth Plastics Reprocessing Plant is due to start its commissioning phase toward the end of August/early September. Once fully operational, it will use between 70GWh to 105GWh (23 to 34%) of the power generated by the adjacent Energy from Waste facility, as well as use some of the heat produced, making both the EfW & plastics plant even more carbon efficient.

The Panel asked a few questions about the 5 electric van trials use in office hours and out of hours and consideration of working with SCC in regard to Climate emergency. Member were told the majority of driving was within office hours. Electric vehicles will be travelling many miles and will need to be charged overnight.

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considers and comments on this report and recommended:**

**Somerset Waste Board notes the progress made in decarbonising our operations.**

## 92 **Update on Schools Education and Behaviour Change**

The Chair invited Mickey Green to provide a update who informed members SWP saw its work with schools as crucial to drive behaviour change and has made numerous improvements to how it works with schools to progress this further. Clearly the last year has been very challenging for schools as well as SWP, so this work was not as fully progressed as wished, however there was confidence in the plans for the future.

The following was highlighted:

- Since the launch of Schools Against Waste programme, on behalf of SWP Carymoor has completed over 248 visits to 168 schools (80 repeat visits) and introduced around 39,500 youngsters to the ideas of waste reduction and recycling (correct as of 31 May 2021)
- As part of the engagement with schools ahead of contracting with Suez, a number of barriers were identified where schools felt they needed support with improving their recycling rate
- SWP believes that Eco-Schools provides a very important means of embedding improved environmental behaviours within schools, particularly within secondary schools where the appetite to do more is there, but the interface between young people, school management/leadership, teachers and cleaning staff means that this doesn't translate to changes in behaviour
- SWP will be launching a new grant scheme in the autumn term 2021. It will offer grants of £500 to up to 50 schools.

The Panel asked a few questions including assisting the local pantry scheme, which helps to reduce food waste by offering low-cost nutritious food for residents and was operating in Somerset with three pantries working from community centres with collecting cardboard through the Recycle More scheme. Mr Green informed the board this is an area that SWP would consider.

### **The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considered and commented on the report and recommended:**

- **Somerset Waste Board notes the progress to date and the plans to progress this further.**

## 93 **Update on National Waste and Resources –**

The Chair invited Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director Mickey Green to provide an update on the National Government consultation on a Waste Prevention Plan and three other major consultations (collectively the 'collection and packaging reforms'):

The following was highlighted:

- The consultations aim to increase the ease by which consumers and businesses are able to separate recyclable waste from non-recyclable waste through a combination of approaches, notably consistent waste collections, clearer labelling on packaging and the provision of return points for DRS drinks containers.
- SWP proposed response on consistency, free garden waste, Statutory guidance including residual waste frequency, and areas of mis-alignment between the three consultations.
- Whilst government is minded of requiring a maximum residual waste frequency of fortnightly, it is notable that this is not being consulted on, is not likely to form part of regulations, but instead will be in statutory guidance.

**The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel has considered and commented on the report and recommended:**

**Somerset Waste Board notes the responses (submitted or proposed) to the national consultations and the potential impact on Somerset.**

93 **Somerset Waste Board Forward Plan**– Agenda Item 9

The Panel agreed the current Somerset Waste Board Forward Work Plan

94 **Any Other Urgent Items of Business** - Agenda Item 10

There was none.

(The meeting ended at 16.24pm)

**CHAIR**