

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 Thursday 23rd September 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 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)

95 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received by Cllr Robin Bastable

96 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

There were none declared.

97 Minutes from the Previous Meeting on 23rd June 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' and further amendment to page 6 regarding the Suez website when applying for a job as the application highlighted some difficulties in the process and to include further detail about the additional costs.

98 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were no public questions.

The Chair invited Strategic Finance Manager Christian Evans to provide a verbal update on the financial performance. The report set out 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.

The following was highlighted:

- Somerset Waste Partnership budget is forecast to be overspent by £627,000. Estimated figures for the collection indicate a potential combined £351,000 overspend across the 4 District partners.
- Somerset County Council forecast is for an overspend of £277,000. This relates to increased waste volumes at the Household Waste Recycling Centres.
- The indicative budget requirements for 2022/2023. The inflation and growth assumptions are as listed in the table in point 3 of the report

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- An adjustment is included to amend the inflation applied to the base prices at the start of the contract; this has a knock-on impact for both 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- Inflation for the collection contract has been calculated on 7% at this stage, this is a basket of indices which includes labour, fuel and CPI. It is difficult to forecast future inflation given the current climate with Covid-19. The actual contract inflation will be known before the final budget is set.
- Household growth is an indicative 0.79% across all District Partners, which is the average annual growth over the last 4 years.
- Garden waste is current shown with an indicative growth of 1% across all District Partners as with household growth this will be updated for actual customer numbers for each District before the budget is finalised.
- Breakeven point is anticipated to be in Quarter 3 of 2022/23. Savings included in the report are reflected in the breakeven point. Once breakeven point is reached, contract savings will be shared on the basis currently stated in the Inter Authority Agreement.

The Panel asked a few questions including: an explanation why the table on page 23 figures do not add up; clarification about the paragraph just above 2.1 of the report where it states the future situation with Covid is uncertain; total overspend relating to additional covid payments and if any of the spends recoverable; disposal costs and costs incurred by the Avonmouth insinator and the an impact of this; is there any remaining Covid funding at SCC that will impact this year's budget; household growth figures being affected .

Christian Evans responded by stating the figures shown in the table on page 23 were rounded and confirmed that the future situation was unknown due to Covid cost. There is SCC emergency fund that can be used across the whole of SCC but was unlikely to be used for Waste Services. Mickey Green confirmed there were regular meetings with Section 151 Officers in regard to the overspends previously government funding was used but this was no longer the case. Suez have put in place measures to protect Staff from COVID. The disposal costs are higher than original estimates due to residual waste with the waste tonnages increasing and this will reflect in the SCC budget. There are costs to putting the residual waste through Avonmouth but less than going to landfill. Each district will be given the actual household growth figures.

Contracts Manager Colin Mercer informed the board that a meeting has taken place with Suez and all the current COVID restrictions in place would continue due to the infection rates increasing.

Mickey Green provided an update about Somerset Waste Partnership currently trialling a refurbished electric refuse vehicle – a Dennis Eagle e-Collect built on a refurbished chassis. This vehicle will be present for members to view after the boards meeting on Friday 24th September. A full business case has been developed for the installation of Photovoltaic (PV) panels at the two depots SWP have sorting and baling facilities) at a cost of £110k (inc 5% contingency). SWP

have been discussing with partner s151s the possible funding routes for this vehicle and PV – noting that any partner that borrows capital will be entitled to a 1% return above the borrowing rate, and that all District partners would then share in the revenue cost of financing the borrowing in line with weighted household numbers.

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

- 1. Note the summary financial performance for 2021/2022 to the end of month 4 (April – July) and the potential outturn position for each partner authority.**
- 2. Consider the draft budget for 2022/2023 and the key factors that will influence the budget setting process.**
- 3. Note the positive business case for an electric RCV and Photovoltaics at our two sorting and baling facilities, and the urgent need to clarify whether funding is available to progress these key business plan actions.**

The Chair invited Somerset Waste Contracts Manager, Colin Mercer to provide a verbal update on the performance report key performance indicators for the period from April 2021 to June 2021 compared to the same period last year.

The following was highlighted:

- Roll-out of Phase 3 of Recycle More is due to start in the late Autumn in Somerset West and Taunton (old Taunton Deane area), with planning already underway for this phase.
- Overall household arisings were up by just over 13,600 tonnes, or 23.33% compared to Q1 in 2020-21. However, the comparator was quite low compared to normal, due to the suspension of some collection services and the closure of recycling sites in Q1 of last year.
- Recycling rates had improved compared to Q1 last year (up 8.07% to 56.47% from 48.40%), as well as showing an increase over Q1 2019-20 (up 1.50% from 54.97%), used as a comparator unaffected by the pandemic.
- 97.0% of materials stayed in the UK, with the amount that was reprocessed in Somerset also remaining high at over 53.0%
- There was an increase in missed collections in Q1, compared to Q4 (1.548 per 1,000 collections against 0.902 in Q4).
- The high levels of missed collections continue to be the main area of focus with SUEZ at present.

Further information was provided a presentation which highlighted the following:

- Collection service disruption was caused by a number of factors including the national driver shortage, lockdown easing, and staff exhaustion and low morale were also among the regional pressures.
- Upskilling staff was currently happening- including training 23 loaders as drivers and a further 15 applications taken. An employee referral scheme also formed part of the ongoing service recovery.

The Panel asked a few questions including extra information about the tonnages and about the materials that are shipped overseas; clarification about additional drivers needed for Recycle More and if this would be reduced again after roll-out. use of the waste landfill site at Dimmer; the counterbalance between domestic and commercial waste and if the missed collection spike was lack of drivers or other factors; help in explaining to residents about tonnages and sending waste to landfill. Help with communicating to the public regarding what and why items go to landfill. Clarification on Figures on page 52 under key risk reports of abuse to staff members and Page 54 the total tonnage of waste that is collected.

Members were told that some of the recycling was used for packaging for industries such as Amazon. By the end of Recycle More there will be less drivers overall but currently for the rollout there is an investment in more resources. There was pressure in the industry for example recently within one week there had been 29 people self-isolating at once. Somerset have had no reports of abuse at present unlike colleagues in other areas such in the London boroughs. The report uses kilogram per household rather than tonnages but feedback will help inform for next year's performance report

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

Note the performance results in the First Quarter 2021-22 Performance Report.

90 Recycle More update-

The Chair invited Colin Mercer to provide a verbal update on Recycle More. As highlighted to the Board in June the ongoing Covid19 pandemic adds to the risks of the roll-out programme, as does the driver shortage and associated pressures on service stability, and this did impact on the success of the South Somerset roll-out.

The following was highlighted:

- The levels of missed collections dropped rounds and incomplete rounds (which has been too high but gradually falling as services stabilised) led to severe pressure on SSDC customer services.
- Mendip customer survey response totalling 1829 online responses.

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- 84% of residents agreed that the new service is an improvement.
- Leaflets for residents in the Somerset West and Taunton area have been slightly amended from the survey response.
- Areas to develop and to include more information about were plastics, controlling litter and reminders about the 3-week collection days.
- The recycle more impact and the tonnages over 44 weeks in Mendip area and additional amount of recycling is being collected at the kerbside.
- Phase 3 for the former Taunton Deane area and the cross boundaries that will be in phase 4 covering the key communication that will be going out to residents.

The Panel asked about whether tetra packs value and costs to dispose of them.

Somerset Waste contracts Manager, Colin Mercer explained there were some additional concerns about the tetra pack. There would be more communication and information sent out around this issue

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

Note the progress made in implementing Recycle More and the risks to the programme.

91 Fees and Charges 2022/2023

The Chair invited Colin Mercer to provide a verbal update on Fees and Charges.

The following was highlighted:

- The contractual agreement with Viridor regarding charges at recycling centres allows Viridor to uplift charges for items such as rubble, tyres, gas bottles and commercial waste annually by the (Viridor) contracted inflation rate RPI this year is 1.37%. As these transactions are between Viridor and the customer, these services are cost neutral to the Council.
- The agreement with Suez regarding contract charges for the following financial year is applied from a basket of indices published in October in the year prior to the uplift.
- Considering two factors in particular, the level of service disruption suffered by customers/residents and estimated inflationary pressures last year did not fully impact as much as predicted, it is recommended all charges relating to collection services are frozen at last year's levels.

The Panel asked a about the Government's idea to make garden waste collection free.

Members were advised the government will make the announcement early next year about the garden waste.

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

1. Agree the proposed charges for introduction from April 2022

92 **Increasing reuse and repair in Somerset-**

The Chair invited Mickey Green to provide an update which included the results of a report commissioned to look into how reuse and repair can be increased across Somerset.

The following was highlighted:

- Three models were proposed by Resource Futures and further work would be needed to determine precise costs. Whilst the initial set up costs may be significant, the hope was that models will be self-sustaining in the future, allowing for minimal ongoing costs.
- The funding bid has been submitted and SWP will be notified as to whether it has been successful at the end of the year. If successful, the project will take place in 2022. If it is not successful, option 3 will not proceed, unless identified as a preferred model by partners.
- SWP are positive about each option and would like to progress all three. Officers are looking for a steer from the Panel and Board as to the preferred approach, and this will be incorporated into the budget setting process and the business plan.

The Panel asked a few questions including the links to the share shop in Frome; the repair bus and potential funding for this model; and the three options put forward and the potential to manage all three.

It was confirmed that part of the work that Resource Futures had completed included interviewing different groups in Somerset to understand barriers and SWP are working with those groups. Section 3 of the report summarised the funding needed and explained if the bid was successful, this enabled a pilot of the repair bus concept for a year at minimal cost or risk to the partners. SWP would like to achieve all three of the options.

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considered and commented on the report and recommended to the Board that it

- 1. Comments on and approve the broad approach and proposed models for increasing reuse and repair.**
- 2. Discuss and provide a steer as to preferred options taking into account the indicative costs and budget setting process.**

93 **Somerset Waste Partnership Outline Business Plan 2022-2027-**

The Chair invited Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director Mickey Green to provide an update on the Somerset Waste Partnership Draft Business Plan for the period 2022 to 2027. This will be 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 2021, partner consultation in January and February with approval from the Board to the final business plan sought in February 2022.

The following was highlighted:

- There will be a particular customer focus for SWP, both the recovery of customer confidence following the driver and loader shortages and the impact/opportunity of moving to a single customer service function for Somerset and how SWP prepares.
- Areas of the business plan will be fleshed out (particularly the approach to reuse, the subject of a separate paper to the Board), and an amendment to the timetable with the focus on customer service and a stable transition to a unitary authority
- Further national consultations were undertaken in Spring 2021 on Deposit Return Schemes, Extended Producer Responsibility and collection consistency (including free garden waste and possible minimum service standards).

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel has considered and commented on the report and recommended to the Board that it:

- 1. Comments on and approves the broad approach and proposed priority areas for inclusion in the Business Plan 2022-27 as set out in section 2 of the report.**
- 2. Discusses 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**

The Panel supported the draft business plan and it was highlighted the sensible approach to consolidate the work already underway. They personally thanked the hard work of officers at SWP year on year especially after the previous year of tackling the problems due to COVID and the introduction of Recycle More. It was noted that employees in the public sector continued working throughout this time with a much-increased workload.

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.

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(The meeting ended at 16.24pm)

CHAIR