

JOINT SCRUTINY PANEL OF THE SOMERSET WASTE BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Panel of the Somerset Waste Board held via Microsoft Teams on 7th December at 2.00pm

Present: Cllr Jo Roundell-Greene, Cllr Dixie Darch (Substitute) Cllr Hilary Bruce, Cllr Harry Munt,

Other Members Present: Cllr Andy Kendell, Cllr Sarah Dyke, Cllr Dawn Denton, Cllr Andy Dingwall

Officers: Colin Mercer, Christian Evans, Mickey Green, Matthew Canning, Nick Cater, Jo Currie, David oaten, Mark Ford, Harry Mclleman, Michael Cowdell

1. Appointment of Interim Chair - Agenda Item 5

Nominations were invited for the Chair of Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board. Cllr Dixie Darch nominated Cllr Jo Roundell-Greene, and this was seconded by Cllr Harry Munt. There were no other nominations and Members agreed by a majority vote that Cllr Jo Roundell-Greene to be appointed as Chair of Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board for the remainder.

2. Chairs Announcements - Agenda Item 5

Chair to inform the Panel of the sad passing of Anthony Trollope-Bellew.

Cllr Trollope-Bellew who farmed the family estate at Crowcombe, on the Quantock Hills, also served three terms as a Somerset County Councillor representing Watchet and Quantocks ward from 2001 – 2013. During his time as a Councillor, he was the Cabinet Member for Environment and sat on numerous committees including the Cabinet, the Somerset Waste Board and the Regulation Committee. Anthony was a passionate supporter of the waste partnership and had a strong strategic voice – instrumental for example in achieving consistency on charges across all Districts and embedding the 'producer pays' principle in charges made locally.

Cllr Trollope-Bellew served the South Quantock ward and also represented SWT on the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee and Chairing the Joint Scrutiny Panel of the Somerset Waste Board.

Prior to the formation of SWT in 2019, he represented the Crowcombe and Stogumber ward at West Somerset District Council where he was a long-serving member and leader from 2015-2019.

The Chair invite the Members of the panel to observe a period of one minute silence.

Chair invited members and officers to indicate if they wish to pay tribute.

Cllr Dixie Darch pay tribute to former Cllr Anthony Trollope Bellew announcing she had worked closely with Anthony on the Quantock Advisory Board and as Councillors at Somerset West and Taunton. Anthony knew the Quantocks very well and dealt with many of conflicting views and manage these professionally, he was a very skilful man and a great deal of respect and of course will be sadly missed.

3. Apologies for Absence:

No Apologies received. Cllr Adam Boyden, Cllr Brain Hamilton, Cllr Michael Dunk, Cllr Robin Bastable and Cllr John Hassall- Cllr Dixie Darch Substituting

4. Declarations of Interest- Agenda Item 2

No declaration to declare.

5. Minutes from the previous meeting- Agenda Item 3

The Panel agreed the minutes from 21st September 2022 as an accurate record.

6. Public Question Time- Agenda Item 4

There were no public questions.

7. Performance Monitoring Report Q2 June 2022- September 2022- Agenda Item 6

The Chair invited Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director, Mickey Green, to provide an update on the performance report for performance monitoring report Q2 June 2022- September 2022 and compares these to the same last year.

The following was highlighted:

- Our overall recycling rate continues to improve compared to last year (up 0.93% to 58.29% from 57.36%).

- almost 96.8% of materials stayed in the UK, with the amount that was reprocessed in Somerset increasing to 56.0%
- Encouraging reuse is a key strand of the SWP Business Plan for 2022-27. The Fixy project and Community Action Groups are the key areas of work that have come from the research commissioned from Resource Futures.
- The aim is to develop a community group network with a designated coordinator(s) to help groups work more efficiently, collaborate better, strengthen community cohesion, facilitate skills share and maximise existing assets in the region.
- A review of how the recycling site network could play a further role in reuse and diverting reusable items from the waste stream will be part of discussions with Biffa once all contractual formalities are complete

Somerset Waste Partnership Strategic Manager Michael Cowdell highlighted the following:

- To assess performance that have direct customer impacts such as missed collections, total assisted collections, repeat, missed collections and service complaints, and important aspects and represented a key criteria that SWP use to establish value for money.
- The delivery of recycle more across the county, which was a very complex, ambitious change and involved in rerouting of every refuse and recycling ran in the county.
- The garden waste service is significantly underperforming, expertise from outside the local contract has been secured by Suez to undertake a root and branch review of the service.
- The Driver Shortages experienced during the summer of 2021 in conjunction with the roll out of Recycle More in South Somerset District Council placed the collection operation under significant pressure. The Garden waste service was suspended at this time to ensure that essential services were maintained.
- Covid-19 has and continues to have impact of sickness absence levels across the contract. The implication is that Sickness levels are unpredictable and short-term fluctuations can affect the number of staff deployed at little notice.
- Understanding that the labour market is challenging and there is greater variability in sickness levels to secure appropriate level of heads to deliver robust service quality

The panel members asked the following questions: Reasoning behind the changes in patterns of decreases in the recycling rate. The panel commented and supported of the Fixy McFix Face and the interactions in the community were positive.

Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director Mickey Green informed the panel the recycling rates prediction of 20% were what SWP had predicted and within the Recycle More report it covers the materials collected.

Harry Mcleman Senior Operatives Manager from Suez informed the panel there's no guarantees SWP could avoid any industrial action. Suez has a strong relationship with the Union and last year Suez did award above inflation pay rise particularly for national driver shortage cohort.

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considered and commented on the following recommendations in this report.

That the Somerset Waste Board:

- **Notes the performance results in the Second Quarter 2022-23 Performance Report.**
- **The Board also note the additional report – Key Performance Indicators Review (Appendix 2).**

8. Recycle More Update- Agenda Item 8

The Chair invited Somerset Waste Partnership Head of Communications and Engagement Mark Ford to provide an update on Recycle More

The following was highlighted:

- SWP provides a waste collection service to 273 schools across the county: 36 Secondary, 213 Primary, 24 Specialist. The service is delivered by SUEZ.
- Recycle More has improved the service by adding plastic pots, tubs and trays to collections, providing additional capacity and improving 'binrastructure'. The aim is to have more separation of recycling and increase recycling rates in schools which currently lag behind domestic rates.
- Mendip offers the best insight as it has been running Recycle More the longest (since October 2020). In Mendip, over the first 23 months, up to September 2022, there was an average decrease of refuse/rubbish of just over 21%, or around 1.7kg each week per household (1% and 0.1kg up since last board report).

- This 42-month period gives context to the impacts of Recycle More over a what has been a turbulent time for waste. It includes a period before any impact from the Slim My Waste campaign (which substantially increased food waste tonnages and may have prompted changes in other materials), Covid (which had varying impacts depending on lockdown restrictions) and Recycle More (being introduced in phases so having an incremental, cumulative effect on tonnages).

The panel members asked the following questions: the kerbside textile collection and the communications around this to residents and the soft plastic trails, persistent organic pollutants regulation and the impact on recycling and bulky collecting and the Communication around this.

Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director Mickey Green informed the panel recycle more is in the business plan and the collections around textile can be confusing as SWP did have to suspend the service for a while and around the communication SWP are awaiting the Market to settle down first before any communication about textiles.

Head of Communications Mark Ford informed the panel the phraseology is shoes and clothes that can be reused that can be worn again, it's kind of the stuff that would be taken to a charity shop. SWP can have a look at promoting that.

David Oaten informed the panel that the European legislation that the Environment Agency in the UK are looking to enforce upon local authorities and focus on the soft furnishings from the home and in particular, the fire retardants on aged furniture, because they are pollutants and the Environment Agency say that they can no longer landfill that type of material. SWP have to maintain a distance between that material and all the other materials that handled both at the site and at the kerbside in terms of bulky collection. There are the regulations that are forcing SWP to not landfill anymore.

There are cost implications potentially are unknown at this stage SWP are awaiting some regulated regulatory position statements from the Environment Agency to give us the detail, but SWP will need to be complying by January.

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considers and comments on the following recommendations in this report.

That the Somerset Waste Board:

- **Notes the progress made in implementing Recycle More and that this will be the final separate report on Recycle More now that the roll-out is fully complete.**

9. Somerset Waste Board Business Plan 2023-2028 - Agenda Item 9

The Chair invited Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director Mickey Green to provide an update on the draft business plan 2023-2028. The financial climate affecting local authorities is particularly challenging, and hence the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) may have a significant impact on the Business Plan.

The following was highlighted:

- The draft Business Plan is attached at appendix A. No changes have been made to the format of the Business Plan as we await the development of a new strategic plan for Somerset Council, and we expect that to lead to the development of a new business/service planning approach.
- The financial challenges facing local authorities have worsened substantially since September meaning that significant revenue savings need to be found by all services and that the availability of capital is very constrained.
- Government expects to publish its formal response to the consultation on consistency in collections before the end of the calendar year, and we also expect a final position from them on charging for DIY waste at HWRCs. These will have significant impacts on SWP. SWP is involved in work with Defra to shape packaging Extended Producer Responsibility, which we expect to result in significant income to the Council in 2024/25.
- To explore joint work with food banks and pantries to support waste reduction, recognising the benefit this can have in supporting people through the cost-of-living crisis
- Attending regular meetings explore how SWP can be more accountable to Local Community Networks and work with them to improve waste reduction, reuse and recycling.
- As part of moving to Somerset Council SWP will cease to have a separate website and use this opportunity to refresh our web presence. SWP will maintain a separate social media presence and continue to explore innovation (e.g. extending use of the Chatbot successfully used in later roll-outs of Recycle More) as well as incremental improvements (improving the functionality of the online calendar) and the further use of new channels such as Nextdoor.

The panel members asked the following questions: Photovoltaic panels will be installed at our Evercreech and Walford Cross depots how is this funded. The work with the food banks and food pantries and the differences between food banks and community kitchens in the Yeovil area.

Somerset Waste Partnerships contracts manager Colin Mercer informed the panel there has been difficulties with the photovoltaic just with our legal section. There has been difficulty with shipping and freight resulting in a slow process. SWP are hopeful that it will continue because the business case, but as the power, the price of power has gone up, although the PV panels have gone up in price since SWP first looked at it, the business case is still relevant and still gives SWP back the savings, which will eventually give SWP the return on the investment and produce some surplus for the Council.

Head of communications Mark Ford informed the panel SWP have been in contact with the Pantry coordinator. Each of them has been offered a selection of things including a collection, a free collection, promotional materials about food waste reduction and recycling SWP has been trailing a collection for one in Bridgwater and as of this week, now collecting from the Minehead pantry as well. A pantry is an arrangement where you pay a modest fee on a weekly basis and have an allotted time where you come in and you pick up a s mixed bag of items depending on what's available that week. which is worth far more than your weekly contribution. There's a limited to people who live within geographical area in terms of numbers.

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considers and comments on the following recommendations in this report.

That the Somerset Waste Board:

- **notes and approves the draft Somerset Waste Partnership Business Plan 2023-28, noting that the Somerset Council Corporate Plan has not yet been set, that the MTFP process is ongoing, and clarity on national government legislation is expected in the coming months.**

10. Update on exploring partial electrification of fleet. -

The Chair invited Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director Mickey Green to provide an update on the data behind the recommendations on the numbers of electric refuse fleet proposed to be bid for as part of the partial refleet in 2024.

The following was highlighted:

- 22 of the SWP fleet needs replacing in 2024 and SWP need to commit to a purchase in this financial year in order to ensure we have a reliable fleet capable of delivering good service quality.
- The trial has taken place across a number of rounds that are of appropriate size and distance and serviced by the existing 26 tonne RCV fleet. T
- Refuse collection routes in Somerset operate on a three-weekly basis, the way in which individual collection days are arranged means that some areas for collection require more travel distance, and inevitably they cover different types of terrain and service different numbers of properties.
- SWP are currently piloting an alternative fuel (Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil - HVO) in our frontline vehicles. This is not a long-term solution (it lowers emissions significantly but is still based on an internal combustion engine) but it may significantly help achieve our decarbonisation goals in the short to medium term.
- Most UK suppliers of HVO are certified to ISCC standards, and SWP insisted on this in our trial. SWP have no reason to doubt that fuel certified as such comes from anything other used oil as it is purported to – i.e., no virgin crops or feedstocks
- The capital costs of two electric refuse vehicles were set out in the September paper and are reflected in capital bids submitted to SCC.
- Risk normally sits with the contractor in ensuring that the fleet procured is adequate to deliver the services – we cannot force SUEZ to use vehicles they are not confident in without changing the risk profile in the contract.
- This behaviour is adopted when the round length is greater than 80 miles or when the crews have had concerns surrounding the vehicles capacity to complete the round.
- This activity generally provides an addition 10 to 15% of charge to the vehicle. On average the vehicle can achieve 79 miles on a single charge in an environment with moderate changes in terrain and in fair weather.

The panel members commented on the following: the disappointment about the problems that have occurred and the technology. The environmental impact of HVO just sounded like a really good solution and complicated it may have.

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considers and comments on the following recommendations in this report.

That the Somerset Waste Board:

- **Notes the information presented to explain the proposed approach being taken to considering the possibility of electric refuse vehicles as part of the partial fleet and notes the further work undertaken on exploring HVO.**

11. Financial Performance Update 2022/2023 and Draft Annual Budget 2023/2024

The Chair invited Strategic Finance Manager, Christian Evans to provide a presentation and update the panel on the Performance Update 2022/2023 and Draft Annual Budget 2023/2024

The following was highlighted:

- The end of October position shows that the Somerset Waste Partnership budget is forecast to be underspent by £3,101,000. This represents 6.3% of the original budget.
- Recycle More now fully rolled out and savings forecast of £2,759,000 (SCC £1,100,000 and Districts £1,659,000).
- Savings on Covid-19 costs in Districts of £320,000.
- Savings on year end accruals for the County Council Disposal contract (£290k), net of additional costs of timber disposal at HWRC sites (£263k).
- Waste disposal costs are forecast to underspend by £1,107,000 This is the largely the Recycle More savings of £1,100,000, however there are also additional costs of timber at the recycling sites (£263k) offset by savings on prior year end accruals for the Disposal contract (£290k), as previously reported to the board.
- Inflation is a very high risk in the present financial climate. This will have a major impact on the base calculation of the collection and disposal contract costs with Biffa, Viridor and Suez.
- All services have been asked to prepare proposals for savings of 5,10 and 20 percent.
- The draft budget for the waste services within the New Somerset Council has been prepared however the budget remains draft i=until the savings are approved.

The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considers and comments on the following recommendations in this report.

That the Somerset Waste Board: -

- **Notes the summary financial performance for 2022/2023 to the end of month 7 (April – Oct) and the potential outturn position for each partner authority.**

- **Considers the draft budget for 2023/2024 and the key factors that will influence the setting of the final budget over the next few months.**

Exclusion of the Press and Public

To consider passing a resolution having been duly proposed and seconded under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting, on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, within the meaning of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972:

12.Somerset Waste Board Forward Plan

The Panel agreed the current Somerset Waste Board Forward Work Plan

13. Any other urgent items of Business

(The meeting ended at 15.53pm)

CHAIR