

SOMERSET WASTE BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Somerset Waste Board held in a Virtual Meeting on Friday 31 July 2020 at 10:00 am

Present: Cllr Dyke (Chair), Cllr Paul (Vice Chair), Cllr Martin, Cllr Ronan, Cllr Keen, Cllr Hall, Cllr Kerley, Cllr Wakefield, Cllr Blaker.

Other Members present: Cllr A Trollope-Bellew

Officers: Scott Wooldridge, Julia Jones, Mickey Green, Natalie Green, Sarah Rose, Paul Hewitt, Colin Mercer, Mike Cowdell, Nick Cater, Tom Woodhams, Terrie Brazier, Laura Rose

Apologies for absence: Cllr A Gilling, Cllr David Mansell

1 Annual Appointment of the Somerset Waste Board Chair and Vice-Chair

It was proposed and seconded that Cllr S Dyke be re-elected as Chair and that Cllr C Paul be re-elected as Vice Chair; the motion was carried and agreed.

2 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 2

Cllr A Gilling, and Cllr D Mansell, substituted by Cllr M Blaker

3 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

There were no new declarations.

4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 February 2020

The minutes of the meeting were read and confirmed by a vote of the Board as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

5 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 5

There were no public questions received by the deadline of 27 July 2020, and no members of the public were present.

At this point the Chair welcomed Cllr A Trollope-Bellew and requested that he give comments from yesterday's Joint Waste Scrutiny committee meeting. He noted the following points:

- It had been noted that the general public had thanked the teams carrying out recycling; however, he would like it to be recorded that ALL waste teams did a wonderful job during the Covid-19 emergency.
- He had been reassured by Sarah Rose, SWP Finance Officer, that there will be no double-claiming by the Council and SWP for extra costs.
- A tax on cardboard was proposed due to the increase in online buying, but this is unlikely to be instituted.
- There was a suggestion that Somerset adopt a practice that occurs in Germany where people put out items that other people may want at the end of one's drive.

Mickey Green stated that re-use is a priority area in the business plan, as is engaging with government about their national strategy.

Cllr Keen noted that members of both the recycling and Suez teams had worked throughout the Covid emergency, despite being short-staffed, and she proposed that a letter be sent to each worker thanking them for their efforts.

Cllr Keen added that she had viewed a BBC television programme about the recycling of cardboard which demonstrated that this is very comprehensive, with the new paper that is produced being put back to use within two weeks.

The Chair agreed that gratitude should be expressed to the waste teams via a note of thanks, and she will work with Mickey Green and his team to effect this.

6 **Somerset Waste Board Membership and Meeting Dates 2020-2021** - Agenda Item 6

Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer, introduced the report for information, highlighting the new Board membership and that of the Joint Waste Scrutiny panel, which brings forward issues for the Board to consider and decide upon.

He pointed out a typographical error with respect to Section 3.2 and noted that the next meeting of the Somerset Waste Board will be 25 September 2020 (not 15 September).

He also highlighted Appendix A, which delineates the regulations with respect to virtual meetings.

The Board **resolved** to:

- 1. Note the revised Board's membership for 2020/21 and Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board set out in Section 2 and the need for induction training for new members.**
- 2. Agree the Board meeting dates for 2020 and 2021 set out in Section 3.**

3. Acknowledge the need for the Board to operate under the rules set out in the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 set out in Section 4.

7 Financial Reports 2019-2020 - Agenda Item 7

The Chair noted that a confidential report regarding the previous contractor would be discussed after Agenda Item 12, as all Somerset Waste Board members had signed the Confidentiality Agreement; any other Councillors or attendees who have not signed this must leave the closed session at that point.

Sarah Rose, Finance Officer for SWP, introduced the report, highlighting that:

- The Board set its Annual Budget for 2019-2020 (originally totalling £46,243,485) at its meeting of 15 February 2019. Individual partner contributions, and the income and expenditure that are subsequently charged to each partner, are prescribed within our Cost Sharing Agreement.
- The Annual Budget is predominantly spent on making payments to our main contractors, these were Viridor and Kier for 2019-2020. These payments account for approximately 94% of our expenditure.
- A number of assumptions are made in the setting of each Annual Budget, such as the tonnage arising, amounts going through each disposal option, household numbers, inflation, the amount of kerbside recycling achieved for recycling credits and the number of green waste customers. Some of these cost drivers are quite volatile and will account for the variations from budget reported.

There was a significant underspend of £1,796,000 (3.9% of the original budget) due to lower garden waste customers and reduced container purchases and deliveries. There were significant waste reductions for residual waste, both kerbside and at recycling sites.

It was noted that the outturn does not include the Recycle More programme, on which £1,241,000 was spent, leaving a deficit for the project at the end of the year of £140,000; no savings resulting from the new contract will be taken from SWP until all roll-out costs have been fully funded.

Two updates were given: First, the partnership audit plan is being revised and will be brought to the September meeting; and second, LGA has been in contact with respect to the truck cartel claim, which will also be discussed at the September meeting. Mickey Green explained that this regards European truckers operating a cartel to increase profits, and he will brief Cllr S Wakefield separately about this.

The Chair thanked Sarah Rose for the report.

The Somerset Waste Board **resolved** to:

- 1. Note the financial outturn position of the Partnership overall and the individual partners' balances at year end, and the summary accounts for 2019/2020 as presented in Appendix A.**
- 2. Confirm 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 2020.**
- 3. Note the outturn position of the Recycle More fund in paragraph 2.4.**
- 4. Agree the case for applying the exempt information provision as set out in the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, and therefore to treat the attached confidential report and its appendices in confidence, as they contain commercially sensitive information, and as the case for the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing that information. Subject to the approval of Recommendation 2 above, agree to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the consideration of the attached confidential report and its appendices where there is any discussion at the meeting regarding exempt or confidential information.**
- 5. Note the approach proposed in the confidential appendix to resolving a number of outstanding contractual issues with Kier. Confidential updates will be brought to future Board meetings.**

8 Performance Monitoring Reports for Q4 2019-2020 - Agenda Item 8

Mickey Green, Managing Director, introduced the report, which covers Quarter 4 of 2019-2020 up to the end of March. He noted the challenges of dealing with Covid and transferring the contract to Suez at the same time, which went smoothly under the circumstances. He highlighted that:

- The building of the new waste plant was delayed
- The risk of missed collections was managed well, while
- Recycling over the year increased to 52.86% with a significant increase in the amount of cardboard, food waste, and steel cans collected.
- Of the materials collected, 90% stayed in the UK for reprocessing
- The Slim My Waste, Feed My Face campaign was rolled out
- There was a big jump in the Facebook following, at a time in which social media is very important, as in dealing with Covid and in rolling out Recycle More

Cllr Blaker pointed out the success of the new Customer Relationship Management system discussed in Section 4.1 of the report, which was phenomenal during challenging times. He queried why there was an increase in the collection of cans;

Colin Mercer replied that there had been an increase in all materials except paper, and people appeared to use more canned goods and drink cans during the Covid lockdown.

The Chair thanked Mickey Green for the report.

The Somerset Waste Board **resolved** to:

Note the performance results in the Fourth Quarter Performance Management Report.

9 Slim My Waste, Feed My Face Campaign - Agenda Item 9

Mickey Green, Managing Director, introduced the report, which was then presented by Mike Cowdell. He pointed out the reason behind the campaign, which was that an analysis of bins revealed that 26% of them contained food waste, and recycling this waste instead would lead to a £950,000 savings in disposal costs. SWP had viewed other similar UK campaigns, such as that of the Bristol Waste Company, that had produced a 16% increase in recycling. He highlighted the following:

- The process of communication with residents, which included information leaflets and stickers to place on bins that were very engaging with children
- The project's roll-out on 4th February 2020, with teams of three following refuse crews to deliver the information packs, although the campaign was suspended on 18th March due to Covid, meaning that just a few areas did not receive the campaign
- Social media was heavily involved in the campaign through Facebook, Twitter and Your Somerset
- Although the impact of Covid made it difficult to determine, the impact of the campaign exceeded expectations based on the massive increase in food waste container orders, which was up by 400%
- During the campaign, there was a significant increase in tonnage of food waste collected, although there has been an increase in the amount of all refuse collected, which has been effective in diverting it from landfill
- There was a savings of £105,00 in disposal costs and an underspend of the estimated budget of £69,242

Cllr Ronan enquired about the feedback from the 17 Slim My Waste workshop sessions carried out by the Schools Against Waste team; Mickey Green responded that they were positively received, and he will share formal feedback with the Somerset Waste Board in the future. There are no plans for more workshops in the county because of Covid and the anticipated roll-out of

Recycle More; therefore, they are unable to establish a date for resuming this campaign.

Cllr Wakefield discussed the future of food recycling through the process of education and expressed her hopes that the campaign will continue as it is so important; she asked if the campaign will be revived. Mickey Green responded that they want to do so, using a different approach to previous campaigns, but at the moment their scarce resources require that they focus on Recycle More. Cllr Wakefield opined that it will help we the new Avonmouth facility can be announced, as people will then know where their recycling goes, which Mickey Green agreed with.

The Somerset Waste Board **resolved** to:

- **Note the outcomes of the campaign to drive higher levels of food waste recycling through the ‘Slim my Waste, Feed my Face’ behavioural change campaign**
- **Delegate authority to the Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership, in consultation with SMG, to decide whether, when and how to roll-out the campaign to the remainder of Somerset.**

10 **Covid-19 Impact on Somerset Waste Partnership** - Agenda Item 10

The Chair reiterated on behalf of all members of the Somerset Waste Board their thanks to everyone in involved with waste in Somerset, not only during the Covid emergency but also during the transition to Suez, as it has been an extraordinary effort. Mickey Green acknowledged that this gratitude and assured that he would pass it on to all staff.

Mickey Green, Managing Director, introduced the report, first discussing recycling sites, which were closed on March 23 in line with most authorities in the UK. We are now in Phase 3, ‘near normal’ operation. Tonnages were lower at the beginning of Covid but are now back up and higher than last year; recycling rates are lower because there is now no opening of black bags to find items that should be recycled. The opening of the Priors Wood facility is on track for tomorrow. As regards kerbside collections, critical services have continued to operate, and weekly conference calls were set up between regional waste authorities. Whilst the build of the Energy from Waste plant at Avonmouth was delayed, the new plant began taking non-recyclable waste from 11th June and now only those limited materials not suitable for this process will go to landfill. Overall, he is confident that the best decisions have been taken during the emergency.

As regards the implications of Covid, he noted that:

- Staff – All worked incredibly hard and deserve much thanks

- Tonnages – These increased, which was not good overall but good for recycling
- Performance – More tonnage created pressures and work is underway to improve service quality
- Missed collections and garden waste – Garden waste collection was suspended before SUEZ came on board and has now been restarted, as well as missed collections; there were more than expected due to the very challenging problems, but SUEZ has now re-routed services and there has been improvement; gratitude goes to the team for working through all this
- Container delivery was suspended from mid-March to mid-May; this has now resumed with 60-70% more requests than normal
- Costs – If there are further outbreaks, the use of Police at recycle centres will be reduced; collections costs have increased due to increased tonnage of recycling; an agreement has been reached with SUEZ for £490,000; there may be still higher tonnages and the situation may change when schools and businesses re-open.
- Fly Tipping – SWP is working closely with the districts and has also been asked to look at the incidence of nuisance bonfires; Somerset had reduced fly tipping significantly but there has now been a return to 10-year averages due to Covid; SWP is working with partners like Streetscene to reduce this
- Lessons learnt – Future outbreaks may be different due to the track and trace program leading to more absences; there has been a move away from landfill and toward shared experiences; recycle sites will not be closed again and fewer Police will be used at them; container deliveries will not be suspended; SUEZ has developed more complex plans for a potential second wave

Cllr Wakefield noted that she has read that the delay in rolling out Recycle More will lead to increases in tonnage and costs; therefore, she asked what will be done with respect to calculating charging differences amongst the districts due to the differences in roll-out dates. Mickey Green responded that amendments have been agreed with district authorities to factor this in, and Sarah Rose added that partners will not take any savings until Recycle More has been completely rolled out, so it will be proportionate.

Cllr Ronan asked with respect to recycling centre signage if there will be “No Engine Idling” signs at all centres; Mickey Green responded that it has been this has been posted extensively on social media to encourage compliance and there will also be signs.

Cllr Martin pointed out, however, that whilst he agrees with the concept of non-idling, there are technical problems with turning engines on and off that can

damage vehicles, particularly diesel autos, so this cannot be imposed upon everyone.

The Chair asked that Mickey Green pass on the Somerset Waste Board's thanks to everyone for their efforts during Covid.

The Somerset Waste Board **resolved** to:

- 1. Note the considerable impact that Covid-19 has had on SWP**
- 2. Endorse the additional spend necessary to date to maintain critical services and authorises the Managing Director, in consultation with SMG and s151 officers, to ensure appropriate funding arrangements are in place to ensure that critical services are maintained.**

11 **Revised Timetable for Recycle More Roll-Out** - Agenda Item 11

Mickey Green introduced the report, noting that the roll-out of Recycle More had to be suspended and that the revised roll-out table reflects Covid risks. There are now four phases instead of five; therefore, the roll-out should finish at the same time as originally planned with all of Mendip and South Somerset involved in the first two phases. Communal properties and schools will not be involved in the initial roll-out in October due to different risks and issues involved, but it is anticipated that their roll-out will be ahead of Phase 2. The timetable set out in Section 1.3 may slip slightly with respect to Phases 3 and 4. He noted that it is more challenging to communicate with the public during Covid, but residents will be kept advised. He also pointed out:

- Suez plans for re-routing were signed off yesterday
- Recycle More benefits come from behavioural changes, hence two leaflets will be going out six weeks before the start and again three weeks before
- Recycle More will benefit from the approach used during Slim My Waste, Feed My Face
- The focus will be on a bright blue bag distributed for recycling, as well as on a new collection date calendar
- There will be a virtual live school workshop
- There will be more social media and virtual communication, as well as better communication with families who have special issues
- Suez will travel around on both the old and new collection days
- The program is expected to break even early in the 2nd quarter of 2022-2023
- There are several risks involved, which have been impacted by Covid, but mitigation measures have been taken

Cllr Keen asked about the state of readiness of the Avonmouth plant; Mickey Green responded that the plant, which is an Energy From Waste site, is still in the commissioning phase and is an independent issue from Recycle More. He noted that in the initial stages of Recycle More, the improved depot in Mendip will be essential to dealing with extra material and meeting turnaround times, and it is on track for the revised timetable.

Cllr Blaker asked if the communal properties would continue in future to have Recycle More introduced later than other properties, or if later on this would occur simultaneously; it was responded that they expect to catch up with communal properties during later phases of the roll-out, as the 50,000 kerbside collections are the first priority, especially during Covid.

The Somerset Waste Board **resolved** to:

Agree the revised roll-out timetable for the new Recycle More collection service and authorise the Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership to vary the roll-out due to the significant uncertainty created by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

12 **Somerset Waste Board Forward Plan** - Agenda Item 12

The Forward Plan was viewed.

The Somerset Waste Board **resolved** to:

Note the Somerset Waste Partnership Forward Plan

The Chair then moved to move into confidential session so that further information respective to the confidential appendix to the Financial Reports (Agenda Item 7) could be given (see confidential minutes).

Following a presentation and further discussion on this issue, the meeting was then brought back into public session.

13 **Information Sheets Issued Since the Last Meeting** - Agenda Item 13

There were none.

14 **Any other urgent items of business** – Agenda Item 14

There were no other items of business. The Chair thanked all Members and Officers.

(Somerset Waste Board – 31 July 2020)

(The meeting ended at 11:52 am)

CHAIR