

## **Somerset Waste Board**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Somerset Waste Board held at Council Chamber, Mendip District council, Shepton Mallet on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 10.00 am.

**Present:** Cllr S Dyke (Chair), Cllr C Paul (Vice-Chair), Cllr D Hall, Cllr D Mansell, Cllr T Kerley, Cllr A Gilling, Cllr J Keen, Cllr T Ronan

### **Other Members Present:**

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

Nominations were invited for the Chair of Somerset Waste Board. Cllr Tom Ronan nominated Cllr Sarah Dyke, and this was seconded by Cllr Tim Kerley.

Members agreed by a majority vote that Cllr Sarah Dyke to be appointed as Chair of Somerset Waste Board for 2021/22.

Nominations were then invited for the appointment of Vice Chair of Somerset Waste Board. Cllr David Hall nominated Cllr Clare Paul for the position which was seconded by Cllr Sarah Dyke

Members agreed by a majority vote that Cllr Clare Paul to be appointed as Vice Chair for 2021/22.

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Cllr Andy Sully and Cllr Darch substituting virtually

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

Cllr A Gilling declared an interest as a member of the Axe Brue Drainage Board.  
**Minutes from the Previous Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2021** –Agenda Item 3

The Board agreed the minutes were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the chair.

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

There were no public questions.

### **Feedback from Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Waste Board**

The Chair informed the Board that the Panel had a very robust meeting, and the following was highlighted.

- The Panel meeting was well attended, and new members were welcomed.
- There was a long and constructive discussion on the Performance report where Matt Canning and Steve Holgate from Suez attended and gave a presentation and answered a number of questions.
- Members were advised that performance had improved in the past week and there were a number of mitigations in place which should enable a continual improvement in performance.
- Members asked for extra information regarding staff salaries, reasons for losing staff, recruitment and retention, digital skills/advertising and liaising with ex service personnel.
- It was agreed more information on these matters would be sent to members. Suez Senior Management were aware of the current problems and acting on them.
- With regard to the Recycle More item, members were interested in the trial of electric vehicles in particular and were informed that further updates would follow.

### **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.

**Somerset Waste Board RESOLVED to:**

- 1. Note 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. Agree the Board meeting dates for 2021 and 2022 set out in section 3.**
- 3. Acknowledge the need for the Board to again operate under the 1972 legislation and the requirement to return to face to face meetings.**

The Chair highlighted the success of virtual meetings over the last 15 months to manage Council and Partner business although there were early challenges at the beginning. There has been an increase in public participation with recordings from meetings for everyone to listen to. The current hybrid way of working for meeting with members having to return to attend physically brought challenges with extra time needed for travelling, setting up for the meeting to take place and limitation on participants allowed in the room. It was hoped that the Government would bring forth new legislation to enable more virtual committee meetings to take place in the future.

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:

- 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.

During the debate the following points and comments were raised:

In appendix B a list of Partners recommendations for use of individual surpluses and deficits -Mendip District Council has a huge balance of £199,342. Strategic Finance Manager Christian Evans confirmed that the Mendip remaining balance of £199,342 was due to taking the garden waste income the previous year which left them with a deficit for the following year and the recycle more roll-out.

**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 2020/2021 as presented in Appendix A.**
- 2. Approve 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. Note the outturn position of the Recycle More fund in paragraph 2.4.**
- 4. Approve 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.

During the debate the following points and comments were raised:

- To advertise with apologies for the distribution to the service that is provided.
- Request for the presentation to be shared publicly.
- In regard to the Monday sickness what is the Bradford method that Suez is using to monitor the sickness.
- A combination of COVID and Brexit are major contribution factors how come Suez didn't foresee this happening.
- DVLA previously have had restriction on LVG drivers for people above 25 and over has this been changed.
- Can smaller vehicle be used that do not require LVG and HGV drivers in the urban areas.
- SWP has given notice of a service breakdown warning notice and contract mechanism are in place for this.
- Recycling collections have been missed and concerns with the food waste being missed as this leads to rotten food and could lead to ongoing other problems.

The Managing Director of Somerset Waste Partnership informed the board that currently they have provided updates on the radio and an interview on the television. The presentation will be shared with members and published on the website and a member briefing information sheet will be provided to share to members and public.

Somerset Contract Director confirmed the Bradford method calculates the score against the employee for sickness, singular days are scored higher than a longer

period sickness then gets escalated to a formal meeting in line with the policy. Mr Canning will provide the method to the board to give more understanding on how it works. Suez have Class 2 rigid trucks and 7.5 tonne vehicles. The driver expectation is 75% to pass with the first stage of theory and then the driving test. This is a continued focus for each year giving people the opportunity to progress from loaders to drivers.

Director of Fleet and Contract Mobilisation Steve Holgate started the Somerset contract last year before it was handed over to operations. This has been discussed at the senior levels and the Chief Executive Officer apologises for not being in attendance today. SUEZ has full commitment, the drivers training team have been to Somerset and three regional fleet managers. 22 employees to support the current workloads have been put into place now for six weeks along with additional 24 drivers across the County, 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 were due to start shortly and 24 young people to be put through their licenses to start a career. SUEZ employee a lot of ex-military, air forces 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.

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.

**Somerset Waste Board RESOLVED to:**

- **Note 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 head of Communication and Engagement Mark Ford updated the board that you can download a collection day calendar from the website to view on mobile phones however SWP are structuring an app that you will be able to download to make more user friendly for residents.

The Managing Director Mickey Green informed the board that phase 3 will now be the 1<sup>st</sup> of November and regular reviews with SUEZ about the timetable and scheduled to be on track at the moment. Lessons have been learnt from Mendip District Council in regard to the roll-out for the communal areas, in SSDC the kerbside and communal properties will be roll-out together.

**Somerset Waste Board RESOLVED to:**

- **Note 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.

During the debate the following points and comments were raised:

- Energy provision - has SWP considered PW (SPELL OUT) and utilised to generate hydrogen which will fuel the trucks that SWP will be using.
- The issue in Exmoor? and the detail to be provided in the future.

The Somerset Contract Director Matt Canning provided the board with an update that hydrogen in the refuse fleet there is only one company that a German company is currently looking into and started to introduce into their range and other company are considering electric vehicles.

**Somerset Waste Board RESOLVED to:**

- **Note 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.

During the debate the following points and comments were raised:

- Two primary Schools in the South Somerset Area have passed on their thanks to SWP.
- The Eco school plan and consideration for schools undertake a litter and plastic free module.

The Managing Director Mickey Green informed the board that the proposal is to undertake the Waste topic and then an additional module for the litter and plastic.

**Somerset Waste Board RESOLVED to:**

- **Note 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 misalignment 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.

During the debate the following points and comments were raised:

- Different views on the deposit schemes and benefits.
- Consistency on collections for garden waste kerbside.
- A concern around recycling credits and the hope ifor government funding of this.
- Digestates in the land and how well this fertilises the land.

The Contracts Manager of Somerset Waste Partnership David Oaten informed the board about the pass one ten qualification for wet and dry processes, currently we have dry processes and is more difficult as there is no water content,

discussions with RAP spell out and the industry to see what can be done and a difference between the two.

**Somerset Waste Board RESOLVED to:**

- **Note 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 12.04pm)

**CHAIR**