

## **SOMERSET WASTE BOARD**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Somerset Waste Board held In the Luttrell Room at County Hall Taunton on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December at 10.00am

**Present:** Cllr S Dyke, Cllr D Mansell , Cllr T Kerley, Cllr J Keen, Cllr P Goater and Cllr T Ronan (Vice-Chair), Cllr A Sully, Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts- (online),

### **Other Members Present:**

Officers Present: David Oaten, Michael Cowdell, Mark Ford, Colin Mercer, Christian Evans, Jo Currie, Mickey Green, Stuart Noyce,

### **Chairs Announcement**

Chair to inform the Board 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 invited the Members of the Board to observe a period of one minute silence.

## **1. Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies received: Cllr F Smith-Roberts (present online), Cllr A Gilling.

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

No Declarations declared.

## **3. Minutes from the previous meeting-** Agenda Item 3

The Panel agreed the minutes from 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2022 as an accurate record.

Noting the change name for Cllr Tom Deakin.

Noting Cllr D Mansell comments for Item 11 regarding board members questions about the community action groups and the reuse shops with the potential of seeing more around somerset. Ideas about share shops for example library to share items and working on to increase the recycling rates.

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

There were no public questions.

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

- The Panel commented and noted the Performance report highlighting the update on the Fixy McFixFace and the positive interaction within the community.
- The Panel commented and noted the Recycle More and looking forward to the soft plastic trail.
- The Panel commented and noted Somerset Waste Partnership Business Plan 2023-2028.
- The Panel commented about the update on the partial electrification of fleet and understand that ongoing conversation about the technology for these.
- The Panel commented and noted the Financial Performance Update 2022/2023 and Draft Annual Budget 2023/2024.

## 5. Performance Monitoring Report Q2 June 2022- September 2022- Agenda Item 5

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:

- 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 Board Members asked the following question:**

Comments made around the process on Community Action Groups and the reuse shops. To have further comments on the two risk that have moved into red; The emission from the energy from waste plant and trace populate but missing Carbon dioxide and would like to see this in the future; Appendix 2 in the missed collection; The charts and text in the reports are small to read; the concerns around missed collection around Somerset Waste and Taunton area are currently high; The missed collection and asset collection for the vulnerable residents and what more can SWP do; The houses and multiple occupancy especially in urban areas and lack of recycling that leads to fly tipping on the public pavement. The work that can be done around encouraging recycling to increase the tonnage on recycling. The work with town and parish councils and circulating contacts for SWP to be able to liaise about projects they may want to take part of or clash with activities that SWP may already be involved in.

The Managing Director of Somerset Waste Partnership informed the board the points on the risks that are red were legislation changes requiring different ways of handling materials around hanging the approach around persistent organic pollutants. The service distribution due to strike action and challenges around the environment due to cost-of-living crisis.

Somerset Waste Partnership Contracts Manager David Oaten informed the board about the persistent organic pollution that it's old regulations and the regulations that came from Europe in 2007 into UK. The Environment Agency are wishing to put it into place in terms of protecting the environment resulting in no longer be able to landfill anything that is a soft furnishing for example padded dining room chair and these items will have to collect it separately from all other items. This will be in place by January, the Environment Agency equally said that they won't come to enforce on any local authority until the summer. Carbon Dioxide figure may come to the next board meeting.

The Managing Director of Somerset Waste Partnership Mickey Green informed the board he agreed in regard to the missed collections. Focusing on continuing to improve services and have done some work in the Bridgwater area. Once SWP become part of the Unitary authority will have enforcement powers. The team are working with the LGR workstream and to have a consistent set of powers and processes with colleagues that deal with the street scene environment.

Harry Mcleman from Suez advised the board the importance to note that some of the background process improvements in the short term and not allowing the poor performance to continue. Each operational team have shifted the missed collection performance, repeat missed and assist missed collection over to the supervisor and getting the detail of those individual crews that were under performing.

The Board noted that the Head of Communication at Somerset Waste Partnership Mark Ford will be the contact for town and parish council to liaise with in the future.

The Chair commented in South Somerset, there is network of environment champions and hopes that that's something that can be expanded out across the County into the Unitary Authority. It would be a good mechanism and for initiatives like that to avoid duplication. The good news stories on the new stories and the challenges that the team have faced, the report shows an open and transparent approach and thank the team at SWP.

**Resolved:**

**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).**

**6. Recycle More Update - Agenda Item 6**

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 Board Members asked the following question:**

In respect of Recycle More will the board see a lessons learnt from the roll out to identify where improvements could be made if any projects like this would happen in the future?; the feedback about the leaflet on the service guide the following three reasons it can go on the fridge, the dates and what goes in what bin; comments around the refuse stats and comparison in the different area acknowledging the extortionary times with COVID and national driver shortage. The refuse performance is higher in some area than others and improvement could be made in some areas; The recycling of each material helps see the overall figures; the reduction in the tonnage and would like to understand what is behind this; Welcomed the insight of the extra data and going forward could SWP look at the area data whether this is by depot to look at the comparisons for recycling data. The calendar of Recycle More is there going to be dates in the future or an update; Interested in the textile and the market has dropped and the delays around the Williton Depot. The Schools Waste programmes could there be potential to have this on the same timetable as Fixy Mc Fix face to embed.

The Managing Director of Somerset Waste Partnership Mickey Green informed the board SWP have looked at previous roll outs of Recycle More through various of stages. Due to the impact over the last couple of years with COVID and amends to the roll out dates and the prediction would be different to how it was rolled out due to those impacts at the time.

The next stages in understanding the behaviour that composition and participation analysis and comparing that to the last one, understanding it by social economic group and that is in the business plan. Also in the business plan, it highlights the need to build that accountability to local Community networks, which will be really challenging data wise and will have to be assumptions applied to that.

The textiles used to go to two places. There were textiles that were good enough to be used again and some would go overseas. What we saw in that market was lots of countries introducing anti-dumping legislation as they would call it to kind of protect their home-grown industry causing that market to change. There was limited impacts in terms the global trade due to COVID. The textiles that are good enough are now being taking to Charity Shops or selling there items SWP do not see a reuse market.

Head of Communication of Somerset Waste Partnership Mark Ford informed the board the complicated operation to get the right dates in calendars. This is currently going out in phases and hoping within the new year calendars will go out the other areas. SWP have had one successful school visit with Fixy McFix Face and have reached out to schools through various different ways and offering three drop-in sessions. If the Board are aware of any School interested to contact SWP to have visits arranged.

Somerset Waste Partnership Contracts Manager Colin Mercer informed the board SWP came across some asbestos when developing Williton depot. Works to remove the asbestos were continuing and it was anticipated that the project would be completed by mid February 2023. The Board noted that closure of the Williton site had caused additional pressure on the service as the crews were currently travelling to Taunton.

**Resolved:**

**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.**

**7. Somerset Waste Board Business Plan 2023/2028- Agenda Item 7**

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 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 Board Members asked the following question:**

The funding for the Community Action Groups having external funding is SWP going to put some funding into the next finance year for the project; comments were made about the recycling and reuse, on the recycling it would have been good to see an action about increasing the recycling; reflecting on a whole that is happening with the waste; new to the business plan is the teracycle schemes and the concerns about what happens to it and the design around packaging; welcome the ability for more reuse shops and the potential for Somerset; Share of Library or larger item that are available for people to borrow through community groups and Fixy; Bio fuels and HVO's with the risks of adding to carbon emissions and deforestation; Concerns about the carbon capture the signs are going to add to our costs significantly and already paying for energy from waste by avoiding landfill tax; Library and Community initiative about sharing items; to increase recycling rate through enforcement to recycling through letters or communication; the ways of working with Community groups looking for leadership and suggestion to them and be welcomed opportunity with engagement from SWP;



Cllr Dave Mansell proposed to remove 4.2 from the Business Plan about HVO's. This was not seconded by other board members.

The Managing Director of Somerset Waste Partnership Mickey Green informed the board when the new contract with Suez, it was agreed to share risk in terms of recycling revenue, 50/50, both of us then contribute 2%. Currently operating a SWEEP fund and still waiting to get a program. The SWEEP fund Suez hold on to, it's on their books that helps make the procurement process a little bit quicker and smoother.

The performance report with the activity and monitor the business as usual, 3.5 will be amended to reflect that it's targeting campaigns, but it's also targeting and activity to get people to recycle more. Point noted about teracycle SWP do not have visible on what supermarket does with the products and making people away of these projects. Before commitment funding for the Community action groups, consultations with members of the public were done. In the report SWP will have enforcement powers going forward and reiterating the approach.

**Resolved:**

**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.**

Cllr Dave Mansell abstained from voting on this item.

**8. Update on exploring Partial electrification of fleet- Agenda Item 9**

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.
- 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 Board Members asked the following question:**

Have the electric vehicles been testing in the winter months; the refurbished vehicle E RCV's that is not as representative for the technology; Cllr Mansell was disappointed that SWP were not in a position towards more E RCVs and a number of other local authorities are using these vehicles. Noting the difficulties in urban areas. A comment was made about that not enough information has been shared with the board. The arguments have been very well put in the paper and accept that this is proper and sufficient information to make an informed choice; the news about trails on electric vehicles breaking down in all areas across somerset; in the report of 4.2 about learning from the trails that are still ongoing. Papers of previous reports reported to Somerset Waste Board and comments about the business plan highlighting a mistake set out in section 4.4 regarding vehicle suppliers, primarily Rome equipped through recycling Denise Eagle for refuse to trial electric vehicles in Somerset and learnt from the current trial of hydrogenated vegetable oil, HVO for plant operating within Evercreech depot to

identify to its cost effective to roll this out further; the approach to the partial refleet of the vehicles and in September it changed to just two vehicles and the disappointment RCV and exploring using HVO's in front line vehicles. A comment was also made about world wildlife fund and should be acknowledge in SWP views about bioenergy. The current EU bioenergy policy will allow ever more trees and crops to be burned for energy. This will harm nature and increase greenhouse gas emissions even more than fossil fuels would do and strict rules to ensure that the bioenergy delivers.

The Service Manager of Democratic Services informed the board to confirm that under the standing orders for Committee meetings, board meetings, there would be an allowance of up to five minutes and to make a statement and then conclude to make the question or make the statement.

Michael Cowdell informed the board that the battery power units are less efficient in the winter for a start. And on days like today, the cruise will be using heaters, SWP have seen that conflict like a few percent drift in terms of basically the draw on the battery.

The Chair commented regarding HVO not quite there yet and wait for that credible research to be carried out and need to therefore make that kind of true representation going forward and make the right decisions going forward.

The Managing Director of Somerset Waste Partnership Mickey highlighted that SWP think the trial of the refurbished the electric vehicle is a very useful thing and also disappointed with the technology not quite ready. Trialling the vehicle are very useful and clear changes in the technological environment. SWP have kept the Board up to date along the process in terms of HVO's and different types of Vehicles.

### **Resolved:**

#### **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 refleet and notes the further work undertaken on exploring HVO.**

Cllr Mansell voted against

## 9. 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 Financial 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 until the savings are approved.

### **The Board Members asked the following question:**

The increase of inflation is in line with the contract cost; concerns around bulky waste collection and residents that use this may be on a low income this cost to be affordable for residents; capitalisation entirely about spreading, in effect spreading the cost of the containers and make them available to people; more comments about the Solar panels projects on depots and noting a new business case will need to made; the PVC project and moving forward with the variable and electrical prices better to generate from a renewable energy. link up in work streams about the cost increase or charges and for collection of bulk items and will fly tipping increase; savings of recycle more are SWP getting back the capital

cost; about the extended producer responsibility When will SWP find out what income that's going to bring to Somerset Waste partnership.

The Strategic Finance Manager Christian Evans informed the board the capitalisation of containers just a different way of accounting for it, but that they are the same containers.

The Managing Director of Somerset Waste Partnership Mickey Green informed the board during the Reflets back in 2020 all the money for the depots. The increase in electricity prices and the PVC and installation is increasing week by week. The board sets the terms of the price, the financial benefit recycle more at 1.7 million and delivering 3.1 million that includes all the operational costs. Confidential sessions are happening about the producer responsibility and a timetable set out in a rough calculation with potential changes and will find out in the next financial year for 2024.

#### **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:**

### **10. Somerset Waste Board Forward Plan**

The Panel agreed the current Somerset Waste Board Forward Work Plan

**11. Any other urgent items of Business**

(The meeting ended at 12.44pm)

**CHAIR**