

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held at online via zoom on 25 October 2023

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.10 am and ended at 12.05 pm

13 Minutes of the previous meetings of 12 July 2023 and 20 September 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2023 and the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 20 September 2023 were agreed as a true record.

14 Declarations of interest

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Geoff Jung, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Ward member for Woodbury and Lymstone which includes Greendale Business Park..

15 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

16 Joint contract and operational report

The Recycling and Waste Manager and the SUEZ Contract Manager gave the Board a joint report on a contract and operational update for the second quarter of 2023/24. Operationally the partnership had delivered another good quality performance. Service levels remained high and performance was high with an average of just over 62% recycling rate across quarter two. The peak summer period had been successful, with no incidents of reduction in performance. Complaints and missed collections remained below the performance framework thresholds. The health and safety statistics remained low, with minor slips, trips and cuts.

The service continued to grow rapidly with twin milestones of 74,000 households and 19,500 green waste subscriptions being passed in quarter two. Phase two of the bridging solution had been planned during quarter two and had been seamlessly implemented in early quarter three. This was the final part of the bridging solution which was designed to provide the service with operational capacity to manage the growth in households.

A significant amount of time had been spent finalising the contract extension agreement and implementing the amended practices and procedures needed to move to a different payment mechanism. The joint working ethic was helping to smooth the transition with finance teams from EDDC and SUEZ providing support and advice to the team to help with this change. The partnership was now in the fourth month of the new cost plus arrangement, with working relationships closer and a more visible approach to managing the contract.

Trials for all the fleet options for electric vehicles had been completed. The latest trial from RVS for a repowered refuse collection vehicle (RCV) was successful in the growth

zone area. The partnership would consider electric RCV to go alongside the two electric recycling collection vehicles on order from Romaquip for the new year.

Recruitment remained positive, with long serving agency staff joining the business, helping to strengthen the manual workforce. Staff continued to be promoted through LGV training with positive results. The knowledge base across the wider team continued to be developed, with EDDC's Recycling and Waste Officer Lou Hodges gaining a CPC in Transport Management after undertaking training with UK Logistics. SUEZ were also doing great work in the Devon community, working with schools in East Devon to create new recyclers.

Material sales had remained static since the last meeting and officers stated that future material prices were an element of risk and hard to predict.

In response to a question, the SUEZ Contract Manager explained the absence management procedures for both short and long term sickness, which were dealt with by SUEZ's HR facility. It was noted that one day short term sickness was the hardest to manage. Due to the operational nature of the business not many employees worked from home, but SUEZ had a policy for hybrid working where appropriate. The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager reminded the Board that HR statistics were managed and included in the monthly performance figures.

17 **Performance framework**

The Board noted the performance framework which showed performance across the contract. It allowed officers to look for areas of improvement and put plans in place to correct actions if necessary. The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained the performance framework and the history behind it. The contract had a performance framework criteria of service standards, each of which had a threshold and that performance was measured against these in both points and pounds. Although changes had been made to the contract there had been no changes to the performance framework. The framework was occasionally suspended for certain reasons such as mobilisation and during the covid-19 pandemic. A partnership approach had been taken and the performance framework had not been invoked at all. The framework was used as a way of measuring performance rather than penalising.

18 **CORE issues/risk**

Melvin Dhorasoo, Business Improvement & Mobilisation Manager and Bev Parry, Head of Project Management from SUEZ were welcomed to the meeting.

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained that the CORE system had been a growing cause for concern due to some long standing and short term issues. CORE was an operating system which provided crew information on a tablet, reporting in live time, such as crew route, staff members, access issues, previous missed bins, locked gates, property issues and road closures. All the information was sent electronically and was essential to day-to-day operations. CORE was a real-time source and required an active mobile connection, however it also worked offline, with all the information stored and download once the device reconnected. The system was hard-wired in the cab and there were contingencies in case the system went down. This had never happened, but sometimes the devices might break and require replacements. All the information was available in paper form too.

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager reported that CORE problems were becoming very frequent and issues were not being rectified in a timely manner. CORE issues were now logged formally and discussed monthly between EDDC and SUEZ. The team had worked hard to improve communications, working with IT support from EDDC and SUEZ and the technology providers. Progress had been made in resolving issues, but EDDC regarded difficulties with the CORE system as an emerging risk. Improved communication was regarded as critical.

The SUEZ Business Improvement & Mobilisation Manager accepted and apologised for the errors. Lessons had been learnt and there was a more robust communications process in place between the parties. He had proposals to discuss with the Recycling and Waste Contract Manager going forward and gave assurances that two members of the municipal support team would be focussing on East Devon and that there would be twice weekly phone calls with the SUEZ Contract Manager and a monthly steering group consisting of the Contract Manager, the Principal Commercial Manager, the Business Improvement & Mobilisation Manager and the Head of Project Management. The SUEZ Business Improvement & Mobilisation Manager also offered to attend any future Partnership Board meetings if required.

It was noted that an updated risk register would be brought to the next meeting of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board.

19 **Absorbent hygiene products collection service - initial proposal**

East Devon District Council was regarded as a top performing local authority for recycling rates and waste minimisation. The Partnership was keen to keep improving and the immediate target was to recycle 65% of the municipal waste. It was aimed to achieve that by:

- Improving dry recycling and food waste collection rates.
- Reaching over 20,000 green waste customers.
- Absorbent Hygiene Product collections (AHP).

Following the waste composite analysis in October 2022 the largest components remaining in residual waste was food waste (15.1%), which was already collected in East Devon, and nappies/AHP (12.2%), which weren't. Green waste accounted for 3.2% of residual waste by weight. Food and green waste collections were already promoted through campaigns and day to day-to-day activities. AHPs and nappies were not currently recovered in the recycling stream.

EDDC had received 3218 requests for extra bin capacity in the last three years from families with children in nappies. These households would all be eligible for nappy recycling. If AHP from older residents was included this would significantly increase the potential tonnages captured. It was projected that potentially there could be 1551 tonnes of nappies from 5250 households each year, almost 8 million nappies. This could translate to a potential increase in recycling rate of 3.4% if the nappy waste was diverted into the recycling stream, as well as diverting more waste away from the energy from waste plant and helping with additional capacity issues. This would result in a recycling rate of 62.9%, which would mean that East Devon could have the highest recycling rate in England (the 2022/23 recycling rate was 59.5%).

The Recycling and Waste team had researched nappy collections and the challenges and opportunities they presented, and these were explained to the Board. Recycled nappies could be used in road surfacing, to make insulation panels, fibre boards or could

be recycled into wood/plastic composite. The benefits, challenges and risks of AHP recycling were all outlined in the report.

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager presented the summary of a trial service design collecting nappies to take place with 200-250 properties in Cranbrook/Tithebarn (young families and condensed urban area) receiving weekly bag collections for three months. Following the trial the team would conduct an end of trial survey to learn what worked and what didn't, with the learning informing a business case and any potential service design district wide. East Devon would like to approach Devon County Council (DCC) as the waste disposal authority (WDA) to share the research and ask them to work with EDDC on the trial. It was imperative that EDDC had DCC's backing as the cost of disposal for any permanent collection service in the future would fall to the WDA. EDDC would need to cover the cost of collecting the material and haulage for the trial, which was estimated to be around £20,000. The the only facility operated by Nappicycle (processor) in the UK, was in Carmarthenshire, Wales, 160 miles from Woodbury Salterton.

The Board were supportive of the initiative and it was suggested that the costs could be spread across Devon if successful. The trial was required to gain information and assess costs. The Chair advised that the would be reporting this to Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee (DASWC) and would seek other local authorities' views.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that Cabinet approve the initial budget provision of £20,000 in 2024/25 to run a trial for nappy collections.
2. that East Devon District Council approach Devon County Council to share the research to date and seek support from them as the waste disposal authority.

20 **Green waste accounts**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager gave the Board a verbal update on the green waste service accounts. Due to changes in the payment mechanism the full accounts were not yet available. The service remained profitable and was still running on four crews to keep the costs down. The customer base was still growing and it was anticipated that a fifth crew would be needed in 2024, however round reviews would be done in the meantime.

As part of the annual charges review it was proposed that the annual subscription would increase by £2 next year to £52 per bin per annum for the green waste service. This was regarded as excellent value for money. It was noted that customer feedback was positive, with very few customers failing to renew. The number of subscriptions continued to grow on a daily basis, reaching 19,896 on 24 October 2023.

21 **Contract extension agreement**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager informed the Board that the contract extension had been unanimously approved at the Cabinet meeting on 10 October 2023. The Deed of Variation was currently being fine tuned and it would hopefully be signed by 1 November 2023.

22 **Depot review project**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager updated the Board on the depot review project. Greendale was being outgrown and there was a wider depot review to look at premises currently used by Street Scene being progressed through the Place and Prosperity team. Consultants had been appointed to help create a vision of how the service wished to operate in the future, along with conceptual designs of the depot and site identification. The consultants' outputs were expected in mid-January 2024 at which time officers would be in a better position to consider the depot strategy.

23 **Any other business - DEFRA residual waste proposals**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager gave a brief summary to the Board on the recently announced Government policy proposals on residual waste collections which stated the Government expected a minimum service frequency for residual waste collections of at least fortnightly alongside a weekly food waste collection. The Government proposals went on to encourage councils to collect residual waste more frequently than fortnightly. This minimum standard provided a backstop, not a recommendation.

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager had attended a hastily set up DEFRA forum the day before and for the local authorities such as EDDC that operated a restricted capacity system it was a 'hot topic' contested by many. A meeting was being sought by the Chair of Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) with DEFRA the following week to broach this subject. It was felt that there was a wealth of evidence that three weekly waste collections produced the results that DEFRA were seeking and that it would be a retrograde step to move away from them. The deadline to respond to the consultation proposals was 20 November 2023. The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager would be responding on behalf of EDDC but also collectively as part of a Devon wide group. There were a significant number of authorities around the country that operated three weekly residual waste collections, but there was no funding in the DEFRA proposal to cover the cost of changing to fortnightly collections.

The Board agreed that going back to fortnightly waste collections was retrograde. It would increase the carbon footprint, cost more and likely to reduce the recycling rate by giving residents the opportunity to put more waste into their bin. There was evidence to prove that reducing the number of refuse collections, restricting capacity increased the rate of recycling. This information was reported to DEFRA as part of the waste data flow. All of this would be included in the Council's response to the Government policy proposals and it was suggested that the Portfolio Holder, Country, Coast and Environment also write to lobby the MP in his role as Chair of DASWC.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet approve that East Devon District Council respond opposing the DEFRA residual waste disposal proposals, both individually, collectively with other Devon authorities and lobby the local MP.

Attendance List

Board Members:

Councillors present:

G Jung (Chair)

M Rixson

T Olive

P Fernley

Officers present:

T Hendren, Director of Housing, Health and Environment
G Bourton, Recycling and Waste Contract Manager

Suez present:

N Tandy, Principal Commercial Manager
J Gatter, Contract Manager

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
C Brown
P Faithfull
M Goodman
E Rylance

Officers in attendance:

Lou Hodges, Recycling & Waste - Operations and Projects Officer
Steve Joyce, Recycling & Waste - Operations and Projects Officer
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

Suez representatives in attendance:

M Dhorasso, Business Improvement and Mobilisation Manager
B Parry, Head of Project Management
J Prosser, Recycling Officer

Board Member apologies:

James Pike, SUEZ Regional Director
Andrew Hancock, Assistant Director Streetscene EDDC
Councillor Steve Gazzard

Chair

Date: