

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held at online via the Zoom app on 20 January 2021**

#### **Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.55 am

#### **47 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board meeting held on 21 October 2020 were confirmed as a true record.

#### **48 Declarations of interest**

Councillor Geoff Jung, Personal, his district ward included the Greendale depot site and he subscribed to the green waste service..

#### **49 Questions to the Board**

There were no questions submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting.

#### **50 Joint operational and contract quarterly report**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager and the SUEZ Contract Manager gave the Board a joint report on a contract review and operational update for the period October to December 2020. The two major operational features of the quarter were the bedding in of round changes implemented in September and the preparations for the peak Christmas and New Year recycling period. There was a focus on troubleshooting during the six week bedding in process as there was disruption to collections as both crews and residents adjusted in the early part of the quarter. The latter part of the quarter focussed on communications and participation preparations for the Christmas period.

The SUEZ Contract Manager outlined the safety statistics for the quarter and explained a Riddor accident.

It was noted that missed collections and customer complaints were high at the peak of the route changes, but this had now decreased to within the thresholds of the contract performance framework targets. Missed collections had been higher than usual throughout the year due to high staff turnover and then the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic. Officers were confident that many of the issues had been addressed and performance would increase.

The amount of tonnages being collected remained high and material values had been stable for the final quarter of the year. The Partnership sold £531,388 and 7857 tonnes of recycled materials in 2020, a reduction in £100,000 from 2019 where it sold 5775 tonnes. This highlighted the volatile nature of the market.

There continued to be wider involvement in the sector as other local authorities continued to request to learn from the experience gained in East Devon. EDDC had also been asked to contribute to the WRAP/DEFRA workshops for planning the implementation of the Resources and Waste Strategy.

The partnership team were congratulated on the wider sector involvement and for their efforts during the pandemic and Christmas period.

RESOLVED: that the Board note the joint operational and contract quarterly report.

## 51 **Monthly operational statistics**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager presented the monthly operational statistics to the Board and explained that this detailed suite of statistics were used by the teams to review monthly performance and identify changes in trends, with necessary adjustments being made.

Some of the figures highlighted were over 4000 tonnes of total waste flow being collected over several months, demonstrating the effect of the pandemic, whilst still maintaining a high recycling rate. Over 600 tonnes of food waste per month was regularly collected. Over 500 tonnes of cardboard was collected in December 2020. The figures illustrated that the price of materials was volatile and predictions were difficult to make.

Performance was measured against property growth. Almost 6 million collections had been made in 2020, with only 7871 missed over the year.

It was noted that the SUEZ staff sickness was target was 3%, however the average rate across the year was 8%, rising at 12% at times due to the pandemic. With staff sickness high there had been a heavy reliance on agency staff.

RESOLVED: that the Board note the monthly operational statistics.

## 52 **Performance framework/penalty calculator**

The Board noted the penalty calculator/performance tracker figures and the importance of tracking these to monitor the performance of the contract, even during a pandemic. The Board also noted that as a force majeure event had been called (during the pandemic) that no financial penalties should be levied on Suez, and in any case the partnership and contract required EDDC and SUEZ to work together to solve problems in priority to contractual penalties and this would continue to be the approach.

In response to a question about missed container deliveries the SUEZ Contract Manager explained that the business continuity plan allowed services to be suspended due to priority. Container deliveries had been suspended in order to redeploy resources and maintain waste and recycling collections. Also more containers were being requested as people were creating more recycling as they stayed at home under lockdown rules.

RESOLVED: that the Board note the performance framework figures and acknowledge the importance of not invoking the penalty calculator.

## 53 **Green waste accounts**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager thanked the Accountant and the Streetscene Budget and Equipment Monitoring Officer for compiling the accounts and

explained them to the Board. It was noted that there had been a year on year growth in terms of customers and income. The income recognised at the end of quarter 3 was £380,186 and profit was £88,945.

There had been a six week suspension period to the service due to the first lockdown of the Covid 19 pandemic. Rather than rebating customers for this period the subscription dates had been moved forward. It did not appear that the short season of last year had negatively impacted sales at all. He reported that at the start of January 2021 the green waste service had 14,500 customers. So far in January over 100 bins had been sold, which was a similar rate to January 2020. Overall sales month on month appeared very similar to the previous year. All indications were that there was still a reasonable demand for the service. Further marketing would take place in March.

The Service Lead – Streetscene advised the Board that the business plan target for the green waste service, for the end of 2021/22, was 15,000 customers and a profit of £170,000.

In response to a question about take up of the service by town, the officers replied that although they had not done any analysis on this it would be possible to map and the Chair agreed that this would be useful information to have.

There was localised targeted marketing, including new builds, and the service was usually marketed before the bank holidays. For the past two financial years a green waste service advert had been included on the annual council tax reminder envelope, however this was not possible in the forthcoming year due to the need to prioritise Covid-19 communications and promoting postal voting for May elections.

RESOLVED: that the Board note the report including the service targets for the year ahead and the marketing engagements that were in place.

#### 54 **Raising our game in 2021: Resident behaviour/participation & crew behaviour improvement**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager's report demonstrated how the partnership team had improved its performance year on year since 2016/17. One of the key factors in this progress had been the focus on behaviour change/improvement for residents and operational crews, and the interaction between these two groups of people.

He warned that the pandemic had affected everything and the partnership team was unlikely to continue its trend of performance improvement for 2020/2021. Understandably, behaviours had been affected. Successive lockdowns had changed resident consumer behaviour and this was reflected not only in changes to total waste flow but crucially in the composition of the recycling stream. Equally, workload pressures had effected crew behaviours as they had striven to cope with the sheer volumes of material, change in recycling composition and often with reduced staffing levels due to self-isolation and with additional health and safety measures. The focus for 2021/22 would be on a return to the trend of continuous improvement by putting in place programmes that would help remove any complacency in behaviours that may have crept in whilst working under pandemic conditions.

Crew practises and behaviours had a significant effect on how residents viewed and participated in using the recycling and waste service. SUEZ had a structured programme of crew training and it was hoped to get back to this and 'raise the game'

during post pandemic recovery. SUEZ crew training at present was heavily focused on health and safety, but behaviours training would be added in during the year and ways to improve training would be considered by SUEZ. EDDC requested that mobilisation style training, including crew best practice, be delivered to all crews as soon as possible.

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager and the SUEZ Contract Manager agreed to work on a structured training programme for all crew members and report on this to the next Board meeting. It was hoped that if a 'best practice' training plan was put in place then this could be of added value to the wider SUEZ group.

It was noted that in terms of resident behaviour, there was a continuous focus on food waste and officers would not be relenting on this. The recycling team had incorporated a number of projects into the 2021 plan to improve resident understanding and participation for all recycling. A new resident recycling guide would be created, with an all household door drop planned for September 2021.

The Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment recognised that there were opportunities to improve communal recycling facilities for tenants in EDDC housing stock in order to encourage EDDC tenants to recycle more and to a higher quality. This had been built into the budget for 2021. It was suggested that outside of the Board meeting a focus group of members and officers discuss the issues surrounding communal recycling facilities for flats and council housing stock, as well as increasing engagement.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that SUEZ put in place a structured best practice training programme for all existing collection crews and run it periodically to pick up staff turn-over and that progress on this be reported back to the next Board meeting.
2. that the EDDC Recycling Team produce a best practice guide using real life photographic examples of best practice/problems to aid the training programme.
3. that an improvement sub group of officers and members be established to consider how to increase engagement and improve facilities for houses of multiple occupation.

**55 Covid 19 costs claim**

The Service Lead – Streetscene advised the Board that a report would be taken to Cabinet in February 2021 to consider SUEZ's over budget claim incurred due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During the pandemic response through 2020 there had been record tonnages of recycling collected at the kerbside, due to large parts of the population being at home either through lockdown or working arrangements. During the same time period, shopping habits changed, shifting to online and click and collect. This has had the effect of broadly doubling collections tonnages for card, with a sustained 10% increase in material tonnages across the board. At the same time there had been staffing issues which compounded the collection strain; through isolation for suspected Covid symptoms to shielding to distancing of crews and crew bubbles to ensure operations are Covid secure.

The report recommended that the over budget claim be approved, subject to legal advice being sought to confirm the assessment of the contractual position, as well as a contingency budget in relation to potential future budget claims by SUEZ in the 2020/21 financial year. If approved, delegated authority would also be given to the Strategic Lead – Housing, Health & Environment/Service Lead – StreetScene to approve future monthly Covid cost claims from Suez and other recycling & waste contract cost variations up to a

limit of 10% over the contractual base payment amount in consultation with the Strategic Lead – Finance and Portfolio Holder – Coast, Country and Environment.

If Cabinet approved the recommendations they would need full Council agreement as it was a new cost, not budgeted for. The decision would be reported back to the Board for information.

It was hoped that the additional contract costs could be covered by a Government grant which was held for over contract costs.

RESOLVED: that the Board note the verbal update on the SUEZ Covid-19 costs claim.

## 56 **Developer charges**

The report of the Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained that EDDC spent around £149,000 per year on recycling and waste containers, with a significant proportion of these being provided to new houses on occupation. In April 2019 the council decided to recover the cost of the provision of new containers to new properties from housing developers as part of an overall 'commercialisation' programme. However, the charges had no basis in law and were therefore unenforceable.

Budget provision was made in 2019/20 and 2020/21 for an income stream from the charges based on a projected response from developers, but this was not met, resulting a budget shortfall at year end. No budget allocations had been made for 2021/22 to prevent the build-up of unpaid invoices in the finance system whilst the future of the scheme was decided.

The response to the charging scheme by developers was varied. Most developers realised that it was not an enforceable charge but some chose to pay on a voluntary basis. Many, particularly the volume house builders, challenged the charge and had not met the invoices, with some requesting credit notes. Developers were still notified of the scheme as information was included in the planning application pack and the recycling and waste developer guide, although no charges had been levied since July 2020.

Members of the Board considered options, including:

- The charging scheme is not reinstated and is wound up with no further budget projections made.
- Developers are charged as before in the knowledge that payment rates were likely to be very low with any budget projections reflecting this.
- Developers are charged in the first instance but informed that if they do not meet the charges they would be passed to the house occupier ie the resident
- Residents of new properties are charged direct for the provision of recycling and waste containers.

The Board agreed that the developer container charging scheme was worth exploring at the time, but that it had not delivered the levels of income anticipated. The scheme was not legally enforceable and developers were aware of this. The financial system could be reconciled to clear the unpaid invoices.

RECOMMENDED: that for the reasons set out in the report that Cabinet approve that the developer container charging scheme is no longer pursued, with no further budget projections being made.

57 **Contract tipping point 3 negotiation**

The Service Lead – Streetscene reported that a new monthly working group had been convened with SUEZ to establish baseline tonnages (pandemic effect and property growth) and that once the baseline had been established negotiations on the contract tipping point would begin.

RESOLVED: that the Board note the update on the contract tipping point 3 negotiation.

58 **Government's Waste and Resources Strategy consultation**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager informed the Board that the Environment Bill had had its second reading. There had been a lot of commentary around the Waste and Resources Strategy amongst the industry, which was now waiting for the second consultation. This was expected in March 2021. It was noted that the partnership had been invited to take part in an implementation group with DEFRA.

The SUEZ Principal Commercial Manager reported that SUEZ would be taking part in lobbying the Government. There was a lot of speculation at the moment and it was hard to say with any degree of certainty, but he felt that East Devon was at a good starting point position.

RESOLVED: that the Board note the update on the Government's Waste and Resources Strategy consultation.

**Attendance List**

**Board Members:**

**Councillors present:**

G Jung (Chair)

D Bickley

E Rylance (Vice-Chair)

T Wright

M Rixson

**Officers present:**

G Bourton, Recycling and Waste Contract Manager

J Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment

A Hancock, Service Lead StreetScene

**Suez present:**

N Tandy, Principal Commercial Manager

H Mcleman, Contract Manager

**Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)**

P Faithfull

P Arnott

D Ledger

**Officers in attendance:**

Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer  
Lou Hodges, Waste and Recycling Officer  
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

**Suez representatives in attendance:**

Stuart Jellings

**Board Member apologies:**

James Pike, Regional Director South West SUEZ

Chairman .....

Date: .....