

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held at Blackdown House, Honiton on 28 April 2021**

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

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.10 pm

#### **59 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board meeting on 20 January 2021 were confirmed as a true record.

#### **60 Declarations of interest**

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Denise Bickley, Personal, Chair of Sidmouth Plastic Warriors.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Eleanor Rylance, Personal, Ward member for Broadclyst, which included Hillbarton Business Park.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Geoff Jung, Personal, Ward member for Woodbury and Lypstone, which included Greendale.

11. Resources and Waste Strategy update.

Councillor Denise Bickley, Personal, Chair of Sidmouth Plastic Warriors.

#### **61 Matters arising**

The Chair informed the Board that SUEZ Contract Manager Harry McLeman would be moving to the Somerset Waste partnership contract and that he would be replaced in East Devon and on the Board by James Gatter. He thanked Harry for the work he had done with EDDC and wished him well in this next role with SUEZ. The Chair welcomed James to the Board and also introduced and welcomed Lily Morton, Recycling Officer.

#### **62 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 and operational update for the period January to March 2021. The main feature of quarter 4 2020/21 was the smooth completion of the peak post-Christmas/New Year collections. Collections were made with minimal disruption despite the expected high waste and recycling flows caused by the normal seasonal influences topped by the pandemic lockdown effects.

There continued to be concerns about the practises and behaviours of a minority of crews. This was being addressed by the implementation of a comprehensive best practice/behaviour training programme for crews. It was noted that the number of missed collections in January was relatively high and an increased number of complaints had been received. The majority of complaints related to litter/spillages and container

returns. A small number of crews had been identified for additional supervision and re-training.

The SUEZ Contract Manager introduced and welcomed Lily Morton, Recycling Officer. She would be working closely with the Recycling and Waste team to improve the quality of recycling across the district and improve crew behaviours.

SUEZ had installed a new CCTV system on site which covered the whole depot including the whole of the fleet parking areas and inside the MRF building. It had thermal detection cameras to alert out of hours should any of the combustible material be at risk of ignition.

Material values had been positive for the beginning of the year with the partnership receiving higher rebates for cardboard than anticipated. The partnership sold 2299 tonnes at a value of £207,9190. During March it sold £88,351 which was the best performing month since the contract began. The Board were warned that the materials market was volatile and it was hard to predict future prices.

It was noted that there had been an increase in the number of road traffic accidents and personal injuries. The Contract Manager explained that this was a result of increased reporting of minor accidents, as well as a number of non-SUEZ fault incidents. Reporting of incidents was being encouraged, and the Contract Manager had no concerns.

A number of key milestones had been passed which reflected the development of all aspects of the service. Officers were asked how the recycling rate was calculated. The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained that it was the total weight of material received by the processors. East Devon's high figure of 60.5% was attributed to its high rate of dry mixed recycling. This was one of the reasons East Devon was the centre of focus for other authorities wishing to improve their dry mixed recycling. East Devon continually focussed on resident participation and had made changes very quickly.

During quarter 4 East Devon continued to participate in the wider recycling sector both as consultee and through direct approaches from local authorities seeking advice from its experience. Forums that had benefitted from East Devon's input were:

- DEFRA/ICER workshop for best practice in kerb-side collection of WEE. As a result East Devon had now been asked to regularly input into this national working group.
- WRAP research into cost and performance modelling for kerb-side collections.

In addition to this other local authorities planning strategic collection changes had sought advice. The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager stated that East Devon were consulted almost continuously by colleagues across the county and every authority had visited at some point. There was a quarterly managers meeting across the county that allowed the sharing of information and best practice.

A request was made for comparative figures for the Christmas period in 2019 and 2020. The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager would provide these to members. Officers were also asked if there were any plans to collect plastic bags/film and crisp packets. At present there were no plans to collect this hard to recycle flexible packaging. At present the processing capacity was underdeveloped but it was expected that this would change over time and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) would address this.

It was noted that the last residual waste review was carried out in October 2017. DCC brokered it district wide and the next review was not due until 2022. The Board agreed

that it would like to request a residual waste review sooner than 2022. It was also noted that energy from waste plants were being used more and more efficiently over time and eventually there would be no landfill.

The Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment remarked on how proud he was of the recycling and waste team and partnership and that other local authorities visiting East Devon and the sharing of good practise was evidence of this. The team was constantly working on the effective partnership with SUEZ and continually pushing for improvements. There were a number of challenges and changes coming up in the sector but he was confident that the team had the skills and knowledge to adapt as required. The Chair and the Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment thanked the SUEZ and East Devon team.

### 63 **Green waste accounts**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager thanked the Accountant and the Streetscene Budget and Equipment Monitoring Officer for producing the accounts. He reminded those present that the green waste service had been suspended at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, with customers being given a three month 'holiday' on their subscriptions. This had changed the flow of income, which now appeared in quarter 2 rather than in quarter 1. This affected the profile of the service for the full financial year, with the service not appearing as profitable in 2020/21 as predicted due to the finances sliding into 2021/22.

Customer numbers for the green waste service had risen rapidly and were now almost 16000. If another crew round was required (from four to five) this would affect the profitability of the service. This would depend on the distribution of where the new customers were in the district. SUEZ were currently undertaking some re-routing to rebalance the rounds, and this would help to inform when a permanent fifth round would be required. It was noted that Somerset were currently trialling an electric vehicle. It was suggested that when a fifth round was required that EDDC's climate fund be used to facilitate the use of an electric vehicle.

The Board discussed the market for the green waste materials taken to the Hill Barton site. The Recycling and Waste Manager advised members that the materials were owned by the composter – Coastal Recycling – and that the partnership had no influence over the distribution of it. It was noted that StreetScene used the compost in its parks and areas across the district. It was felt that as a contributor, EDDC should have some influence over the market of the materials and a request was made for a representative from Coastal Recycling or Devon County Council to attend a future Board meeting and explain how the composted materials were marketed and distributed.

RESOLVED: that the Board note the green waste accounts and invite a representative from Coastal Recycling or Devon County Council to a future Board meeting.

### 64 **Tipping point update**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained that the tipping point in the contract was 73,000 properties and this was expected to be reached in March 2022. However, the covid-19 pandemic had had a significant effect on the waste stream, resulting in higher tonnages being collected and an acceleration of the affects expected from property growth. The long term covid effects on the waste stream were less predictable, and it was unclear how permanent the impact of the change in shopping

habits on the collection service were likely to be. At present the service was stretched most weeks and a bridging solution was required, to cover costs relating to covid, up until the contract tipping point.

It was noted that there was a change notice process within the contract, giving both parties 14 days to respond. The Service Lead – Streetscene suggested that the Board discuss any changes before a change notice was served by either party.

SUEZ were looking at round scheduling in order to minimise catch up rounds, but this was a complex logistical operation. Following Covid-19 claims the EDDC council tax team were carrying out a reconciliation and would provide the partnership with a list of second homes. These schedule 2 properties had the option of having a paid for commercial waste collection.

RESOLVED: that the SUEZ team produce an options appraisal report for consideration by the Waste and Recycling Partnership Board.

## 65 **COVID-19 claims**

This item had been discussed under the tipping point agenda item above.

## 66 **Crew best practice guide/training update**

The Board considered the SUEZ Contract Manager's report which set out an enhanced training package for all crews. The aim was to produce training to roll out to crews both new and existing to improve the customer service provided by the SUEZ crews. This would include the five golden rules of customer service, which correlated to the most common complaint type. These were:

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1. **Always return containers neatly** – Ensure containers are returned to the resident's homes. If the resident has an assisted collection ensure that the containers do not present a trip hazard i.e on a foot path. All communal bin stores must have containers returned to the designated storage areas and not stacked as it makes it difficult for residents to separate them again, shows disrespect and is a trip hazard. EDDC have invested time and money in the new bin stores to make it easier for crew to collect and reduce collection time, which is time saved going to every flat means they have time to return containers.
2. **Never litter** – When your vehicle is travelling over 50 metres you must ensure that all flaps are closed. This is important in rural areas where you may be tempted to leave them open. You must also ensure that you do not leave any mess after each collection ie when loading recycling onto Romaquip.
3. **Always behave responsibly** – Remember that you are an ambassador for SUEZ and our customers and that we live in a world where everyone has a mobile phone so if you are behaving irresponsibly then someone may record this and share in on social media etc. Rude and offensive language is not acceptable, crews must be aware that customers may hear them whilst they are working.
4. **Drive with care** – You are in a large vehicle which could intimidate other road users, ensure that you drive carefully. Remember that sometimes other road users make mistakes, this does not mean that you should return them hand gestures or shout abuse. All our vehicles have the SUEZ brand and our customer brand on them it does not look good for either if our drivers abuse other road users.

5. **Use social media wisely**– Think before you post on social media anything that could be related to work. Could your post be interpreted as offensive for a resident or our client. Are you sharing inaccurate information which could mislead our customers? “

Visual training would be provided to the crews, which would include customer feedback from persistent complainers, as well as examples of good and poor practises. Training would be mandatory for all employees and it was aimed to deliver the training over the summer months. There would also be a standardised procedure on how supervisors managed complaint escalation.

It was noted that agency staff represented challenges and that agency staff were used when the service was already suffering staff shortages. A crew of the month scheme was a successful way of recognising good behaviours and this was well received by the teams.

Concern was expressed that although some of the complaint issues were irritating, that crews could have conditions imposed that prevented them engaging as a team and having a positive experience whilst working. The SUEZ Contract Manager responded that whilst they wanted an engaged workforce, awareness needed to be raised about crew banter which could cause resident offence. However they were trying not to restrict fun and they wanted teams to be happy whilst at work. Complaints about littering and container returns often related to crews cutting corners to save time. It was important for the crews to understand the time it took to correct the complaints. It was noted that the EDDC React team had reduced from five to two. The recycling and waste contract stated that spillages must be collected by crews within a two-mile radius and was therefore something that EDDC could recharge for. It would be helpful to EDDC if SUEZ could highlight this in the training.

It was suggested that the partnership should be more proactive in publicising its efforts. It was suggested that quarterly infographic be produced to share information on what the partnership collected and recycled to raise public awareness of the service. The Service Lead – Streetscene replied that the team was already over capacity in keeping the service running and would not be able to produce any more promotional material due to resourcing required. Councillor Bickley offered to produce an infographic if the recycling and waste teams could provide her with the necessary data.

The Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment commented on the continuous improvement journey and the Service Lead – Streetscene thanked the SUEZ Contract Manager for producing a fantastic document. He hoped that SUEZ would engage with the EDDC Recycling Team and felt that it was important that the photographic evidence and videos were shared with the Board.

**RESOLVED:** that the SUEZ visual training material be presented to the next Recycling and Waste Partnership Board meeting.

## 67 **Performance framework**

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.

The graphs contained in the agenda showed trends in performance. It was suggested that in the future, when reflecting back on the performance management data, that the force majeure figures be colour coded.

RESOLVED: that the Board note the performance framework figures.

## 68 **Resources and Waste Strategy update**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager updated the Board on the Resources and Waste Strategy, along with a summary of timings and consultations. There were three sets of regulations:

- EPR (extended producer responsibility) for packaging. [Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://www.defra.gov.uk/epr/)
- DRS (deposit return scheme). [DRS Consultation FINAL .pdf \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)
- Consistency in collection.

The Board discussed DEFRA's consultation on the resources strategy; extended producer responsibility and deposit return scheme. The deadline for response of 4 June on these two consultations was noted and that the Recycling & Waste team would respond. The issue would also be discussed at the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee of which the Chair of the Board Cllr Geoff Jung was a participant.

The Resources and Waste Strategy would fundamentally change the sector and how it would operate, but at the moment little was known about how it would work in practice. More would be understood following the consultations and when the regulations came into force.

The SUEZ Principal Commercial Manager reiterated that it was a very complicated topic which would have an impact operationally and administratively. Revenue streams would be coming from different angles as well as funding for the service.

The Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment reported that awareness of the implications of the Resources and Waste Strategy had been raised during the recent Council Plan workshops with members and that it would be a future decision for the Council to take. Once the proposals and implications were fully understood members would be informed

RESOLVED: that a report be brought to a future Board meeting outlining the potential changes and impacts for EDDC's communities and delivery contract with Suez.

## 69 **SUEZ takeover bid update**

The SUEZ Principal Commercial Manager explained the merger between SUEZ and Viola, in which Viola would acquire SUEZ. Two weeks earlier the two boards had met and agreed that SUEZ and Viola would merge in the UK, under Viola's ownership. There would be processes in place to ensure that there would not be a huge monopoly and that until these processes were complete the merger would not happen.

It was noted that on a local level the service would remain the same as the previous regime, but would need rebranding.

On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked SUEZ and in particular the Contract Manager and wished him well on his move to Somerset. In response the Contract Manager thanked the Board for the continued support in East Devon.

### **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)**

#### **Officers in attendance:**

Lou Hodges, Recycling Officer

Steve Maclure Waste Management Officer

Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

#### **Suez representatives in attendance:**

James Gatter, Assistant Contract Manager

Lily Morton, Recycling Officer SUEZ

#### **Board Member apologies:**

James Pike, Regional Director South West, SUEZ

Councillor Geoff Pook

Chairman .....

Date: .....