

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held at Online via the Zoom app on 13 October 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.40 pm

14 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board meeting held on 14 July 2021 were agreed as a true record.

15 Declarations of interest

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

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Eleanor Rylance, Personal, Ward member for Broadclyst, which included Hill Barton Business Park, where Coastal Recycling was situated.

Declarations of interest.

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

16 Matters arising

There were no matters arising or questions submitted in advance of the meeting. It was noted that during the previous meeting it had been recommended that visits be arranged to SUEZ Greendale depot and to Coastal Recycling at Hill Barton Business Park. The Chair felt that this would be of interest to many district councillors, however if social distancing was to be maintained the Board agreed that it would be sensible to wait until January 2022 to decide whether it was safe to conduct the visits.

17 Joint operational and contract 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 period July – October 2021. This quarter (2) had been dominated by staff shortages that had affected the entire sector. Staff resources had been closely managed to maintain as many collections as possible on planned schedules. The staff shortages had led to regular non-deployment of rounds and in-complete rounds for recycling and officers outlined how the situation had been managed. The team working and focus on key principles and priorities was testimony to the joint working ethic. The Recycling and Waste Manager thanked the teams involved and added that the app messaging had proved invaluable in communicating round difficulties.

Waste, green waste and clinical collections had been largely unaffected. Bulky items collections were suspended in order to transfer staff to support recycling crews under contingency planning. In response to a question, it was noted that this had not increased fly tipping.

Two significant milestones were passed during the second quarter:

- 72,000 properties served.
- 17,000 green waste customers.

This continual growth had added to the operational pressures and reflected the need to grow operational capacity to meet the demands and developing size of the operation.

Shortages in operational staff had impacted SUEZ and the industry dramatically. The bonus incentive helped with some shortages over the summer and it also aided in bolstering staff wages to keep them in line with other Devon authorities. Towards the end of September more loader and driver positions had been filled with higher paid agency staff. Some of these staff were filtering into SUEZ via temporary to permanent positions. The increase in staff had helped with the collection issues levelling out and a reduction in negative performance statistics.

An Assistant Contract Manager had recently been recruited from within the contract on a secondment role. The SUEZ Recycling Officer had also been moved to a supervisory role to bring on her operational skills and a new Recycling Officer, Jess Prosser was introduced and welcomed to the meeting. Six new team leaders had been appointed within recent weeks to help with quality of service. There were 5 members of staff being trained to be LGV driver 3 through the government apprentice scheme.

The SUEZ Contract Manager reported that health and safety incidents had reduced. There had been a number of missed collections and complaints due to staff shortages but these were both on a downward trend. Waste flow was increasing and this was attributed to holiday lets and the number of visitors to the area over the summer.

Material values had been positive from the beginning of the year with the partnership receiving higher rebates for cardboard than anticipated. The partnership sold 6757 tonnes at a value of £868,678. September was the best performing month since the contract began. It was hoped that if this trend continued total material sales income for the year would be over £1 million. The Board were cautioned that despite this the partnership would not receive the same level of uplift income it was expecting this year due to losses in shared savings. Overall waste arising were going up, but this was mainly due to the increase in green waste collected.

As part of county wide collaborative working the team were working with both Exeter City Council (ECC) and Devon County Council to assist with the pending trial of food waste collection in Exeter. The food waste collected in Exeter would be taken to the SUEZ Greendale depot as a means of getting the material into the anaerobic digestion treatment stream. The partnership had also provided food waste participation data to help ECC predict workload on the trial collections.

In addition the team were providing monthly materials tonnage data to South Hams District Council to help them predict workloads as they planned to extract themselves from the long running difficulties they had had with the collection system and operations.

The Chair and other members thanked the teams for the service and the partnership approach. The Board wished to record its thanks to the recycling officers for doing an excellent job and working at this level and interacting so professionally with councillors and SUEZ to resolve issues.

The Service Lead – Street Scene commented that he was glad that the bonus scheme and driver training programme had helped the service. In light of the national driver shortage issue and increase in wages, he asked whether SUEZ planned to increase its pay rates the following year. It was suggested that driver pay be taken to the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee (DASWC) to set a uniform pay rate across the area. It was noted that driving for the waste and recycling service was different to hauliers. Many people were attracted by the hours and the ability to work locally. SUEZ would be watching pay rates and would be looking at wages internally. It was noted that regionally SUEZ looked very closely at wage rates and incentive schemes.

The Recycling and Waste Manager reported that periodically the sector had a county wide pay review and that there was currently one ongoing. The local authorities were very open about pay and shared information. It was suggested, as part of the ongoing DASWC collaboration, that county wide standard pay rates could be explored across all the collection authorities. SUEZ were asked if they actively recruited women and it was noted that there were currently a couple of female drivers on the East Devon contract. There were also a few female loaders and at management level there were four women and five men. The SUEZ Principal Commercial Manager reported that in terms of white collar roles there was equal pay and as many if not more women employed across the company. There were fewer women in operational roles and steps were being taken to attract more females.

Concern was expressed over the lack of ability to recycle aluminium cans in public waste bins. It was noted that many of these beach front bins were overflowing in the summer and members queried how cans could be diverted from the public waste bins. The Service Lead – Street Scene replied that it was a service objective to improve on street recycling, but this involved a whole host of operational issues regarding the need for more bin lift vehicles on the fleet, as well educating the public as society still did not always engage with recycling. It was hoped that the anticipated deposit return scheme (DRS) would help with this. It was noted that there was still no definitive time scale from DEFRA for DRS implementation.

On behalf of the Board the Chair once again thanked all the staff and teams for their work in keeping the service running.

18 **Performance framework**

The Recycling and Waste Manager thanked the Recycling and Waste Assistant for the performance figures which showed performance across the contract. It was noted that lockdown and staff shortages had led to dips in performance but this was starting to improve, with figures returning nearer to target. The teams were thanked for working together in partnership during a difficult period. It was noted that the summer period was always a challenge with additional visitors to the area and waste generated from holiday lets, as well as staff shortages and staff wanting to take holidays. The Partnership Board noted the performance framework.

19 **Bridging solution update**

The SUEZ Principal Commercial Manager updated the Board on the bridging solution put forward to EDDC. This required a significant uplift on the contract. Officers had recently been provided with more detail on the proposal, which they now needed to investigate further. Once this had been undertaken officers would be in a position to continue discussions and clarify the proposal.

20 **Crew behaviour training phase 2**

The SUEZ Recycling Officer outlined phase 2 of the crew behaviour training. She reported that there had been an improvement after the first phase of training, but that bad habits were starting to return. A video had been produced and would be delivered in a similar way to the toolbox talks. It would also be put onto the SUEZ portal and used for new inductions and agency staff. The video reiterated the five golden rules and why it was so important for crews to follow them. The five golden rules were:

1. Never litter.
2. Always return bins neatly.
3. Always behave responsibly.
4. Drive with care.
5. Use social media responsibly.

The reasons why the crews should follow the rules were:

- Less complaints means supervisors have more time to deal with your queries.
- Makes your day shorter.
- Improved relationship with client and residents, makes everyone's lives easier.
- Increased support from client and residents.
- Positive resident reactions.
- You are the face of Suez.
- You are contracted to provide a good service.

The Board thanked the Recycling Officer for her excellent video and agreed that all councillors should be encouraged to watch it: <https://youtu.be/Yha0V9KwTp4>. It was suggested that the video be linked to the Council's website so that the public were aware of what was expected of the crews.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the Partnership Board recommend to Cabinet that members note the excellent crew behaviour training being delivered by SUEZ, including the five golden rules of crew behaviour:
 1. Never litter.
 2. Always return bins neatly.
 3. Always behave responsibly.
 4. Drive with care.
 5. Use social media responsibly.
2. that the Partnership Board recommend to Cabinet that the training [video](#) be included on the EDDC website and that all councillors be encouraged to watch it.

21 **Flats recycling project**

The SUEZ Recycling Officer and two EDDC Recycling and Waste Officers gave a presentation to the Board on a project looking at recycling in flats. Over 400 bins stores across the district were initially surveyed in 2017 and facilities were reviewed to see how to maximise recycling participation at each. There were a number of challenges to be overcome:

Challenges for residents

- Having space inside to store recycling
- Knowing what can or can't be recycled
- Distance to the recycling store and having to use stairs

- Having to trek outside in bad weather
- Poorly laid out recycling stores with insufficient space

Challenges for local authorities

- Contamination
- Separation
- Quality - Keeping recycling dry
- Communication challenges with a diverse range of tenants
- Motivating residents to recycle more
- Social problems such as fly tipping, misuse of facilities
- Lack of ownership

In 2020 a developer guide was created which gave a steer for large housing developers to create communal recycling stores that were user friendly, crew friendly and created conditions for good levels of recycling. The EDDC planning team had been issuing it to developers on receipt of planning enquiries and the recycling team and SUEZ were consulted to ensure plans met their capacity and space requirements.

Following an EDDC housing fire risk assessment at 23 blocks of flats there was a housing led recycling store project which started in January 2021 where recycling stores were revamped. Each store was kitted out with new recycling and waste containers and posters. 15,000 litres excess refuse capacity was removed and recycling capacity was increased. A recycling guide and a handy bag (to help residents get recycling from inside their home to the outside stores) was delivered to every flat.

Good relations were forged with big social landlords, most of which were persuaded to invest money in improved recycling facilities. Some private developers also contacted the recycling and waste team and invested in high quality recycling facilities.

As part of the project seven blocks of flats were monitored for recycling output and contamination. This was:

- 2 newly built EDDC bin stores.
- 1 newly built private bin store.
- 3 EDDC bin stores that had had no EDDC intervention.
- 1 private bin store with no EDDC intervention.

The average amount of recycling from non-flatted areas per week for 2 people was 8.65kg and for one person it was 4.32kg. The results of the monitoring showed that people living in flats put out less recycling than those living in houses (some by as much as 50%). Despite EDDC's current intervention to encourage recycling, this had little impact on the amount of recycling placed out for collection. Bespoke interventions were required and examples were shown to the Board. There was also a problem of high contamination in flats, with plastic being the worse material for contamination, followed by paper and card. However, in general the higher the recycling rate the higher the contamination. A number of future interventions were discussed and the Board were shown a [video](#) produced for residents of flats to promote recycling.

On behalf of the Partnership Board the Chair thanked the officers involved for all their efforts with the flat recycling project. Despite the results being a little disappointing it was great to see various departments working together and officers were encouraged to continue with the work to encourage recycling in flats. It was noted that the team were looking to produce a recycling leaflet specific for flat residents. It was suggested that district councillors be informed of the project and encouraged to contact active residents associations in their area to promote the project and share the video.

RECOMMENDED: that the Partnership Board recommend to Cabinet that district councillors share with residents associations in their area the flats recycling project and the [video](#) in order to encourage residents of flats to recycle and that an improvement project be established and reported back to future meeting of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board.

22 **Green waste accounts**

The Recycling and Waste Manager thanked the Accountant for producing the accounts. He outlined the cash position and the accruals position and commented that the projected position was healthy. It was noted that the costs were based upon the four rounds at present, if another round was required this would impact on costs. In response to a question it was noted that if growth of the service continued an additional round was likely to be added in the new financial year.

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

A Hancock, Service Lead StreetScene

Suez present:

N Tandy, Principal Commercial Manager

J Gatter, Contract Manager

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

P Faithfull

J Kemp

B De Saram

Officers in attendance:

Andrew Hopkins, Communications and Events Consultant

Lou Hodges, Recycling Officer

Lily Morton, Recycling Officer

Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

Steve Joyce, Waste Management Officer

Steve Maclure, Waste Management Officer

Suez representatives in attendance:

Lily Morton, Recycling Officer, SUEZ

Jess Prosser, Recycling Officer, SUEZ

Board Member apologies:

James Pike, Regional Director, SUEZ

John Golding, Strategic Lead - Housing, Health and Environment

Councillor Geoff Pook

Chairman

Date: