

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held online via the Zoom app on 20 July 2022**

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

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.45 pm

#### **1 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous consultative meeting held on 27 April 2022 were received and noted.

#### **2 Declarations of interest**

There were no interests declared.

#### **3 Matters arising**

The Strategic Lead – Environment, Health and Housing asked for an update on actions agreed at the last meeting on tetrapak and the supply chain of some recycling materials. The SUEZ Contract Manager reported that the plastic processors had advised that all 'waste' went to energy from waste (EFW) and that nothing went to landfill or was shipped overseas. Plastics were the second largest earning material for the contract and four different processors were used. A request was made for the environmental impact assessments from the four plastic processors and the SUEZ Contract Manager would ask the SUEZ trading team for this.

The EDDC Recycling and Waste Contract Manager informed the Board that the only other Devon authority that collected tetrapak kerbside was Teignbridge Torbay as part of the cardboard collections.

The Service Lead – Street Scene outlined a report he had been working on for the Board with the Assistant Portfolio Holder Climate Action and Emergency Response. She felt that there was not enough transparency in the communications. Officers advised not to change the communications in relation to tetrapaks as they expected things may change through new regulations that would come in under the Environment Act.

It was suggested and agreed that an Improvement Sub Group be set up by the Board and consist of Councillors Jung, Bickley and Rylance, and the Recycling and Waste Contract Manager and the Service Lead – Street Scene.

An update was requested on the soft plastics trial. The SUEZ Principal Commercial Manager reported that he would bring a summary of the trial, including the data and experiences of the participating authorities to the next Board meeting.

#### **4 Joint operations 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 April to June 2022. Ongoing pressures had remained during the first quarter, but service levels had

remained good, with particular improvement in missed collections. Complaints were low and under threshold levels. The spring and Jubilee bank holidays went well. Staff shortages on certain days were addressed by great communications between the two partners and use of the EDDC resident app and website.

A milestone had been passed in the green waste collection service, with 18,000 subscriptions during the quarter. The partnership were congratulated on this and it was suggested that this good news story be communicated to residents. The waste and recycling team were also congratulated for recent Face Book posts on food recycling. In response to a question the Recycling and Waste Contract Manager outlined the green waste marketing plan that was included in the original business plan. SUEZ were carrying out a project to assess 'compostable waste arisings' levels at household waste recycling centres (HWRC) across Devon, which appeared to have reduced. The results of this would be shared with the Board once the work was complete.

There had also been focus on planning for the implementation of Phase 1 (Growth Zone) of the bridging solution. The routes had been mapped and were ready to be case checked and exported. It was important for supervisors and their teams to have ownership of the routes and to minimise resident upset on the roll out.

Commodity prices had remained high, giving record income on materials sales. June had achieved the highest ever revenue sales since the start of the contract. Plastics prices had risen considerably and it was believed that 'plastic tax' was a key driver in this market.

Recruitment of drivers was ongoing, but there had been a lot of success with loaders starting with the contract. In-house training for loaders to become drivers was still going well. Two supervisor candidates had been taken from within the contract, demonstrating strong succession planning. There was a strong team of five supervisors.

It was noted that SUEZ had a lot of ongoing sustainability projects.

The SUEZ Contract Manager was asked how the recent hot weather emergency plan had gone and what lessons had been learnt for the future. He explained to the Board that the operating permit had been changed the previous year to 5:30am, which allowed crews to start at 6am. This had been popular with the crews. There had been little issue with heat exhaustion, with supervisors delivering water and fresh fruit and refillable water bottles available on site. In terms of forward planning, SUEZ were looking at introducing 'summer months' adjusted working hours from May to September.

## 5 **Bridging solution phase 1 implementation**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager updated the Board on phase one of the bridging solution implementation. The additional vehicles had been ordered, with three new Romaquips anticipated (fully liveried) in two to three weeks' time. An RCV was expected in November.

A lot of planning had gone into phase one. This included software, supervisor checks and driver input. The EDDC planning team had been included in meetings and advised that there were no major new developments. Round information would be looked at during August and communications would be matched to the level of change. It was probable that implementation would be during the last week of September. The main risk area remained staff recruitment.

The Recycling and Waste Partnership noted the bridging solution update.

## 6 **Performance framework**

The Board noted the performance framework which showed performance across the contract for the Board's review and information. Service levels were good, with missed collections below the threshold. The biggest issue had been non-deployment of rounds due to staffing pressures.

## 7 **Risk register**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager presented the risk register to the Board. He highlighted emerging risks and high risk areas, which included:

- Lack of Strata design capacity to meet deadlines for communications materials – the Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained that he was in regular contact with the Communications manager, but lack of capacity within the team led to delays in communications material being available when required. Lack of graphic design capacity stopped development of some of the participation work.
- Staffing – this was an ongoing problem and reflected the overall recruitment crisis in the industry and nationally. There was a new risk in terms of recruitment of additional front line staff for bridging solution phases one and two.
- Global effects fuel supply/costs – SUEZ were currently carrying the additional fuel costs.
- Growth of operation resulting in outgrowing the depot facility – there was pressure on the depot as the service got bigger, with space constraints reducing operational efficiency.
- Legislation and regulation – the Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained that this had not been scored yet as there was insufficient information at present to assess the risk.

In response to discussion about lack of communications and Strata design capacity, the Leader agreed to write to the Portfolio Holder Democracy, Transparency and Communications to raise these concerns.

The Recycling and Waste Partnership Board noted the risk register and thanked the Recycling and Waste Contract Manager for presenting it.

## 8 **Green waste accounts**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager gave the Board a verbal update on the draft green waste accounts. He reassured the Board that the scheme remained viable. Rising fuel costs were a concern as they affected the operating costs, but the green waste service was profitable. It had also recently passed the 18,000 bin subscriptions milestone, contained in the business plan.

## 9 **Contamination trial**

The SUEZ Recycling Officer explained that a trial had been undertaken to determine whether sending letters and visiting properties that persistently contaminated recycling receptacles would reduce the contamination.

Six months before the trial began there were 3,583 cases of contamination recorded by crews. The Recycling Officer outlined the contamination procedure, contamination codes and the issues that contamination could lead to.

The three month trial took place on recycling round 13 in Exmouth and took place in three stages; tagging, letter and visit. Residents were not informed that the trial was happening as the team did not want them to change their habits. Each week a report was run on Core looking into the contamination recorded on the recycling round 13. This was then put into an excel spreadsheet which would automatically tell officers if a resident needed a letter sent or a visit.

The trial showed that tagging, letters and visits did help reduce contamination, with most residents genuinely confused about what they were doing wrong.

The main causes of contamination found were residents using the wrong container (misuse of recycling bags), hidden contamination and non-recyclable plastic. The trial showed that the contamination codes needed updating. Overall a large time commitment would be required if this was to be done on a larger scale, possibly on an area basis to reduce workload.

Options post trial were:

- Continue using the stickers/tags as they were and not change the current procedure.
- Add a contamination procedure to CORE which would automatically notify to send letters and visit residents (similar to the trial).
- Increase communications surrounding contamination. This could be done by incorporating communications focused on contamination into the 2023 plan.

It was noted that one of the biggest area of contaminates was non-recyclable plastics. This demonstrated that people wanted to recycle more, but couldn't. It was suggested that the Improvement Sub Group consider improving/expanding the ability to recycle. The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager reassured the Board that further work on contamination would be built into the 2023/24 improvement plan.

The Board went on to discuss flats and how individual residents could be encouraged to take ownership in flats. The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained that flats were a universal problem across the sector. The partnership had a comprehensive programme for flats which included incentives, and he outlined this to the Board.

The Recycling and Waste Partnership Board noted the results of the trial. On behalf of the Board the Chair welcomed the trial presentation and thanked the SUEZ Recycling Officer for her work.

## 10 **Competition and Markets Authority decision on Veolia/SUEZ merger**

The SUEZ Principal Commercial Manager gave the Board an update on the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) decision on the Veolia/SUEZ merger. A decision had been expected on 17 July, but this would now be given on 11 September. The CMA preliminary findings were not in favour of a Veolia/SUEZ merger in the UK. The SUEZ Principal Commercial Manager advised that CMA preliminary findings usually reflected the final decision, but as this was not guaranteed SUEZ were planning for both eventualities. If the final decision was against a merger then Veolia would have 12 weeks to sell SUEZ. Although SUEZ had good accounts and a positive culture, it was an uncertain time for the company.

On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked the Principal Commercial Manager for his update.

**Attendance List**

**Board Members:**

**Councillors present:**

G Jung (Chair)  
D Bickley  
E Rylance (Vice-Chair)  
T Wright  
M Rixson  
J Kemp

**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  
J Gatter, Contract Manager

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

P Arnott  
B De Saram  
P Faithfull  
P Millar  
J Rowland

**Officers in attendance:**

Lou Hodges, Recycling Officer  
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer  
Steve Maclure, Waste Management Officer

**Suez representatives in attendance:**

Jess Prosser, Recycling Officer

**Board Member apologies:**

James Pike, Regional Director

Chair .....

Date: .....