

# **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of the meeting of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held at online via zoom on 12 July 2023**

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

The meeting started at 2.10 pm and ended at 3.30 pm

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

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 April 2023 were agreed as a true record.

### **2 Declarations of interest**

Declarations of interest.

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

### **3 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **4 Terms of reference and membership of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board**

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting and invited them to introduce themselves. Following this he gave a brief explanation of the recycling and waste contract with SUEZ.

The Service Lead – Streetscene reminded those present of the way the Recycling and Waste Partnership was intended to operate. It was different to many of the Council's other committees in that it had councillor, officer and SUEZ membership and was intended to discuss the more strategic business of running the partnership service. The terms of reference were included with the agenda papers and members were asked to consider whether, aside from titles, they needed to be updated.

Recycling & Waste Partnership Board were asked to confirm the following points:

- To allow maximum participation the Board meetings remain virtual, with decisions being reported to and ratified by Cabinet.
- The Board should focus on strategic/business improvement items. Parochial or regular service issues should be raised directly with officers outside of the Board meetings.
- To use the Board membership (terms of reference reminder) to debate business direction, new and emerging threats and opportunities in a more commercial way, also drawing on Suez expertise to assist in this.
- Observing members were welcome but should only comment if called by the Chair.
- Members should ensure they read any papers ahead of the Board meetings and submit any questions one week in advance so officers and SUEZ partners can provide full and considered answers.
- That the Board note it had the ability to use improvement forums (subgroups) to work on ideas in areas such as the circular economy and environmental ethics, with reports back to the Board for debate.

- Board debate and decision making would centre in more depth around items such as contract replacement, depot provision, fleet decarbonisation, DRS/EPR/consistency, material markets, future direction, participation projects.
- SUEZ to be asked for injects regarding national/global issues and the Board to use this to help keep the service fit for purpose and continuously improving.

**RESOLVED:** that subject to the terms of reference being updated to reflect changes to titles, the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board note the terms of reference.

## 5 **Joint contract and operations 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 first quarter of 2023/24. It had been a positive start to the financial year, with both service levels and overall performance levels being high. Complaints and missed collections remained below thresholds of the performance framework. The bank holidays, including the additional coronation bank holiday weekend (which was operated differently to the usual arrangements) went smoothly due to multi-layer communications and crew briefings.

There had been rewards for positive attitudes and crew performance over the recent months. Annual pay reviews for all staff were recognised by the staff along with a company cost of living incentive which started in April 2023. Long serving agency staff had joined the business, helping to strengthen the business and staff were continuously being promoted to go through LGV training, with positive results. It was reported that no staff on the East Devon contract were currently in a union, so the partnership was not affected by the industrial action being taken elsewhere.

During the quarter the business plan target of 19,250 green waste bins subscribed was passed a lot earlier in the year than anticipated keeping the business plan on track for 2023/2024. The small price rise of £2/year had not impacted new subscriptions or renewals. It was noted that there was currently sufficient vehicle capacity in the green fleet. Some small round rebalancing would take place in September, with more planned for February 2024.

The SUEZ Contract Manager reported that East Devon Municipal, Devon Household Waste Recycling Centres and Devon I&C all joined together to have a stand at the Devon County Show in May, working together and connecting with the community. Each organisation had a different goal for the show. For East Devon it was to educate on how to reduce food waste, which was done with having an interactive game for children where they had to sort food items out into different lunch boxes depending on if they were wasteful or waste free. A request was made for the interactive game to be taken other local events across the district to encourage recycling.

It was noted that material sales had remained static since the last meeting, with indications of a rise in June figures. Plastics were increasing in both price and quantity. In response to a question about waste flows, the Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained that waste flows had peaked through 2021 into 2022. Although this was now decreasing the trend was being reversed due to the increase in households in the district.

In response to a question about registering new properties the Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained that EDDC's planning department was in correspondence with the council tax department. Bins/containers were ordered at the time a property was registered with council tax and this information was uploaded to SUEZ promptly so that

there was no delay in service. It was noted that a Valuation Office Agency (VOA) report was received monthly but that properties tended to take approximately three months to get through the VOA

The Partnership continued to receive approaches from local authorities around the country seeking to learn from its experience and expertise, with positive responses received. In the last quarter meetings had been held with Teignbridge, South Gloucester, North Kesteven and South Tyneside.

## 6 **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. It was noted that overall missed collections were below target which was positive news. There was a need to focus on missed assisted collections and container deliveries. The SUEZ Contract Manager reported that the rise in missed assisted collections was due to lack of round experience with a new crew. There had been a staffing issue with container deliveries, but extra resource had been put in place and this would be resolved quickly. The Recycling and Waste Assistant was thanked for preparing the performance report.

## 7 **Contract extension proposal update**

The Streetscene Service Lead gave the Board an update on the contract extension proposal. He confirmed that a four-month interim extension agreement with Suez for the continuation of the service on the cost plus 5% basis had been agreed and signed. This four-month period would allow EDDC to complete the negotiations on the capped costs and contract detail and to bring a full report to Cabinet (4 October) and Council (18 October) for agreeing the basis for the three year extension (following on from the agreement to extend from Cabinet on 22 March). These reports will be on the Forward Plan for October.

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Partnership Board was 25 October, which meant that the Board would not have an opportunity to scrutinise the report before it was presented to Cabinet. The Board agreed to hold an extraordinary meeting prior to the October Cabinet and Council meetings to input into the process. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee also offered to support and wished to be involved in the process. It was agreed that he would be invited to the extraordinary meeting of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board.

**RESOLVED:** that an extra ordinary meeting of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board be held before October 2023 to consider the contract extension proposal report.

## 8 **Green waste accounts**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager presented the year 2022/23 green waste accounts to the Partnership Board and explained the background to the green waste service. The service began in 2018 and was a self-financing, joint venture between EDDC and SUEZ, with profit being shared at the end of the financial year on a 60 (EDDC)/40 (SUEZ) basis. The accruals position for 2022/23-year end was noted in the accounts.

Residents could subscribe to the green waste service at any time. Sharp spikes were often seen in income across the year, but the costs remained linear. There had been a small price increase of £2 for the service for the first time since the start of the contract to cover staff and fuel costs. This was below inflation and there were no signs that it had impacted subscriptions. The service represented good value for money when benchmarked against neighbouring authorities.

## 9 **Electric vehicle progress**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained that as part of the bridging solution Cranbrook had been arranged into its own Monday to Friday collection schedule in order to rebalance rounds. There were dedicated crews and vehicles to address the extra ordinary growth in the 'growth zone'. As new vehicles were required it was decided to trial the use of electric vehicles, particularly as the growth zone was near to the depot so that range concerns with electric vehicles would be managed.

The partnership had nearly completed trials of the all the fleet options for electric vehicles, apart from the electric refuse collection vehicle (RCV), which required more investigation. The vehicles were returning to the depot with 50% battery charge remaining. It was noted that a big issue with the current depot was the incoming electricity supply which only allowed for a small number of vehicles to be charged. This would be explicitly considered when undertaking the depot review.

An order was due to be placed for 2 electric recycling vehicles to cover the growth zone area, subject to reviewing the current capital allocation. These would be provided by Romaquip, the supplier of the current recycling fleet. The 7.5-ton narrow access Romaquip would be in service soon, subject to the delivery of some parts, and routes were being developed to bring a CO2 saving to the partnership and an increase in performance/versatility.

Further investigations would be made into electrifying other rounds in the future. The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager explained that the bulk of the current fleet had been procured in 2016/17, with a planned 10-year life. Some refurbishments would be made to the older part of the fleet, and although some additions had been made to the fleet as the contract had grown, the bulk of the vehicles would need to be replaced in one go. Once the electric vehicles had been purchased more could be learnt from carrying out extensive in-house trials. This would enable the partnership to be in a much more knowledgeable position by the time the fleet required replacing in 2026. The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager outlined the costs of replacement diesel vehicles and the electric equivalents. It was noted that decarbonisation came at a large price.

The SUEZ Contract Manager thanked the Somerset contract for the use of their ERCV for a period to see how the East Devon partnership could manage an electric RCV in the growth zone.

The Board thanked all those involved in impressive partnership working.

## 10 **Words of thanks**

On behalf of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board the Chair thanked the Director - Housing, Health and Environment who had been involved with the contract since its early days, for his guidance, inspiration and control. He had overseen the introduction of the three weekly black bin collections and mixed kerbside recycling collections, overseen all

the change and overcome the hurdles with great calmness and co-ordination between the contractors, PR and press, councillors and residents. It was now the best performing recycling service in the country. His forethought, guidance and help would be missed, and the Chair wished him a fantastic well-deserved retirement.

In response the Director – Housing, Health and Environment commented that he was really proud to have worked with such a high performing team and been involved with such a good partnership with SUEZ, which was the envy of many. It had been incredibly rewarding to have been given the opportunity to experiment a bit and maintain such a strong high performing service for the residents.

### **Attendance List**

#### **Board Members:**

#### **Councillors present:**

S Gazzard

G Jung (Chair)

M Rixson

#### **Officers present:**

G Bourton, Recycling and Waste Contract Manager

J Golding, Director of Housing, Health and Environment

A Hancock, Assistant Director StreetScene

#### **Suez present:**

N Tandy, Principal Commercial Manager

J Gatter, Contract Manager

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

P Arnott

I Barlow

C Fitzgerald

M Goodman

T Olive

E Rylance

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

Andrew Hopkins, Communications Consultant

Lou Hodges, Recycling and Waste Officer

Steve Maclure, Waste Management Officer

Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

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

Jessica Prosser, Recycling Officer

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

James Pike, SUEZ Regional Director

Chair .....

Date: .....