

# **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of the meeting of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held at Clyst Room, Blackdown House, Honiton, EX14 1EJ on 12 November 2024**

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

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.20 pm

### **10 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2024 were agreed as a true record.

### **11 Declarations of interest**

Declarations of interest.

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

### **12 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising, however the Chair requested that the East Devon District Councillor membership on the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board be reviewed due to difficulties faced by some members in attending meetings.

**RECOMMENDED:** that Council review the district council membership on the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board.

### **13 Joint operations and contract report**

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager and the SUEZ Contract Manager gave the Board a joint contract and operational update for the second quarter of 2024/25. During this quarter operations had been consistent and service levels had remained excellent. The summer months had historically been a difficult period with staffing shortages, but there had been no impact this year, with full staff resources and no occasions of incomplete rounds.

The main focus of the quarter was preparing for the absorbent hygiene products (AHP) recycling trial which started in mid September and was going well. Also in September the first of two electric recycling vehicles purchased as part of the bridging solutions was received. The electric vehicles would primarily be tested in the growth zone area (Cranbrook and Tithebarn), making this area a fully electric round, but would also be used in other areas across the district to assist with the decision making for when a large proportion of the fleet was due for renewal in 2026/27. There was currently only one other local authority in the country using electric collection vehicles. A proposal had also been put forward for an electric refuse collection vehicle. Options for electric vehicles had been vigorously trialled, with Romaquip being generally better built and more robust. The vehicle tipping system also worked with the system at the depot. It was noted that the electric recycling vehicles carried as much as the standard vehicles, with the configuration providing additional cardboard capacity. They also offered other benefits including reduced emissions and lower maintenance costs. The Board requested that there be proactive communications to highlight the use of the first electric Romaquip

vehicle in the district and suggested organising a photo call and involving the local media to promote the initiative.

Recycling rates were around 62%, with the potential for a good year if this rate was maintained for the remainder of the year. It was noted that the rates were a quarter behind due to the validation process.

The SUEZ Contract Manager highlighted the success of reducing sickness levels from 9.21% in September 2023 to 2.77% in September 2024 through effective management and medical dismissals. This included immediate follow-up on day one of sickness and addressing long-term sickness. The reduction in sickness positively impacted operations. Complaints and missed collections remained below the performance framework thresholds, along with health and safety issues. Crew stability had improved and recruitment efforts were successful. There was good staffing levels, but these were slightly down on contract staff, with spaces filled by agency staff. The agency staff were on a temporary to permanent basis, with the aim of transferring them over to SUEZ staff in the next few months.

The material recycling facility (MRF) was fully staffed, following a period of under staffing pressures due to a successful recruitment drive. The MRF was working well dealing with waste flows. The SUEZ Contract Manager explained the fire watch procedures at the MRF, where staff conducted two-hour fire watches after shutting down operations. This included taking heat readings of motors and machines to ensure safety before leaving the site. There were also five thermal cameras which activated if temperatures exceeded a certain threshold.

The Board discussed risks associated with incorrect battery disposal and the need for more communications to residents. Disposing of lithium batteries in general waste could start fires. The Board agreed on the need for a public awareness campaign to educate residents about the proper disposal of batteries, including using the East Devon app, social media and bin tags to communicate this message effectively. There should be a push on all communications channels to ensure that batteries were in plastic bags and placed on the top of the recycling box, visible for crew collection. Small electricals should be placed in the recycling box and not the grey waste bins. The SUEZ Contract Manager agreed to provide figures on fires at the depot.

The Board noted that revenue was falling for materials across the market, nationally, but that the partnership was still receiving competitive prices. Budget setting for the forthcoming year had recently been undertaken, with a cautious approach taken as the fluctuation in material prices impacted the overall budget and required careful monitoring. The volatility of the materials market was a risk on EDDC. It was suggested that the joint Overview and Scrutiny committee should review the budget volatility around materials income during the budget setting process to ensure that the budget was set realistically, considering the fluctuations in the national market.

### **RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the Recycling and Waste team run a communications campaign to promote greater awareness amongst residents on the safe disposal of batteries.
2. that the Recycling and Waste team undertake proactive communications to promote the use of the first electric recycling collection vehicle.
3. that the joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the budget volatility of material prices during the budget setting process.

The Board noted the performance report which showed performance across the contract. It highlighted eight parts of the contract that officers focused on and allowed officers to look for areas of improvement and put plans in place if necessary. The Recycling and Waste Service Manager highlighted the overall good performance and addressed questions about container delivery. The increase in containers not delivered within target during August 2024 was attributed to one of the 2.5 delivery drivers being off work, as well as the additional 200 containers delivered as part of the AHP trial and an increase in green waste subscriptions. It was noted that approximately 2500-3000 containers were delivered per month.

It was suggested that QR codes could be put on the recycling boxes to provide information to residents on recycling. The SUEZ Contract Manager reported that there was not an issue with contamination amongst the recycling bins and that full recycling information was available on the EDDC website, app and was included with new property comms packs.

The Recycling and Waste Operations and Projects Officer agreed to review what information other councils provided on their recycling bins and ask the manufacturer whether it would be possible to include a QR code on the recycling containers. He would report back to the next meeting of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board.

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### **Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP) trial update**

The Recycling and Waste Operations and Projects Officer provided the Board with an update on the AHP trial, including the three different containers used, resident feedback and the potential for district-wide rollout. The trial began in September and was just past its half way point. Simple communications were sent out, initially a letter which gave participants an overview of the reasons for the trial. A second letter was then sent out which included a visual image and a 'how to' use the container provided and to take part in the trial. The three different containers were demonstrated to the Board and discussed.

There were around 200 properties taking part in the trial as well as one childcare setting. So far 6.4 tonnes of material had been collected in total, averaging around 1 tonne per week. The participation rate was high, at 82% with no complaints received. Resident feedback was good and there had been only one missed collection out of 1600 so far. There had been no odour problems reported at Greendale and the Nappicycle collections had been reliably completed each fortnight (Nappicycle had funded the haulage part of the trial to their plant in Wales).

Following the 12 week trial a questionnaire would be sent to all residents taking part as part of an evaluation of the trial. Discussions would be needed with Devon County Council (DCC) around potential disposal costs. It was noted that the gate fee of around £155 per tonne at Nappicycle was similar to the Exeter energy from waste gate fee. Projections based on tonnage from the trial were similar to the Nappicycle data predictions of an increase of 3.4% in the recycling rate. Officers would need to understand what percentage of the AHPs collected were classed as recycling.

The Recycling and Waste Operations and Project Officer would report back to the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board on the outcome of the trial, along with a business case detailing the costs of the trial, where these costs may sit and the carbon footprint of the trial. A report on the trial would also be presented to DCC. More data

was required before any decisions could be made. If the AHP collection service was to be continued decisions would be required on the type of vehicle needed, whether the collection service would be district wide and whether to collect adult AHP as well as nappies.

On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked the Recycling and Waste Operations and Projects Officer for the AHP trial update.

**16 Green waste accounts**

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager presented the green waste accounts to the Board and thanked the accountant for producing them. The green waste service was popular, with 21,300 subscribers (out of 74,000 properties in the district). A fifth crew had been added to the service this year, creating increased capacity but an additional expense. Predicted profit was £383,921 for the year. There was no longer a profit share with SUEZ, resulting in EDDC retaining 100% of the profits.

It was noted that all fees and charges would be reviewed during the budget setting process but the proposal was to increase the charge for the green waste service from £52 to £55 per year.

**17 Recycling box colour change**

The Recycling and Waste Operations and Project Officer's report proposed to procure black recycling boxes rather than green to save costs, reduce supply chain delays, increase potential for economies of scale and improve longevity.

Over the last few years all reference to colour had been removed from communications material in relation to the recycling boxes to enable more flexibility over future colour. The black and green boxes were identical, apart from their colour, but the black box was 63p cheaper, with a potential annual cost saving of £8,000 per year. The black boxes also aligned with resource efficiency principles because the 'master batch' raw materials used in black boxes were more abundant. In addition to this they were more robust than the green boxes which faded and became brittle quicker.

**RESOLVED:** that the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board approve the permanent procurement of black 55 litre recycling boxes in order to reduce purchasing costs.

**18 Bulky household waste collection charges**

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager's report proposed an adjustment to the charges for the bulky household waste collection service in response to the introduction of the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP) regulations. The new regulations mandated that from 1 December 2024 certain waste items must be collected and disposed of separately, resulting in increased operational costs. As the service must be run on a cost recovery basis, it was necessary to revise the current pricing structure to reflect these changes. The Recycling and Waste Service Manager's report outlined the proposed pricing adjustments and the impact of the POPs regulations on the bulky waste collection service.

The POPs regulations would significantly impact operational procedures for bulky waste collection, resulting in an increase in the number of days per week that the bulky household waste service operated from two days per week to four days per week. POPs

items could only be taken to household waste recycling centres at Pinhoe and Exmouth, thus increasing travelling time and distance. These changes had increased the cost per collection, making the previous pricing structure insufficient to cover the service's full costs. The bulky household waste service provided by EDDC was discretionary and all large household items could be taken to a household waste recycling centre free of charge directly. The report suggested that by implementing the proposed changes the service would continue to meet both regulatory obligations and customer needs without imposing an unsustainable financial burden on the service. The Board expressed concern over increased fly tipping and officers agreed to report back on this in six months, along with a review of the pricing structure.

**RECOMMENDED:** that Cabinet approve the proposed increase in bulky household waste collection charges from 1 December 2024 to cover the additional operational costs introduced by POPs regulations.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board agree for the Recycling & Waste Team to review the pricing structure in 6 months, to ensure the operational costs are being covered with any amendments to this proposal going back to the Board.
2. that the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board note that the Recycling & Waste Team will undertake a basic comparison exercise in 6 months to ensure there had not been a significant increase in fly-tipping.

**Attendance List**

**Board Members:**

**Councillors present:**

M Goodman

G Jung (Chair)

M Rixson

**Officers present:**

A Hancock, Assistant Director StreetScene

L Hodges, Recycling & Waste - Service Manager

**Suez present:**

J Gatter, Contract Manager

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

I Barlow

C Brown

**Officers in attendance:**

Gareth Bourton, Recycling and Waste Contract Manager

Steve Maclure, Recycling & Waste - Operations and Projects Officer

Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

**Suez representatives in attendance:**

Jess Prosser, Recycling Officer

**Board member apologies:**

Mike Wildman, Regional Manager, SUEZ

Mark Taylor, Regional Director, SUEZ  
Councillor Paula Fernley  
Councillor Todd Olive  
Andrew Wood, Director - Place

Chair ..... Date: .....