

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held at online via Teams on 30 July 2025**

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

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.40 am

#### **36 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2025 were agreed as a true record.

#### **37 Declarations of interest**

Declarations of interest.

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

#### **38 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### **39 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 first quarter of 2025-26, which saw consistently strong service levels across all areas, despite the additional pressures brought by the four bank holidays during the period. Peak holidays tended to be a peak time for the service and required careful planning and resource management to ensure continuity and minimise disruption for residents.

Complaints remained below threshold for quarter one, with a reduction from April to June. Missed collections also remained well under the performance levels set. Assisted missed collection figures were slightly increased due to a couple of crew issues on service. Sickness levels had vastly improved.

The health and safety indicators showed a positive increase in safety conversations with teams, used to point out situational awareness, since March 2025. Along with the introduction of hazard observations in January 2025, making the staff more proactive to concerns, the crews were reporting more by the introduction of digital access to through a QR code link in every vehicle.

The contract was currently in a strong and positive position. Crews were consistently completing their daily rounds on time, without exceeding contractual working hours. This had led to low overtime rates, delivering valuable cost savings for EDDC. This efficiency was also having a positive impact on staff morale. It was noted that staffing levels were sustainable, but not ideal. The contract was currently 7 LGV and 5 loaders against budget headcount. A driver incentive had been added from the beginning of June for new drivers, but there was a national shortage of LGV drivers. Sickness levels had significantly improved and were at an average of 2.78% (including long term).

Work was continuing well in the material recycling facility (MRF), dealing with waste flows. Environment Agency (EA) sampling was operating correctly, with new sampling equipment and teams getting to understand the system. SUEZ support teams were working with the EA to understand changes and recommendations on criteria.

There had been a slight gain in materials prices. A request was made for material prices to be included in the next report to the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board.

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager and the SUEZ Contract Manager were thanked for their report.

#### 40 **Performance Framework**

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. Assisted missed collection figures were a little higher but this was being addressed. The Recycling and Waste Service Manager highlighted the overall good performance and reported that the contract had never invoked a penalty.

#### 41 **Green waste accounts**

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager presented the green waste accounts for quarter 1, 2025-26 to the Board and thanked the accountant for producing them.

It was noted that as it was quarter 1 there remained a lot of predictions but the service was doing well and the predicted accrual income position for the year was £393,028.

#### 42 **Simpler Recycling**

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager's report explained that Simpler Recycling was a national reform aimed at standardising the collection of recyclable materials across all local authorities in England. The legislation required councils to collect a consistent set of materials (glass, metal, plastic, paper/cardboard, food waste, and garden waste) ensuring clarity for residents and improved recycling performance. Local authorities could co-collect certain materials, such as paper/cardboard with glass, but only where a TEEP (Technically, Environmentally and Economically Practicable) assessment supported it. Separate weekly food waste collections and access to a garden waste service must also be in place.

To meet the April 2026 compliance deadline, two key actions were proposed:

- completing a TEEP assessment for the co-collection of paper/card with glass (as per the current collection method),
- and introducing a narrow-access green waste collection service (not currently offered).

A narrow access green waste service would require capital investment in a 12-tonne refuse collection vehicle and a Transit Style Bin Lift Tipper. It was recommended that £200k be reallocated from existing capital vehicle refurbishment funds to support this purchase. Work on the later requirement for films and flexibles collection, due by March 2027, had begun with early research and planning.

#### **RECOMMENDED:**

1. that Cabinet approve the reallocation of £200,000 from the existing refurbishment capital budget to fund the required vehicles.

2. that Cabinet approve the completion of a TEEP assessment to support the co-collection of paper, glass and cardboard.
3. that Cabinet note the early stage work for 'films and flexibles' implantation was underway.

#### 43 **Absorbent Hygiene Product (AHP) business case update**

The Board considered the report of the Recycling and Waste Project Officer which set out a nappy recycling proposal. East Devon District Council was exploring the introduction of a district-wide nappy recycling service to support its statutory obligation (Environment Act 2021) to reach a 65% recycling rate by 2035, up from the current 60.1%. Disposable nappies accounted for up to 12% of residual waste—the second largest waste stream after food—and were not recycled.

A successful 12-week nappy recycling trial in 2024 demonstrated strong public support, high participation, and around one tonne of nappies collected weekly. The proposed service would involve weekly collections from 3,000–5,000 households, using dedicated vehicles and processing through NappiCycle in South Wales. However, without financial support from Devon County Council (DCC), East Devon would bear all costs, making the service around three times more expensive per tonne than existing recycling.

Four options had been assessed, with the preferred recommendation being to “Proceed with Caution,” plan for a future phased rollout. This approach allowed time to align with other statutory service changes (such as film and flexibles collections, and narrow access green waste collections), secure the necessary Environment Agency permits, and seek financial contributions from DCC to reduce disposal and haulage costs. With DCC support, the cost per tonne could drop from £602 to £339, significantly improving affordability. The service would deliver environmental and operational benefits, including a potential 3.4% boost to the recycling rate, up to 388 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> savings annually, and reduced pressure on residual waste services.

The business case explored service costs, carbon and recycling benefits, risks and challenges and next steps, including a proposed phased future rollout to 3,000-5,000 households. Collections would take place weekly using a sack-based system with collections made using 12-tonne vehicles. Processing of nappies would take place at Nappicycle (South Wales), the UK's only specialist nappy recycler.

Options for consideration were:

1. Do nothing optimise existing services. This was not recommended.
2. Proceed with immediate rollout in 2025. This was not feasible.
3. Proceed with caution, plan for a future roll out. Preferred option.
4. Defer and revisit in 2028. Lower priority.

Option 3 was preferred as it allowed time to:

- Maintain some momentum on the nappy recycling proposal while retaining flexibility to focus on more immediate statutory priorities.
- Further explore financial support and partnership with Devon County Council and consider alternative funding opportunities.
- Establish if a permit validation was required and calculate the cost of depot modifications required by the Environment Agency.
- Gain more certainty on the financial viability of the service.

The Recycling and Waste Operations and Projects Officer was thanked for his thorough report. The Board agreed with option 3 and that support was needed from DCC at both officer and member level, and from neighbouring authorities. It was noted that option 3

did not require significant amounts of money and that there were other potential funding options. The Board also agreed that re-useable nappies should be promoted.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board approve option 3, proceeding with caution for a future roll-out as per the detailed business case.
2. that EDDC promote the use of re-useable nappies.

**Attendance List**

**Board Members:**

**Councillors present:**

P Fernley  
G Jung (Chair)  
M Rixson  
T Olive  
M Goodman

**Officers present:**

L Hodges, Recycling & Waste - Service Manager  
Mark Barrow, Interim Director Place

**Suez present:**

V Masseri, General Manager  
J Gatter, Contract Manager

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

R Collins  
I Barlow  
P Faithfull

**Officers in attendance:**

Angela Baquerizo Thorsen, Recycling and Waste Operations and Projects Officer  
Steve Maclure, Recycling & Waste - Operations and Projects Officer  
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

**Suez representatives in attendance:**

Jess Prosser, Recycling Officer

**Board Member apologies:**

Andrew Hancock  
Councillor Richard Jefferies

Chair .....

Date: .....