

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held at Tale Room, Blackdown House, Honiton on 23 October 2019

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.30 pm

14 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board meeting held on 17 July 2019 were confirmed and signed as a true record, subject to minute number 12 Government Waste and Resources Strategy, first bullet point being amended to read 'HMRC – a tax on any packaging containing less than 30% recycled plastic'.

15 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

16 Matters arising/questions

There were no questions raised at this point, but the SUEZ Contract Manager was congratulated on his new arrival.

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager updated the Board on the Woodbury additional cardboard sack trial. He advised that crews were still collecting the cardboard sacks, but that these would soon be withdrawn now the trial had been managed. A carefully managed communication with residents was required to give information about why the sacks would no longer be collected, and also to thank them for taking part in the trial. It was suggested that this also be posted on the community Facebook page.

17 Contract & operational update report

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager and the SUEZ Contract Manager gave the Board a joint report on a contract review and operational update. Overall operational performance levels had decreased during quarter two, due to a high staff turnover, for various reasons. Overall recycling performance, had been the highest ever. This was a reflection of the work the recycling team had been doing in communal bin stores, as well as an increase in property growth and green bin sales. Paper quality had been a difficult area, but work was being done on this and improvements were being seen. The main problem with paper quality appeared to be a segregation issue (kerbside separation) rather than a customer issue. A very small trial was being planned for this (separate sack for high value paper). It emphasised the importance of quality as well as quantity.

It was noted that the overall tonnages being collected were falling. East Devon was currently the second lowest authority in England for kilograms of waste produced per household per year. It was suggested the statistic used to monitor monthly operational performance be presented to the Board annually and that this information be brought to the next Board meeting. The statistics helped indicated movements and trends.

The SUEZ Contract Manager explained the 20% turnover of staff during the previous quarter. This was mainly due to the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence

(CPC) deadline at the start of September. There was a national shortage of drivers. The rate of pay for drivers was accelerating faster than inflation. In the contract base pay was linked to inflation so this needed to be reviewed. The Board discussed the recruitment and retention of drivers, which was a nationwide problem. SUEZ were doing all they could to recruit drivers from every pool available. Consultant's advice had been taken for specific wording in adverts to attract female drivers.

SUEZ staff shortages had led to some rounds not being deployed resulting in a rise in missed collections, and then having to do 'catch up Saturdays'. It was noted that the East Devon App push messaging system had been useful in notifying customers when some rounds could not be completed.

There had been a heavy reliance on agency staff, and a number of incidents involving SUEZ employees who had not behaved to the expected standards. SUEZ had now implemented an employee engagement programme and early signs showed a significant improvement in behaviours. Also, as part of SUEZ's continued succession planning three employees had been enrolled onto a level three supervisor/team leader apprenticeship.

The SUEZ Contract Manager outlined changes in the staffing structure, as detailed in the report and best wishes were given to Stuart Jellings, the previous Contract Manager.

Problems areas being addressed were:

- Paper separation.
- Flats/communal bin stores, where there was a lack of ownership and it was difficult to identify individuals who were not recycling correctly.
- Relationships with social landlords and developers were being improved upon so that bin stores could be commented on at planning application stage and installed correctly. EDDC had made improvements within its own housing stock.
- A disproportionate amount of time was being spent in Cranbrook, where recycling rates were lower than other areas.

It was noted that new residents to East Devon were provided with information on how to use their bins and the frequency of collections, but there was a cost issue if this message was to be provided more than once, after residents had first moved into their property.

The SUEZ Contract Manager reported that the partnership had sold 1453tonnes of material during quarter two, a reduction in 37tonnes from the previous quarter. However, material value had significantly improved and it had been the most successful financial performance in the resource recycling centre since the new equipment had been built. It was easy to show that the investment in the equipment was receiving payback in terms of material quality and price. The largest influence on this was the mixed plastics sales. However, the market was very volatile and Brexit would bring uncertainty. It was important to ensure the best quality in order to achieve the highest price.

The Board noted that the partnership had received around 30 visits and many enquiries from other local authorities and one of its strengths was resident engagement and getting people to behave as they wanted them to do. East Devon invested a lot in time and communications with the public (through its recycling officers). The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager would be running a series of workshops for other authorities who were interested in the partnership's model. It was noted that the partnership was not standing still, but was trialling things and continually improving performance. Officers were congratulated on all their hard work.

18 **Risk Register**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager advised that risk A3, lack of Strata design capacity to meet deadlines for communications materials, continued to be a risk. The service was very communications and design heavy and a green waste publicity deadline had been missed over the summer due to lack of capacity. Risk I4 indicated the volatility of markets and material price, which EDDC had little control of. Risk Q related to the Government's resources strategy, but this had not yet been scored as not enough information was known at present.

19 **Performance framework/penalty calculator**

The SUEZ Contract Manager reported that staffing issues had impacted on operational performance and an increase in missed collections. The performance framework was reviewed monthly and used to drive performance of the contract. It was noted that the performance management framework could be misleading, for example SUEZ had missed delivery targets for containers, however these containers had not been delivered to SUEZ in time in the first instance and they therefore did not have the containers to deliver to the customers.

20 **Green waste accounts**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager thanked the Accountant and Budget and Equipment Monitoring Officer for compiling the accounts and explained them to the Board, including that the depreciation of the new vehicles would be included in the figures as they would soon be in use. It was noted that the green waste service was only in its second year, with the first year being mobilisation. Missing the summer communication due to lack of design team support had not been helpful as in order to attract new customers the service needed to be continually advertised. Three or four bins a day on average were being sold but numbers were declining due to the change in season.

The shiny new green vehicles would help with advertising the service and it was proposed that a promotional sticker would be put on the green bins. The recycling team were receiving social media training.

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager reported that whenever the service ran a campaign, all the information was provided to town and parish councils. A request was made for this information to also be sent to district councillors and that they be added to the communications distribution list. Officers were working with Cloud 9 on the East Devon app and its push functionality to improve direct communications with customers.

RESOLVED:

1. that the green waste service accounts be noted.
2. that district councillors be added the communications distribution list.

21 **Resources strategy update - SUEZ**

The SUEZ Director of Municipal Services reported that all the consultation responses were currently being considered. The main issues appeared to be:

- Deposit return scheme (DRS) – whether it would be implemented. If a DRS was implemented it would have a big impact on local authorities as plastic bottles were

currently the biggest revenue stream. A plastics recycling tax also linked in with this.

- Garden waste – whether a free fortnightly garden waste collection service would be implemented. This was originally proposed to encourage the packaging industry to use compostable packaging, but authorities responding were indicating the cost of this.
- Extended producer responsibility (EPR) – the Government was still pushing this hard, to decide on the complexity of packaging. The drive was on standardising packaging, which would change how people viewed packaging.

It was thought that the proposals were likely to come through in April 2020, with legislation being introduced and implemented in 2022/23. However, Brexit could affect this.

The SUEZ Director of Municipal Services felt that EDDC was ideally placed for where the legislation appeared to be going at the moment as it already had the optimum collection schedules and materials.

RESOLVED: that the resources strategy update be noted.

22 **Recycling end destinations, plastics and environmental sustainability**

The Board discussed the proposed Council motion and forthcoming Scrutiny agenda item:

In order to achieve greater transparency and responsibility for our waste and to be certain that 'recycled' waste is not 'dumped' in an unprocessed state in another country, we propose the following motion:

- a) that EDDC, in conjunction with Devon County Council and Suez, assess how it might, within the current legal framework, best secure transparency from recycling processors so as to facilitate clear reporting to our residents;
- b) that EDDC, in conjunction with Devon County Council and Suez assess how it might best report in weight terms as well as percentages, (with the intention of securing greater understanding as to whether the volume of general, food, plastics, metal, glass, textiles and electronic waste is decreasing, as well as percentages increasing);
- c) that EDDC assess how to encourage public behaviour change by promoting through EDDC's media presence the message 're-use, refill, reduce' rather than focusing on 'recycle';
- d) that a report be prepared on how EDDC can buy or commission products made from recycled materials whenever possible, (also joining with other councils where appropriate to reduce costs, for example for recycling sacks and bins) with a view to encouraging a closed loop circular economy system, the overall intention being to reduce and ultimately eliminate 'virgin' plastic entering the system.

The Service Lead for Street Scene Services advised that the data requested in part b of the motion already existed and was reported, simply in another form, but could be provided as requested. Much of the discussion during the meeting had already included

part c of motion. However, an increase in communications and engagement was a resourcing issue and had cost implications.

EDDC's website recycling hub already contained a huge amount of information, including a page on 'how my resources are used'. The Alexa skill would also enhance this. Additional information would require an extra layer of work in the back office.

The Service Lead for Street Scene Services demonstrated a fact sheet produced for Cornwall Council by SUEZ and suggested that this could be developed further to explain and provide more information about where products went. He had also asked Devon County Council (DCC) to provide information (as the waste disposal authority) on where some of the materials they traded went. This information had been provided but it was noted that once the materials had been sold into manufacture DCC no longer had visibility or ownership of the products.

SUEZ had a dedicated trading team, with a strict code dictating that products were traded in the UK through contractual requirements. SUEZ had stopped trading in Asia three years ago and did not send any of their products outside of the UK. A recent audit had been carried out on end destinations. Due to commercial sensitivity buyers would not always tell SUEZ where their materials went. A lot of effort was put into selling high value end products and it was stated that everything SUEZ sold from East Devon had a value. They were 99.9% confident that the materials they traded in the market were being reprocessed into something else. However, it was impossible to know exactly where everything that was recycled went. SUEZ and EDDC traded in the most ethical way possible and followed a due diligence process up until the point where they lost control (sold) the material.

It was hoped that the Government's resources strategy would help create a circular economy, and that EPR (extended producer responsibility) would be the biggest driver in this.

23 **LARAC award success and next steps**

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager informed the Board that the partnership had received a national recycling award. It had won the 'best new idea' in the innovative category for its use of digital technology. The feedback from the award ceremony was very positive, showing where the sector should be going in the future.

This was due to the Alexa recycling skill and the East Devon App, developed with East Devon business partner Cloud 9 Technologies. The App had a very high level of usage but the aim was to fine tune the messaging function. At present it could send push notifications at round level, but the intention was to refine it to street level if possible.

Officers had worked hard on the Alexa recycling skill, with over 10000 items on it. Its strength was that it was integrated with the CORE integration system and gave a very quick response/answer. Tips had been added, along with an extra level of information, such as a reason why. It was possible to monitor how the skill was being used and to develop those aspects. There had been a soft launch of the Alexa skill so far, with extensive testing. It was publicly available and would now be made more widely known, with constant promotion to increase its usage. There would be a press release and the Alexa recycling skill would be advertised on the Christmas bin hangers. It was hoped that regional TV would also be interested in the news story.

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager offered to demonstrate the Alexa recycling skill at the next Board meeting.

24 **Dates of future meetings**

Dates of future Board meetings were noted as:

29 January 2020

29 April 2020

Attendance List

Board Members:

Councillors present:

G Jung (Chairman)

D Bickley

P Faithfull

E Rylance

T Wright

Officers present:

G Bourton, Recycling and Waste Contract Manager

J Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment

A Hancock, Service Lead StreetScene

Suez present:

M Canning, Regional Manager

S Holgate, Director of Municipal Operations

H Mcleman, Contract Manager

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

A Dent

Officers in attendance:

Steve Maclure, Waste Management Officer

Lorraine Toulman, Waste Management Officer

Jacob Sycamore, Waste Management Officer

Suez representatives in attendance:

N Browning, General Manager, Municipal Operations

R Boulton, Recycling Officer

Board Member apologies:

Chairman

Date: