

TO: JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
13 March 2014

JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD – COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY
(Report by the Project Director)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Joint Waste Disposal Board (JWDB) of progress in terms of the development of a communications plan for the re3 councils since its last meeting on 12th December 2013.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Members note the contents of this report.**
- 2.2 **That Members endorse the proposal to recruit a single re3 Marketing and Communications officer to replace the two similar posts that were not filled upon the departure of the existing staff in 2011.**
- 2.3 **That Members approve the proposal to increase the Management Budget by up to £50,000 from the 2015/16 year onwards.**

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 3.1 During the negotiation of the re3 PFI Contract the councils recognised the strategic value in aligning elements of their communication with residents on waste related matters. The councils also sought to build-in an education element to the contract – a programme of school liaison and visits to the re3 facilities by pupils. This was achieved by the recruitment, via the councils' PFI Contractor, of two Education and Waste Minimisation 'officers' and the allocation of an £150,000 operational budget per annum (£50,000 of which was to cover staff costs).
- 3.2 Both the individuals employed in the Education and Waste Minimisation roles were valued by the councils and contributed to the early success of the re3 PFI contract. That being said, they were not employed by the councils and accordingly spent appreciable amounts of time engaged in corporate activities for the Contractor.
- 3.3 When both individuals sought opportunities elsewhere, the re3 councils decided (at the July 2011 JWDB meeting) not to replace them and to accept a budget saving of £100,000 per annum - that sum representing a combination of staff and operational costs.
- 3.4 Since the departure of the dedicated Education and Waste Minimisation 'officers' in 2011, there has been no collective approach to communication.
- 3.5 As Members will recall from the presentation at the December 2013 JWDB meeting, overall amounts of household waste managed in the re3 area have fallen over the period of the contract thus far (see Appendix 1).
- 3.6 Current indications of national economic recovery are, if regarded solely from a waste management perspective, arguably a mixed blessing. As the economy recovers household waste is expected to grow. As waste grows so will the variable costs of waste management.

- 3.7 In addition to the pressure on costs, there is an increasing requirement for quality in recycling.
- 3.8 Material processors nationally and internationally are being successful in positioning quality risk at the level of those who produce and collect recyclables (for example, residents, councils and council contractors).
- 3.9 The recently adopted MRF Code of Practice, which will become operationally active in October 2014, is one example of the impacts on councils and taxpayers of the drive for quality. A potential worst case scenario, and hopefully some way off, is that Councils and their contractors risk failing the entry requirements to the recyclables market if the quality of their material is not sufficient.
- 3.10 The re3 councils spend c£30m per annum on waste. A significant element of that cost is through shared facilities and on common areas of service.
- 3.11 The Joint Waste Disposal Board approved the development of a shared communications plan at the September 2013 Board meeting. Whilst the communications plan is a key element of the overall re3 waste strategy, it is also intended to form a direct response to the potential for waste growth and to seek to mitigate the associated growth in costs.
- 3.12 Members received a detailed presentation of the draft communications plan for the re3 councils at the December 2013 JWDB meeting.

Communications Plan

- 3.13 As Members will recall, the re3 Project Team worked with consultants from MEL (the company who undertake our waste analyses and user satisfaction surveys) in determining the strands of a communications plan.
- 3.14 Using our own data, and following conversations with the council waste teams, four strands were identified for the initial year of the plan. While the strands are designed to relate to specific groups of residents, they will also be influential across the re3 area. For this reason, they may be retained beyond the initial period of a year. The strands are as follows:
- Trying their best families – *'I'm doing my bit, are you?'*
 - Flats with communal collections – *'Working together'*
 - Home movers – *'Get set, recycle'*
 - Online shoppers – *'Click. Receive. Recycle'*
- 3.15 The strands are important because waste and recycling is a service area in which low level measures of success have traditionally been prevalent. This means that the fact of service delivery (having ones bin emptied) is often absolutely sufficient.
- 3.16 The strands allow the re3 councils to maximise the efficiency of the communications. Clearly there is an element of targeting in the strands but the intention is also to ensure that messages have a broad relevance and appeal too.
- 3.17 As is shown at Appendix 2, the intention is for communications work to continue throughout year, providing targeted support to the council collection services on a consistent, rather than intermittent, basis.

- 3.18 For three of the strands, bursts of activity are planned. These are specific campaigns which should raise the profile of recycling in both a specific way (i.e. for the targeted group) and in general (i.e. for residents at large).
- 3.19 There is no burst for the 'Get set, recycle!' strand as the intention here is to provide information to home movers when they need it – very soon after moving-in and as part of now normalised processes such as registering for council tax, sorting out phone/internet/TV connection etc.
- 3.20 The on-going, lower level, activity which is intended to continue throughout each year is just as important as the bursts. This must include use of more modern forms of communication in ways which support the strategic objectives of the re3 partnership and the council waste collection services. It will also include channels such as newspaper stories, the re3 website, radio, purchased advertising etc.
- 3.21 The communications plan identifies specific *metrics* (elements that can be measured to determine the effect of an activity) and these are described at Appendix 3. Targets have not been set for these at the present time but that is something that could be done at the same time as wider performance targets are being set for the individual re3 councils. This is essential because the targets will not be achieved through communications alone. Activity which draws-in the contributions from all relevant staff - in short the *alignment* of day-to-day activity (for example, waste collection, communications, monitoring) with council objectives will greatly assist the councils in achieving their targets and mitigating cost increases.

re3 Communications and Marketing Officer

- 3.22 In order to deliver an ongoing programme of supportive communications and marketing for the re3 partnership, officers have concluded that a new post may need to be created.
- 3.23 The principal requirement of the role is anticipated to be slightly different to the original PFI support in this area (that provided by the Waste Minimisation and Education officers previously described). This is due to the wholly different environment in which the re3 councils now operate as compared to that in 2006. As two examples, the post-holder would work only for the councils and would principally be focussed on increasing recycling and reducing contamination rather than overall waste minimisation.
- 3.24 As in any role, that initial focus may evolve as time goes on but at present the councils must focus on the achievable. Increasing the amount of recycling collected and improving the quality of that material has been identified as the principal focus.
- 3.25 The role of any new re3 Communications and Marketing Officer would specifically include:
- Delivering the specifically targeted communications output (both the *bursts* and *background* activity) which has been designed for the re3 councils in the communications plan.
 - Supporting the re3 Project Team in reporting progress towards targets and strategic objectives.
 - Working alongside the respective, relevant council teams, develop and maintain channels of communication which are purposeful, convenient for residents and successful (always in support of the councils' objectives for recycling through the re3 PFI contract).

- Working with colleagues in the re3 Project Team and each of the re3 councils to update communications targets in alignment with council objectives and changes in service.
- 3.26 The third bullet-point, at 3.25 above, is worthy of specific mention. The re3 partnership has done little to adopt modern forms of communication. This must be addressed and while each of the councils is making strides to do so at a corporate level, officers feel that there is scope (given the sums of money involved in waste and the frequency upon which services are delivered) for specific support in this area. That being said, any work undertaken at this level would need to be compliant with the policies and procedures at the re3 councils.

Proposal

- 3.27 It is proposed that the re3 Project Team seeks to recruit an re3 Marketing and Communications Officer, as described above, in support of the collective council objectives of the re3 partnership within the re3 PFI contract.
- 3.28 Through avoided expenditure which can be carried forward to the 2014/15 year, the re3 councils could fund a communications officer for 1 year without any additional budget.
- 3.29 It will not be possible to address the impact of growth in waste and waste costs in 1 year, though. The need to continue to vigorously encourage increased recycling will similarly continue to be relevant throughout the remainder of the PFI contract.
- 3.30 For this reason, officers request that approval be given for an increase in the PFI management budget in the 2015/16 year up to a maximum of £50,000.
- 3.31 It should be noted that the figure of £50,000 is an indicative figure only. Subject to Member and council approval, officers will recruit a member of staff, as described and specified above, and incorporate a precise figure in the budget setting process for the 2015/16 year which is no more than £50,000.
- 3.32 In the event of approval, and in order to ensure the necessary alignment of this role with the strategic approaches of the individual councils, it is proposed that any person specification and job description created for this role be signed-off by both the re3 Project Team and the relevant Head of Service for waste collection at each council.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

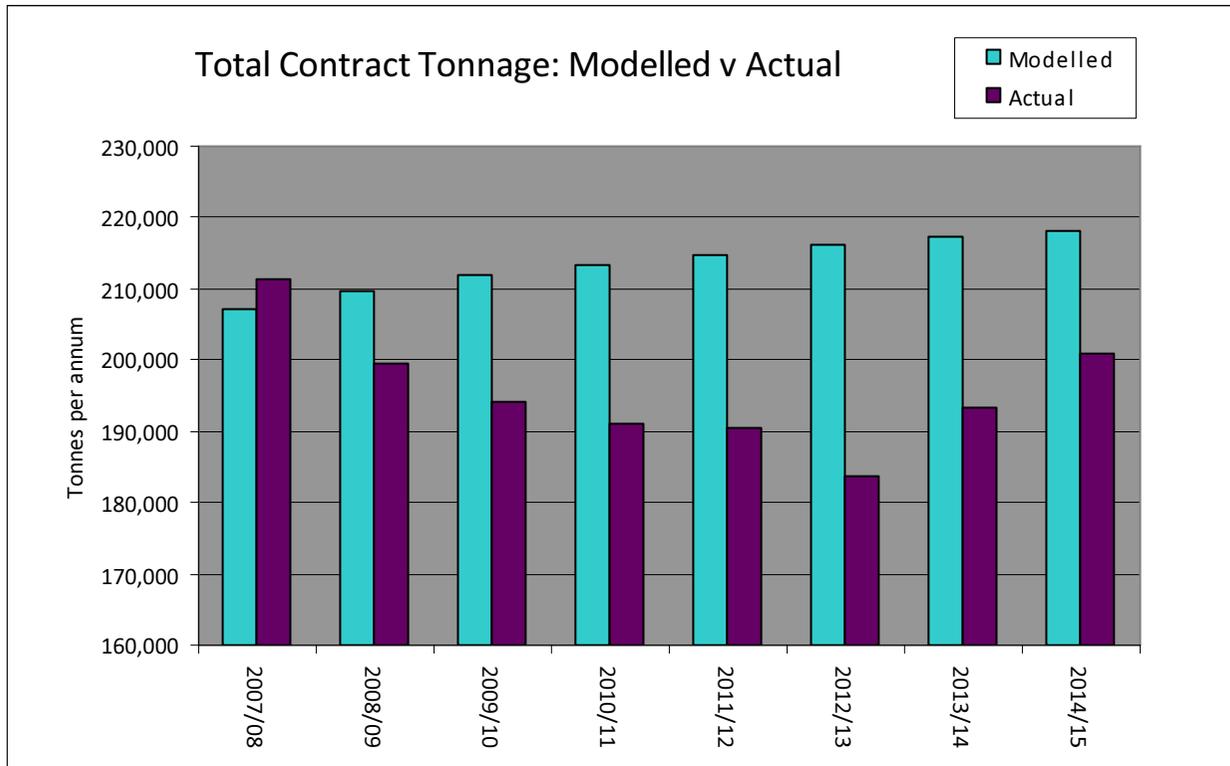
JWDB Reports for December 2013.
JWDB Progress Report 7th July 2011

CONTACTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

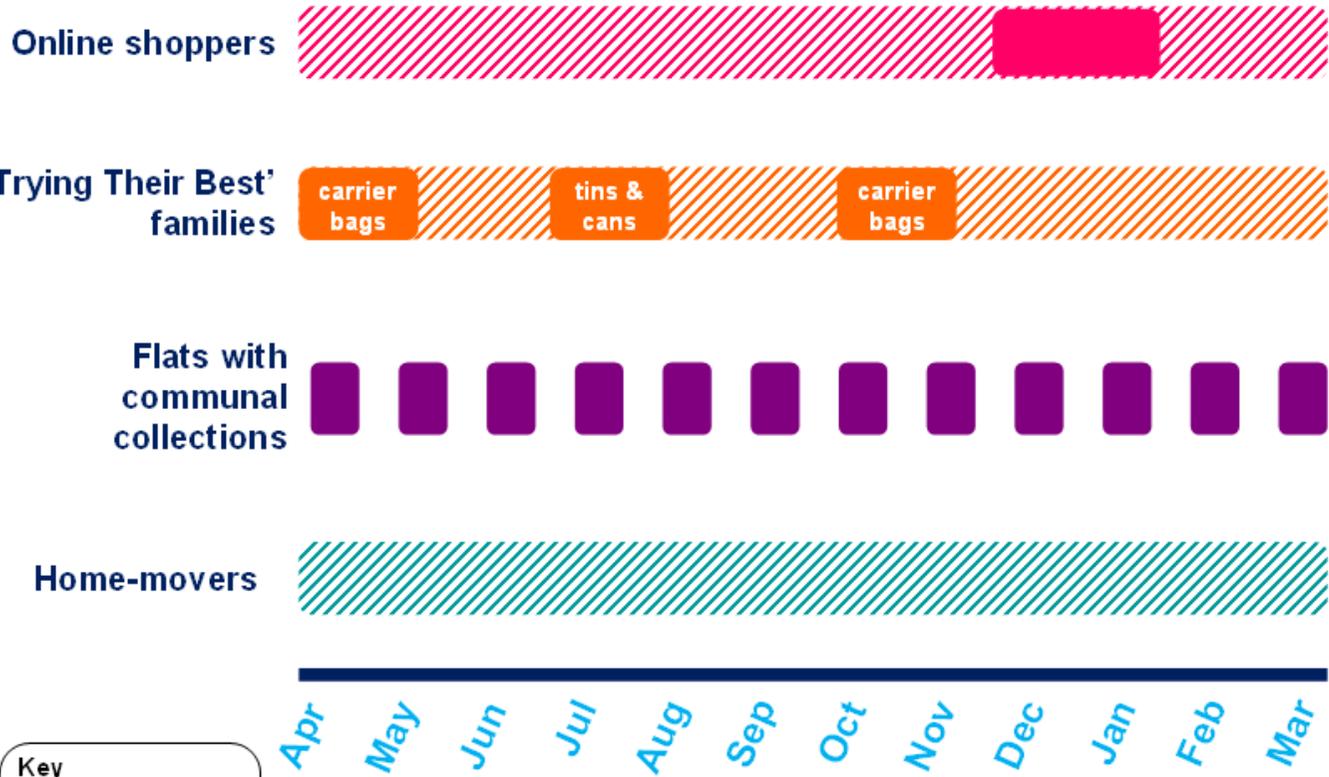
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APPENDIX 1 – Comparison of Modelled Tonnage with Actual and Estimated Actual Tonnage



Overarching Communications Framework



Key

- campaign burst
- ▨ ongoing low-level activity

Strand 1: I'm Doing My Bit, Are you?

Communications Objectives & Evaluation Metrics

Objectives

1. **Motivate** residents to recycle the full range of plastic, steel and aluminium items.
2. **Educate** residents about how to recycle correctly.

Evaluation Metrics

Measure:

◆ % target audience who say they recycle plastic drinks bottles and aluminium drinks cans

◆ % target audience who know what should be done with carrier bags and other harder to recycle items (*tbc by re3*)

Monitor:

◆ Capture rates for plastic, steel and aluminium

◆ Contamination rates for carrier bags and other harder to recycle items



Strand 2: Working Together

Communications Objectives & Evaluation Metrics

Objectives

1. **Motivate** residents to start recycling/recycle regularly.
2. **Educate** residents about which day their recycling is collected and how to be more organised in storing their recycling.

Evaluation Metrics

Measure:

◆ Number of co-ordinated 'hyper-local' bursts that take place.

◆ Levels of engagement with tenants/residents' associations.

◆ Levels of engagement with tenants at events.

Monitor:

◆ Participation rate in targeted areas.

◆ Recycling tonnages vs. residual tonnages from target estates.



Strand 3: Get Set, Recycle!

Communications Objectives & Evaluation Metrics

Objectives

1. **Increase flow of information to new residents** to help them start recycling.
2. **Educate** residents about how to recycle correctly.

Evaluation Metrics

Measure:

- ◆ Number of stakeholders engaged
- ◆ Number of 'Get Started' toolkits downloaded and distributed

Monitor:

- ◆ Participation rate for target areas
- ◆ Contamination rates for target areas



Strand 4: Click. Receive. Recycle

Communications Objectives & Evaluation Metrics

Objectives

1. **Remind** residents to recycle cardboard packaging at a key time of year

Evaluation Metrics

Measure:

- ◆ Capture rate for mixed paper including card during and 1 month after the campaign period.

Monitor:

- ◆ Trend in capture rate for mixed paper including card across the year

