

JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
29 SEPTEMBER 2022
(9.30 - 11.30 am)

Present: Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes MBE
Councillor John Harrison

Reading Borough Council
Councillor Tony Page
Councillor Karen Rowland

Wokingham District Council
Councillor Clive Jones
Councillor Ian Shenton

Officers Oliver Burt, re3 Strategic Waste Manager
 Jayne Rowley, re3 Principal Finance Officer
 Sarah Innes, re3 Performance Officer
 Kevin Gibbs, Bracknell Forest Council
 Damian James, Bracknell Forest Council
 Claire Pike, Bracknell Forest Council
 Graeme Rasdall-Lawes, Reading Borough Council
 Richard Bisset, Wokingham Borough Council
 Francesca Hodgson, Wokingham Borough Council

1. **Election of Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE be elected Chair for the municipal year 2022-2023.

1. **Election of Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE be elected Chairman of the Joint Waste Disposal Board for the municipal year 2022-2023.

2. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor Page be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Joint Waste Disposal Board for the municipal year 2022-2023.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

5. **Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board held on the 7 July 2022, be approved as a correct record.

6. Progress Report

The Joint Waste Disposal Board received a report on progress in the delivery of the re3 Joint Waste PFI Contract.

The report covered:

- Recycling Centre Booking System
- re3 and Council Performance Statistics
- Recycling Centre Bag Splitting
- Persistent Organic Pollutants
- Mattress Recycling
- Sue Ryder Project
- Contractor Appraisal
- Communications

The Board agreed that it would be useful to defer the discussion to December regarding the booking system in order to allow further briefings to occur to bring newly elected councillors up to speed and remind long-standing councillors about the work of the Board and its contract. Representatives from each Council were asked to ascertain a formal indication from their colleagues as to whether continuation of the booking system would be supported and, if there were concerns, how these could be resolved.

It was noted that the complex joint contract was due to be renewed in 2031 so it was important that future decision makers were well informed about the scope of the contract, the history of the partnership working arrangements and the sites included.

In response to a query about the climate change impact of the booking system, Oliver Burt, re3 Strategic Waste Manager reflected that anecdotally everyone present was aware that the numbers of cars idling in queues at sites before the introduction of the booking system were high. He noted that no measurements had been recorded as a baseline and CO2 measurements had not been taken while the booking system was in place for comparison. It was therefore difficult to calculate the impact of reintroducing a queuing system in place of the proposed booking-system.

Sarah Innes, re3 Performance Officer went through the booking system presentation slides and highlighted the amendments made since the last meeting to develop the information available to all the partner Councils.

The re3 Performance Officer confirmed that the number of slots available were less than the number of visitors prior to the introduction of a booking system but that these are not currently fully booked. During July a fifth of all slots were not booked and that was fairly representative across other months and there was a lot of availability in the system. Due to the availability residents are able to book slots at relatively short notice and even make same day bookings or booking no more than one day in advance.

Data collected in the first week of August showed that the vast majority of visitors came to site with a booking but those who did not were invited to park and make a booking whilst on site. Those people who did not have a smartphone were reminded of the access arrangements, but a small number of people were turned away due to how busy the site was.

The graph demonstrated that visitor numbers had fallen more steeply than the tonnages of the site during the same period using the booking system which meant that residents were bringing in more waste per visit. The updated slide showed that

total household waste figures over the re3 partnership had remained relatively stable over the last few years until the last few months. With an increase in residential properties this means that residents are becoming less wasteful overall and visits to the recycling centre were becoming more efficient.

The Board reviewed the maps of Smallmead and Longshot Lane that had been included in the slide pack to show the impact of queues on the surrounding local businesses and locations around each site and the access routes. Residents had fed back to re3 that since the booking system was in place they had observed less queuing, it had been possible to introduce pedestrian access to the sites and that they found recycling at the sites easier.

Using historical waste data and Office National Statistics population forecasts to anticipate the future tonnages that could be expected at the recycling centres. It was noted that the attendance levels of visitor were due to reduce to below 2017 to 2019 figures within the next 20 years. In summary if residents continued to make their visits more efficient then it could reduce the need for big costly structural changes at the recycling centres.

An additional benefit of the booking system which had been updated in the slide pack was the postcode validation through the booking system to ensure users were located in the re3 area. Therefore, site staff only needed to check that the postcode on proof of address matched that given at the time of booking. Previously staff were more reliant on staff local knowledge and the display of the window stickers.

Some of the concerns around the booking system that had been investigated further was the potential risk of increased residual waste as a result of being discouraged from using the sites. The review of data demonstrates that this had increased slightly in the first year the booking system was in place but was probably more the result of the start of the pandemic as opposed to the booking system itself.

Monitoring of reporting of fly tipping showed that Reading's figures were reducing, Bracknell's were stable, and Wokingham appeared to have a big spike in figures, but enforcement officers considered this due to the introduction of a new reporting system.

The Board had previously asked to consider whether the types of waste being fly tipped could have been brought to recycling centres and potentially up to 84 of the reports could have. However, it is known that businesses often generate very similar waste to householders and businesses are not entitled to use the recycling centres. Household waste identified could have also been collected via curb side collection.

Within the information presented the number of bookings for the recycling centre per Reading Borough ward were broken down and listed in ascending order and then compared to a map the number of fly tips per ward that were reported in the same time period. The data appeared to show that there were more fly tips in areas where there were fewer bookings for the recycling centre. However there hadn't been an overall increase in the number of fly tips in the Reading area during the time the booking system was in place, but it could potentially be that the location of the fly tipping had been affected. The same approach to data for Bracknell Forest showed the opposite findings so other factors were likely to be affecting where people choose to fly tip and differing levels of reporting. Equivalent statistical data for Wokingham was not currently available for comparison.

Consideration was given within the pack of information to address concerns about digital exclusion and what approaches were in place to counteract factors preventing

someone booking a slot online. All three of the re3 councils take phone bookings, support was available at Council libraries or internet cafes and it was also possible for friends and family to book on behalf of a resident. These alternative methods are largely consistent with those offered by other Council services, for example if residents wanted to book a bulky waste collection.

The re3 Performance Officer explained that officers had investigated the level of bookings by deprivation level. As expected, there were making bookings from residents in wealthier areas as it was acknowledged that due to a potentially higher disposable income those residents would be able to replace items more frequently such as technology.

Officers had considered the additional burdens for residents when using the booking system e.g. making a booking online, providing some personal data, attending the site at the correct time. The presentation slides had been amended to include more detail from the user satisfaction survey results from 2021. The results have been broken down by each partner Council for each site. The Longshot Lane data shows that Wokingham residents found it easier than Bracknell residents to recycle. The Smallmead site data indicates that Wokingham residents found the queuing times better than Reading residents. Reading residents seem to prefer attending without a booking. In summary the survey showed there were mixed views about the booking system but there was a slight preference for pre-booking.

The re3 Performance Officer explained that officers had been exploring the possibility of a hybrid solution which would enable free access periods within a booking structure with a rationale for why this would be difficult to achieve e.g. identifying the best times to implement, challenging communications messaging, potential for confrontation on site, impact on commercial vehicles permits, reduction of data collection and loss of system benefits such as loss of pedestrian access.

The Board discussed that the majority of fly trips within the borough were commercial orientated and generated by people travelling through areas rather than local residents.

In response to a query about residents' ability to travel to the sites the re3 Strategic Waste Manager confirmed that it was an unavoidable characteristic of the service that required the resident to bring waste to the facility. Other elements of the service were based on collections, and it was noted that a lot of the functionality of the household waste and recycling centres could not be replicated on the doorstep.

A member of the Board observed that the website did not include any ability to cancel existing bookings, and this could only be done from the email which was generated.

It was observed that digital exclusion could occur due to language barriers and part of welcoming people moving into the re3 areas from abroad needed to include advising them what services were provided and how to get rid of the rubbish responsibly.

A member of the Board suggested that the slides needed to be revisited to check how readable they were for councillors new to the topic so that they did not include any anacronyms or unclear terminology.

Clare Lawrence, ROLE advised that a new antisocial behaviour team within Wokingham was responsible for monitoring and responding to fly tipping so the data for Wokingham's area would be shared for the comparison exercise could be undertaken.

The Board requested the discussed changes be made to the information slides, that briefings to be held with each council to educate colleagues in the JWDB and the booking process before the end of the year. The Board agreed to consider an alternative date for the next meeting as the proposed date of 8 December was not considered enough time to complete the proposed briefing activities across all three councils.

Sarah Innes, re3 Performance Officer updated the Board on performance statistics for the three councils for April through to August comparing data with the same period from the previous year. The Board were advised that the recycling rate for all three councils had gone down with a bigger drop in recycling tonnages than in residual tonnages which led to lower recycling rates overall. There were a number of factors affecting tonnages such as recovery from the pandemic which was, in particular, affecting glass tonnages at the recycling banks. Garden waste tonnages had been affected by the long hot summer just as the concerns about cost of living would impact on consumer behaviour. Food waste tonnages, particularly in Reading and Bracknell, had dropped off significantly but they were both new services last year. Participating in these services will lead residents to become more aware of how wasteful they are and particularly with the economic situation will likely be trying to reduce their food waste.

The practice of carrying out bag splitting in order to extract recyclables from the bagged residual waste received at the recycling centres were paused during the covid pandemic. It is intended that this service will be reinstated so that residents bringing bagged waste to site would be encouraged to place their bags in a slightly separate area of the recycling centre so that a member of staff will go through those bags and extract the recycling. Suggested that to educate residents ideally they would stay and watch the bag splitting process and actually see their own waste sorted and identify what could have been taken out for recycling. The contractor would not be able to offer that for all residents and not all residents would want to stay. Suggested that engaging just a few people would be worth doing to reach a wider audience by using bag splitting statistics on posters at the site, included in leaflets or included on the email confirmation received when you make a booking. Additional Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) would be required by staff and the process of bag splitting would be kept under review.

It was confirmed that the cost of the service was £100,000 a year but an income from the process was generated such as bric-a-brac and also a reduction in the cost of disposal. The income generated was not currently split to separate those items donated by residents versus those retrieved through bag splitting.

The Board were advised that the Environment Agency had identified a large quantity of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in upholstered furniture. The implications for the re3 partnership was that persistent organic pollutants need to be destroyed through incineration, but bulky furniture needed to be shredded first in an enclosed building to keep the POPs contained which would be at an additional cost. The second operational implication was containing POPs when items were damaged and the risk of contaminating other upholstered waste. Transporting and storing such waste in a separate area would require operational changes. The Environment Agency had asked local authorities to indicate their level of compliance with the guidance by the end of the year. It was noted that the waste industry was currently lobbying the government to extend these time scales to allow arrangements to be put in place. Re3 officers were working with the contractor and the Board would be updated at a later meeting. The Board agreed to write a letter from the Chair to be sent to the each of the respective Members of Parliament. The letter would explain

the reality of the situation for local authorities and the waste management industry trying to comply with the regulations before January 2023 which is that there are very few places available where such material could be managed and stored in an atmospherically controlled environment. A draft letter would be sent to Board members before being sent out.

The re3 Performance Officer advised the Board that the contractor had identified a potential route for mattresses to be recycled by a facility in London where they would be dismantled by hand and then the various elements would go off for recycling.

The report explained that the cost of recycling mattresses was more expensive than the cost of landfilling them the Board was asked to consider the slight increase in recycling rate including the potential environmental benefits against the financial cost of processing. The re3 project team proposed an initial trial to understand the volume of mattresses in the waste stream and how long they would need to be stored before a load was ready for reprocessing. It was noted that for some residents when purchasing new mattresses their suppliers offered to take away the old mattress for disposal. Board Members noted they were aware of locations where there was a very frequent level of turnover of mattresses from certain properties and disposal was an issue in certain neighbourhoods.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the contents of the report be noted.
- ii) the re3 Project Team be tasked with delivering the suggested service aspects, as described at 5.5.
- iii) the determination of whether the re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board wishes to
- iv) retain or remove the booking system be deferred to the next meeting; and
- v) the proposal for a mattress recycling trial, as described at 5.36 be supported.

7. **re3 Environmental Act Briefing Report**

Oliver Burt, JWDB Project Manager provided the re3 Board with a briefing on a significant part of anticipated secondary legislation relating to the Environment Act. It was explained that in the ongoing absence of formal guidance, the details contained in the report would help the councils begin to prepare for subsequent financial and operational changes.

The Board were advised that waste collection was currently funded through general taxation it was anticipated that funding would be provided through contributions made by companies responsible for the material entering the market. The example given was the producers of a plastic bottle would be paying a levy to contribute to a funding pot from which waste collection would be funded.

He explained that councils would be assessed on their compliance with a number of elements of the legislation. Three collection system archetypes would be endorsed by Government for adoption by councils which had been designed by the WRAP consultancy. Funding would be apportioned to councils on the basis of their relative efficiency and effectiveness. It would be important to be graded as 'best' so it is key to understand how this is being assessed. The Board was advised that officers would work together to understand the implications for how Councils work and their funding. DEFRA workshops would be attended in the Autumn. A further briefing would be brought to the Board.

8. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

RESOLVED that pursuant to Regulation 21 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2000 and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of item 8 & 9 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

(3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

9. **Financial Report**

The Board received the Finance Report which briefed the re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board on the Partnership's current financial position and to advise on the first draft budget for the financial year 2023/24.

RESOLVED that

- i) the Partnership's financial position for the current year, 2022/23 to date and specifically the factors via which had arisen, as described at paragraphs 5.5 to 5.8 of the restricted agenda report be noted;
- ii) the Partnerships 1st draft Budget for financial year 2023/24 be noted; and
- iii) the contents of the report be noted.

10. **Date of the Next Board Meeting**

The following schedule of dates were agreed:

- Monday 9 January 2023
- Thursday 2 March 2023
- Thursday 15 June 2023
- Thursday 21 September 2023

CHAIRMAN