

JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
15 JUNE 2023
(9.38 - 11.53 am)

Present: Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Mary Temperton
Councillor Helen Purnell

Reading Borough Council
Councillor Karen Rowland

Wokingham Borough Council
Councillor Sarah Kerr
Councillor Ian Shenton

Officers Oliver Burt, re3 Strategic Waste Manager
Monika Bulmer, re3 Marketing & Communications Officer
Sarah Innes, re3 Performance Officer
Jayne Rowley, re3 Finance Officer
Kevin Gibbs, Bracknell Forest Council
Damian James, Bracknell Forest Council
Andy Edwards, Reading Borough Council
Richard Bissit, Wokingham Borough Council

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Liz Terry, Reading Borough Council

30. Election of Chair

RESOLVED that Councillor Rowland be elected Chair for the meeting, and Councillor Shenton be appointed Vice-Chair for the meeting.

It was discussed and agreed that in future years, it made best sense that the Annual General Meeting be held at the Summer meeting to align with any elections or portfolio changes.

Councillor Rowland welcomed new members to the Board and thanked Councillor Hayes for her passionate and admirable service as Chair of the Board since 2010, in taking on the task around the climate emergency. The Board also thanked Councillor Page for his service as Vice-Chair of the Board.

31. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2023 were approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment of *Wokingham District Council* to *Wokingham Borough Council* in the attendance record.

33. Urgent Items of Business

There were no Urgent Items of Business.

34. **Progress Report**

Sarah Innes, re3 presented the Progress report with performance statistics.

Members' attention was drawn to the recycling rates which had declined across all three Councils. There had been a reduction in recycling tonnes, kerbside collection and bring backs. There had also been a reduction in garden waste tonnes which could be attributed to the recent warm weather. Food waste collection had also declined, and it was speculated that this could be attributed to the rising cost of living. Glass tonnage recycling had also reduced; however it was noted that there had been an increase in glass recycling during COVID and this was now returning to normal levels.

There had been an increased in contamination in mixed dry recycling, which was important to address. Members queried the arrangements for contaminations, and it was clarified that legislation dictated the classification of contaminate particulates which would include things such as loose shredded paper. It was noted that shredded paper should be contained, for example in an envelope, when recycled, and members asked for this to be better communicated to the public as it was expected that the public were not aware.

At a previous meeting, members had asked for further information on the implications of raising the cost per 25 litre unit for soil and rubble disposal from £2.50 to £3. Sarah explained that the income from soil and rubble disposal was around £90,000 which was neutral with the cost of disposal for these materials however the increase to £3 per unit would account for inflation on the contract. The current charging arrangement for re3 was not dissimilar to that of neighbouring Councils. Having discussed the matter, Members agreed with the increase to £3 per unit.

Sarah presented an update on the proposed WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) banks. Officers had used information from a local provider to submit a successful funding application to the Material Focus WEEE fund and were subsequently seeking further quotes from reprocessors to secure the funding. It was noted that there would be no income stream for the reprocessing of electrical items, and the costs had been calculated to carry the project to the end of the PFI contract. Members supported the roll out of banks in principle, subject to ongoing procurement and funding discussions, and noted that the 30 banks would be equally split across the three boroughs.

Sarah presented an update on the Podback scheme following previous discussions at the Board. Re3 had been invited to participate in coffee pod recycling at the Household Waste Recycling Centres, to accept aluminium and plastic coffee pods. While the scheme targeted 80% of coffee pod brands, any pods could be recycled using the scheme. The scheme was being implemented with clear signage and website updates, and it was hoped that the process would go live in July 2023. Although the scheme was classified as a trial, it was hoped that it would become permanent. Members queried how and where the pods would be recycled, and it was clarified that an audit report was in process to cover full details, but all plastics would be recycled within the UK, and the coffee contents of the pods would be processed at an anaerobic digestion facility in the UK. Members were happy to proceed with the scheme, with a review in 6 months' time.

Members received details on the call for evidence for the Near Elimination of biodegradable waste disposal in landfill by 2028. Officers commented on the potential for some practical incoherencies, and the potential cost for compliance. Officers would seek members' contribution to the call for evidence submission by 7 July 2023.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the contents of this report
- ii. Members review the proposed revisions to charges for non-household waste, described at 5.15, and confirm that these should be implemented to deliver full cost recovery
- iii. Members instruct Officers to proceed with the 'WEEE bank' project, as described from 5.21; to roll out a network of collection points for small electrical appliances
- iv. Members agree to receive a report on the implications of the coffee pod recycling service, 6 months after its launch at the Recycling Centres.

35. Communications Report

Members received the Communications report. Monika Bulmer, Marketing and Communications Officer at re3 presented key points arising from the report.

The Household Waste Recycling Centre online booking system had been improved to include translation services, and had subsequently been promoted through press releases, a social media campaign to target multi-cultural audiences, adverts in residential magazines and recycling leaflets available in Arabic, Polish and Urdu. Monika had been invited to meet with some community groups to explain the system, which had received positive responses. Members requested that promotion of the translation system be broadened to Bracknell and Wokingham as well as with Reading community groups. Members noted that the system was currently being translated into Chinese, and promotion with local Chinese community groups would take place once this work was complete.

The Recyclopedia app had been in place since 2018 for residents to look up items for recycling, point residents to relevant websites and to re3 services. Officers had reviewed the current app and proposed a move to a new platform called Scrapp which offered better functionality, including barcode scanning, automated bin day reminders and integrated maps for bottle banks. A dashboard view could provide insight into the searches residents were making. Monika resolved to discuss translation services with Scrapp, to ensure that more languages were available to residents. Members welcomed the transfer to the new system and commented that it may help with previously discussed contamination issues but urged caution in not overcomplicating the app to ensure it remained usable for all residents. Monika agreed to arrange a demonstration of the new app to Members which Cllr Rowland requested before a "go live" of the new site.

Regrow community compost had been delivered to local organisations and schools as part of a successful community scheme. 75% of the total community allowance had been allocated, and members were encouraged to continue promotion of the scheme for the remaining bags of compost to be used.

Virtual tours of the recycling facility were being developed for the re3 website, and it was hoped that these could be used with new, younger audiences who were not able to visit the site. The tours would be finalised at the end of July 2023, and the facility would be closed for a short time to allow for photos to be taken. Members were also invited to come for a tour of the recycling facility in person.

Monika gave a summary of Communications activities since the last meeting, which had included seasonal recycling advice over Easter and the Coronation, and

communications around plastic and glass contamination. The Repair cafes in each borough had also been promoted.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the contents of this report.
- ii. Members approve the recommendation, as described at point. 5.19, to commission and adopt Scrapp as the partnership App.

36. Trial Collection of Flexible Plastic Packaging

Sarah Innes presented a report on the FlexCollect scheme, for which Re3 been selected as a trial area.

Subject to member approval, the two-year scheme would roll out to 5,000 properties in Reading, then to a total of 20,000 properties across the re3 area, in the second year. It was hoped that funding could be secured to continue the project after its completion. Officers were preparing for implementation, and there remained some legal queries to be explored.

Monika Bulmer commented that WRAP had been responsible for the communications material for the FlexCollect project, and that these materials were being localised. FlexCollect bags and a leaflet would be delivered by Royal Mail to all eligible households. Residents had been supportive of the idea, and officers would continue to promote the scheme through neighbourhood apps and Facebook groups.

Members welcomed the idea in principle, however there were concerns around the use of single-use plastic bags for collection, particularly as some Councils had run recent communications about removing single-use plastics from the recycling and food waste process. It was noted that the FlexCollect bags would be recycled along with their contents, but officers recognised the concern and suggested a meeting with FlexCollect to discuss alternatives.

RESOLVED that:

- i. Members note the contents of this report
- ii. Members approve the participation of the re3 Councils in the FlexCollect Project, as described from 5.5
- iii. Members instruct the re3 Project Director to sign the FlexCollect contract as described at 5.21.

37. Re3 deposit return scheme correspondence report

Officers provided an update on the correspondence with Minister Pow on the deposit return scheme, which Board members had discussed at a previous meeting.

It was recognised that a deposit return scheme would have significant implications on local collections and residents' way of life, particularly in light of cost of living. Officers had queried the apparent lack of an Equality Impact Assessment, significant additional costs associated with the scheme, fair funding arrangements for Councils and the added complexity for residents.

Board members noted the response from Minister Pow however it was commented that the response did not satisfactorily address the issues raised. Members asked if there was any further lobbying that re3 could do, and Oliver Burt agreed to contact

the Local Government Association to find out whether any other organisations shared the concerns of this Board.

38. Exclusion of Public and Press

RESOLVED that pursuant to Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2012 and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of items 11 to 14 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.

39. CIPFA Reviews Report

Members received a report on the CIPFA Reviews undertaken for Wokingham Borough Council by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA) on the arrangements of the re3 partnership and the shared waste management contract.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the contents of this report.
- ii. Members seek the development of a specification for a shared review of the financial arrangements (as described at 5.26 to 5.30) including future reporting to the re3 Board.

40. Re3 Partnership Background and Transition Report

Board members received a report on the background to the re3 Board and the shared arrangements, and the plans for transition of this contract.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the contents of this report.
- ii. Members endorse the broad strategic principles listed at 5.33 for use by the re3 Project Team, and the councils, in preparations for contract transition
- iii. Members approve the allocation of 5.48

41. Financial Report

Board members received the Financial Report for 2022/23 and the outlook for 2023/24. Cllr Rowland encouraged that an additional meeting for members that wished to have a further introduction or refresher as to the financial report's structure and to clarify any questions surrounding its method of presentation take place preferably prior to the next meeting.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the Partnership's financial position as at the end of 2022/2023 and the financial outlook for 2023/2024.

42. Date of the Next Board Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for 21 September 2023, to be held at Bracknell Forest Council.

CHAIRMAN