

JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
11 JANUARY 2024
(9.35 - 11.20 am)

Present: Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Mary Temperton
Councillor Helen Purnell

Reading Borough Council
Councillor Karen Rowland (Chair)
Councillor Liz Terry

Wokingham Borough Council
Councillor Lindsay Ferris
Councillor Ian Shenton

Officers Oliver Burt, re3 Strategic Waste Manager
Monika Bulmer, re3 Marketing & Communications Officer
Sarah Innes, re3 Performance Officer
Damian James, Bracknell Forest Council
Jayne Rowley, re3 Finance Officer
Kevin Gibbs, Bracknell Forest Council
Claire Pike, Bracknell Forest Council
Steve Brown, Wokingham Borough Council
Richard Bisset, Wokingham Borough Council
Chris Wheeler, Reading Borough Council
Kevin Gibbs, Bracknell Forest Council (online)
Chris Wheeler, Reading Borough Council (online)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Keith Townsend, Reading Borough Council

14. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

15. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 were accepted as a correct record.

17. Progress report

Sarah Innes, re3 Monitoring and Performance officer presented the current Progress report.

The updated current recycling rates for Quarter 1 to Quarter 3 2023/24 were 56.8% for Bracknell Forest, 50.7% for Reading and 56.4% for Wokingham, approximately 1% higher for each area than indicated in the report.

The legislation regarding disposal of DIY waste at recycling centres had been changed, with some waste which had previously been chargeable now required to be

accepted free of charge. A new DIY module had been implemented, as part of the booking system, at the centres to identify which waste was chargeable. Members were asked to ratify their decision, necessitated outside of the Board meeting by the commencement date of the new legislation, to implement a charging scheme.

The flexible plastic trial collection had been running in Reading since September 2023, and re3 officers had been seeking data and learning from this. The interim report from FlexCollect was awaited and would be provided to members when available. Discussions were ongoing about the future funding arrangements for the service following the completion of the trial.

Councillor Shenton expressed his dissatisfaction with FlexCollect for poor budget management and their failure to engage with Wokingham Borough Council before deciding not to proceed with the project in Wokingham.

While funding for WEEE banks had been secured, there had not been any bids from companies through the procurement process. Using another provider or system would change the balance of risk from the project, and re3 were aware of the government's plans to consult on the requirement for Councils to arrange kerb-side collection of WEEE items and for retailers to provide drop off points. For this reason and until further details were available, it was proposed to bring this project to a close.

The annual satisfaction survey had been undertaken at the recycling centres and had indicated an improvement. The results would be shared with contractors to discuss further improvements to be made. Board members welcomed the high user satisfaction results and congratulated staff working at the sites.

Reading Borough Council had undertaken a corporate survey over the summer, which had included questions on whether residents had accessed recycling sites in the last 12 months. Officers had identified a few areas of the borough which may benefit from further promotion of waste and recycling services. It was noted that some residents had lobbied ward councillors to say that the booking system was difficult to use and that booking a slot had restricted their access to the site. It was proposed that Bracknell Forest and Wokingham may benefit from undertaking their own surveys for more granular data.

Following a period of disruption to the glass bank collection in September resulting in staff absences, the contractor had worked hard to rectify the situation and collections were now back to normal. It was queried whether there were any arrangements in place to deal with peak periods such as Christmas and New Year, and offices commented that while the contractor consulted with re3, it was always difficult to predict which glass banks would overflow during these peak period.

Further to discussion, it was **RESOLVED**:

- 1 That Members note the contents of this report
- 2 That Members ratify their decision to implement an amendment to the Recycling Centre Booking System, so that non-household waste can be identified and charged for, as described at 5.9 of the report
- 3 That Members approve the recommendation at 5.29 of the report for the WEEE bank project to come to an end.

18. Environment Act report

Oliver Burt, re3 Strategic Waste Manager and Programme Director presented the Environment Act report.

The Environment Act was passed in 2021 and had included Simpler Recycling, the detail of which had been released in October 2023. The funding arrangements were becoming more clear as time passed, and the report included detail on DEFRA's expectations of funding for Councils. Councils would not find out the final funding arrangements until the final year preceding the point of compliance. The report highlighted the five main options around glass collections.

Officers were least concerned about the flexible plastics requirement in the Simpler Recycling plans, as the pilot had demonstrated that there was a good chance of flexible plastic being added to current collections and processed through the existing recycling plant. There remained some caveats depending on glass collection arrangements and any further materials added to the collection requirement.

A draft response on WEEE collection proposals would be developed and submitted to government outside of Board meetings.

The Board was asked to establish a working party on Simpler Recycling disposal functions across Councils.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- It was commented that while the three authorities should work together on all plans for collection and recycling, the procurement processes should be key through.
- It was also noted that the specification of any new refuse collection vehicles should be decided as soon as possible to avoid delays to the collection process.
- It was proposed that the glass banks were currently working well and keeping them (even if for a limited period of time) should be considered to moderate any cost and supply-chain challenges.
- Board members recognised the variation in dates and the uncertainties around the political landscape and plans for the re3 contract.
- Board members asked officers to conduct further research into the options available to re3 for the remaining 8 years of the current contract.

The Chair asked each Council to nominate the most appropriate officers to sit on the working party to herself and Oliver Burt. An update report would be requested from each working party at each Board meeting for Board members to take into account all different contributors before making decisions. **(Action: All)**

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED**

- 1 That Members note the contents of this report
- 2 That Members agree to establish a working party, as described from 5.40, and request reports from each working party at every JWDB meeting.

19. **Communications report**

Monika Bulmer, re3 Marketing and Communications Officer presented the Communications report.

Work was ongoing to help residents understand the changes to charging and booking arrangements for non-household waste.

The virtual tour project had been completed with three virtual tours now available to promote the recycling facilities to a broader audience.

Following a significant fire at an re3 site in October, re3 had reached out to media outlets to raise awareness of inappropriate disposal of batteries. Officers were pleased with how well the message had been picked up in the media.

The Scrapp app was in its final checks with each IT team, and it was hoped that a final launch date would be available soon. The current Recyclopedia app would remain in place during the transition period.

Work was ongoing to further promote foil recycling, and Monika was working with a metal packaging company to promote metal packaging recycling with a campaign scheduled for Spring 2024.

Day to day communication work had included adverts in resident magazines for Bracknell Forest and Wokingham, focussing on food waste recycling. Social media remained active and a monthly newsletter continued to keep residents updated on campaigns and seasonal updates.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- While it was important that all batteries were disposed of correctly the most dangerous batteries were lithium batteries which were often hidden in other items such as toys, clothing and greetings cards. Members requested that this distinction be made to residents who may not be aware.
- Members requested that a final conversion to the new Scrapp app be expediated to a suitable date (to be confirmed ASAP by officers) to prevent further delays. **(Action: Monika Bulmer / Oliver Burt)**

The report was noted.

20. **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 9 and 10 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

21. **Financial management report**

The Board received a report on the current financial management position.

Members requested further detail in a subsequent report around the impact of the cost of living and peaks of recycling rates through the year.

Members requested a further report on the proposals regarding a chargeable service at the recycling centres. **(Action: Oliver Burt / Jayne Rowley)**

Arising from discussion, it was **RESOLVED**:

- 1 That Members note the current financial outturn for re3 and the three Councils at detailed at 5.1 to 5.12.
- 2 That Members note the revised budget (excluding contract Indexation) as detailed at 5.13 to 5.16.
- 3 That Members note the Net cost of waste calculations for the last Financial Year (FY22-23) and the comparatives made between them 5.17 to 5.22.
- 4 That Members note the actions, agreed by the respective council waste teams and the re3 Project Team, as per Appendix 4.
- 5 That Members note the contents of the updated re3 Risk Register and request updates at alternate JWDB Meetings, as advised at 5.23 to 5.31.
- 6 That Members considered the recommendation at 5.37 and requested officers to bring a report back on the implementation of a chargeable service at the Recycling Centres for non-re3 residents as soon as practicably possible.

22. **Strategic Development report**

The Board received the re3 strategic development report.

Arising from discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that

- 1 Members note the contents of this report
- 2 Members request an update report on the next steps, described at 5.23 to 5.27.

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

The next meeting was scheduled for 7 March 2024 at Reading Borough Council, and members requested a later start time of 10am.

CHAIRMAN