

JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
7 SEPTEMBER 2021
(9.30 - 10.36 am)

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

Reading Borough Council
Councillor Adele Barnett-Ward
Councillor Tony Page

Wokingham District Council
Councillor Parry Batth

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

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Gregor Murray, Wokingham Borough Council

37. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Hayes MBE be elected Chairman of the Joint Waste Disposal Board for the municipal year 2021/22.

38. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Page be nominated Vice Chairman of the Joint Waste Disposal Board for the municipal year 2021/22.

39. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The minutes of the meeting of the informal Joint Waste Disposal Board held on the 17 June 2021, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

42. Progress Report

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

The report covered:

- re3 and Council Performance Statistics
- Rigid Plastics Recycling Trial
- e3Grow
- Communications
- Bike Reuse

Sarah Innes reported the performance statistic for all three Council, the provisional recycling rates for April to July were:

BFC – 58.3%

RBC – 52.9%

WBC – 56.7%

It was noted that as expected all three recycling rates were higher than the previous year, which was due to the changes that all three Councils had made to their kerbside collections earlier in the year.

The recycling rates for the re3 recycling centres were 67.84% at Longshot Lane and 72.10% at Smallmead, this was lower than the previous year, but it was thought that this was due to the amount of residual waste being collected. However, across all three Councils there was a reduction in the rates from the previous year in the amount of residual waste being collected, which showed that the recycling changes were having a positive impact. The recycling rate for Longshot Lane was lower, this was due to the way in which the rate was calculated, and it was expected that this would level up over the coming months.

Contaminated waste in the kerbside mixed recycling was starting to slightly increase in Bracknell, a close eye would be kept on this in the coming weeks. A breakdown of materials found in the sampling results varied and the data would be circulated with the Board.

Following a successful sale of re3grow compost in 2020/2021, the re3 Project Team planned to increase the order to 10,000 bags of 40L compost for the next year. The compost was set to arrive early Spring 2021. As requested, the Marketing and Communication Officer would strengthen messages about the composting process, focusing on the peat-free quality of re3grow compost and would explain further to residents, the cost structure, showcasing that the price per bag had been calculated to cover the costs of producing and supplying the compost only. Communications would be ready for sign off by Christmas and would be publicised prior to residents being able to purchase the compost.

There was not a link between the green waste recycling issues and being able to produce the re3grow compost. Members would be receiving briefings by their Council's on the green waste recycling.

At the Joint Waste Disposal Board Meeting in June 2021, Officers reported that a rigid plastics recycling trial would commence at both Recycling Centres in early July. The purpose of the trial was to enable the costs and benefits of the service to be assessed. The trial was still ongoing but it was reported that 33 tonnes of rigid plastics had been sent for recycling in the first six weeks. There had been positive feedback from the offtaker about low levels of contamination. The costs of recycling the rigid plastics were presented in the report, and officers were liaising with the Contractor to optimise the haulage of the material and would be presenting the

conclusions of the trial during the next meeting in December. It was expected that the cost of the haulage could be reduced during the trial. There was not a correlation between the amount of waste produced and cost, as the price was linked to the transportation of the waste. Currently during the trial light load had been transported but it was thought that this could now be increased.

Members had previously requested that the Partnership explore the purchase of products that could be used to purposefully demonstrate the circularity of the recycling process. Officers have liaised with the hard plastics reprocessor and confirmed that it would be possible, but the details had not yet been provided. Officers reported on the development of an online calculator for re3 residents at the JWDB in June 2021. The calculator illustrated the importance of collective and consistent action in helping to achieve necessary climate change adaptations. The Calculator was now being advertised on the social media and newsletters and Members and officers were encouraged to share the link whenever appropriate.

re3 Officers and Contractor were currently preparing for the installation of England's first retrofittable AI-powered robotic waste picking system, at the Material Recycling Facility in Reading. The recycle-picking robot, known as Recycleye Robotics was able to perform the physical tasks of identifying, picking and placing materials at a rate of 55 successful picks per minute making it extremely efficient. Further communications on the operational benefits would be provided as soon as the testing period was completed. This would not be displacing any members of staff.

The arrangements had been made for installation and the robot was already onsite. Officers were working very closely with the FCC communications team to deliver activities locally and nationally. Once the trial period had been completed further communications would be provided.

It was requested that Board Members see a demonstration of the robot as it was expected that there could be media interest.

It was suggested that there could be a naming competition for the robot, similar to the trucks.

At the end of September are two national weeks of action, Recycle Week and Great Big Green Week would be taking place. More locally the wider Reading Climate Change Festival would be returning for a second year. re3 would be engaging in each event, providing an online webinar for residents to learn about the councils and their partnership, as well as limited tours on a first come first served basis.

Previous webinars had proven successful with residents and would be promoted on social media and in newsletters. It was suggested that this could be promoted at each Council at their Council meetings. Tours had previously been very popular, with 7 tours a week. It was expected that due to Covid there would only be 2-3 tours a week which could be increased over time.

The Annual Environmental Report 2020/2021, a document summarising activities and achievements of the Partnership had been published on the re3 website. The report had been circulated with the Officers and press release had been issued to the local and trade media.

A number of bikes had been delivered to the Recycling Centres when no longer of use to residents. Primarily the bikes were provided to the Sue Ryder charity as well as Precycle on a regular basis. In the past year re3 has made it possible for a local organisation to benefit from the bike including My Journey Wokingham. re3 wished to

keep the bikes within the local community, so were open to suggestions from Officers and Members to achieve this.

During lockdown it was noted that the number of bikes being recycled had increased. It was requested by the Chair that Officers look at opportunities within their Councils to look at recycling the bikes. It was requested that this be brought back to a future meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members noted the contents of the report.
- ii. Members requested an update on the rigid plastics recycling trial, including costings and as described at 5.18 in the report, to be presented at the next meeting.

43. **Booking System Report**

The Board received a report briefing them on access options for the re3 recycling centres.

The report was broadly similar to the one received by the Board at its meeting in June 2021. The report covered the aims and benefits of the booking system.

It was highlighted that a survey was currently being conducted with neighbouring business in the Longshot Lane Industrial Estate regarding the booking system and the impact it has had on their access. The survey was still ongoing, but based on some feedback already received, the site was now allowing for residents to queue onsite at the recycling centre prior to the site opening at 8am. This was in order to remove cars from the road, and help access to the site.

The booking system was upgraded on the 18 August 2021. The upgrade included a postcode look up function which was working really well and would allow for good patronage data to be provided to the Board. There was only currently two weeks of data, but based on this data at Longshot Lane 61% of bookings were Bracknell residents, 38% were Wokingham residents and a handful of bookings were Reading residents. At Smallmead 57% of bookings were by Reading residents, 43% by Wokingham residents and a small number of bookings by Bracknell residents. This data would be monitored and shared when appropriate.

At the last meeting of the Board, Members asked for a number of options to be trialled.

The options were:

Option 1 – Removal of the booking system

This option was not trialled, as the contractor had plenty of experience of using the sites without a booking system.

Option 2 - Retention of the booking system, with current profiling and additional slots

As part of a trial, Officers, in consultation with the Contractor sought to progressively increase bookable slots to reach an optimised but practically operable level. Officers

profiled increases of between 5% and 20%, based on our existing principles and previous booking levels, and trialled progressive increases at both Recycling Centres across June, July and August. During the peak of the trial, there were 13,134 slots available across both sites which 74% of the visitor numbers received back in 2019. This number did develop a slight queue at points.

Option 3 - Retention of the booking system, with weekday profiling and additional weekend slots

Under Option 3, the re3 Partnership could retain booking-slot profiling during the working week (Monday to Friday) similar to the numbers currently available, in order to maintain easy access for other service users and then at the weekend, from 1pm on Saturday and throughout Sunday, a larger number of bookable visits would be scheduled. Two weekend trials were held over the summer. Feedback from the first weekend trial was used to assist how the second weekend trial would be operated. During the trial Longshot Lane was not fully booked, but Smallmead was, with 87% of residents happy with the length of time spent queueing. It was noted that higher levels of booking were kept in during the Monday to Friday.

It was recommended that a variant option between option 2 and option 3 be agreed by the Board, which would see a slightly increased number of bookings between Monday and Friday and slightly increased bookings again on the Saturday and Sunday, which would lead to 14,000 visitors across both of the sites. This would be kept under review, with the no show rate monitored, as well as the length of time residents were spending onsite to make sure that level of booking remained appropriate but based on the trials so far, there was demand for the bookings and the queues could be managed successfully.

Arising from the Member's comments and questions, the following points were made:

- The variation could be adjusted if numbers changed.
- It would have been helpful to have a recommendation that was the variant option.
- The Board should agree and communicate to residents that was now how the recycling centres worked, as Members were still getting questions to when the system would be removed.
- Readings Green Waste had been paused for a short period and there had been feedback to Members that there had been queuing due to the green waste recycling at Smallmead. Officers were not aware of any long queues or significant issues due to the green waste.
- There had been some issues with queuing on the first weekend trial, but this had fed into the second trial weekend and adjustments made accordingly.
- Numbers had been increased due to the pause in the Green Waste collection.
- Emails had been sent to residents whether they did or didn't use their booking slot. There seemed to be a higher number of no shows at Smallmead than at Longshot Lane. Data into people making multiple bookings had not been looked at but this could be reviewed. There were currently a large of number of available slots, with next day booking availability.
- Slots could currently be booked for the afternoon on the same day, which was a very different scenario to a few months ago.
- Patronage numbers could be reviewed and brought back to future meetings, to see the variants changed over the year.

The Chair requested that booking system be continued, and that officers bring it back to the next meeting for review if required.

It was agreed that a variant option on options 2 and 3 was a sensible proposal and gave the operators of the site and booking system the ability to amend the system accordingly and as appropriate.

RESOLVED that Members endorse the continuation of the booking system and that a variant on options 2 and 3 for access to the re3 recycling centres, as presented at the meeting and detailed from 5.10 within the report be approved.

44. Exclusion of Public and Press

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 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.

45. Finance Report

The Board received the Finance Report which briefed the re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board on the Partnership's current financial position and confirmed the second draft budget.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the Partnership's financial position for the year to date.
- ii. Members endorse the option to replace the Gainshare provisions in the re3 Contract with a supplement, for food waste only, as described at 5.22 of the report.
- iii. Members note the contents of this report.

46. Date of the Next Board Meeting

The next meeting would be held at 9.30am on 2 December 2021.

Further meetings will be held at 9.30am on 3 March and 9 June 2021.

CHAIRMAN