

JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
9 JANUARY 2023
(9.33 - 11.35 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
Monika Bulmer, re3 Communication Officer
Damian James, Bracknell Forest Council
Claire Pike, Bracknell Forest Council
Andrew Edwards, Reading Borough Council
Francesca Hodgson, Wokingham Borough Council

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

On page 7, the second full paragraph would be reviewed and reworded if required.

On page 8 of the minutes where it mentioned Clare Lawrence and ROLE, this would be amended to Francesca Hobson and Assistant Director, Environment and Safety.

RESOLVED that subject to the amendments, the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board held on the 29 September 2022, be approved as a correct record.

12. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

13. Urgent Items of Business

There were no Urgent Items of Business.

14. Reuse Report and Reuse Presentation from the Contractor, FCC

The Board received a report which provided a briefing on reuse and reuse opportunities for the re3 Board.

Rory Brian, General Manager at re3 Ltd and Liam Bould, Regional Development Manager at re3 Ltd, attended the Board to provide a presentation on Reuse from the contractor's perspective.

The key points arising from the presentation were as follows:

- The YouGov poll showed a rise in public appetite for reuse.
- Over 2000 people were surveyed.
- 44% said they had purchased in a reuse shop in 2020, this had increased by 12% to 56% in 2022.
- 80% of those surveyed agreed all HWRCs should have a charity reuse shop nearby or onsite.
- Three quarters of people who did not currently have access to a reuse shop said they would donate their items if their HWRC had one.
- 60% said they would be more likely to donate than throw away their good quality, second-hand items if they knew they would be resold at a reuse shop.
- 64% said they would prefer to be shown how to fix a broken item, at their local HWRC with 19% saying they would prefer to buy a new item to replace a broken one.
- 81% thought companies and local authorities should be encouraging people to fix their broken items, whereas 4% thought that companies and local authorities should encourage people to buy new items to replace their broken ones.
- 75% bought second-hand items.
- Almost half bought a second-hand item every six months.
- Over half of people donated items to their local charity shop every six months.
- Almost half visited their local HWRC at least once a year.
- FCC currently operated 10 reuse shops in partnership with local authority and charity partners.
- The reuse shops generated £1.7m in revenue annually for the charity partners.
- FCCs Swanton Road site in Suffolk had been reopened as a merchant drop off site for reuse items with their charity partner The Benjamin Foundation. White good repairs were also being undertaken at the site.
- re3 currently worked with Sue Ryder, Precycle for book scanning, Precycle for electrical items and bikes, pop up shops and Re3paint scheme for residents to collect free paint.
- 55,000 books a year had been scanned and sold on.
- Reuse sat under Reduce, at the top of the waste hierarchy and had the greatest carbon benefit of all the solutions for dealing with waste.
- In 2020 the UK reused 3.4 million furniture and electrical items, which was 111,664 tonnes of products and 123,236 tonnes of CO2.
- Model of reuse that could be utilised were a physical shop, pop-up shops, auctions, a Hub like at Swanton Road and working with partners such as Precycle.
- 2 repair events had been held in 2022 in Amersham, Buckinghamshire which had been continued by the local community.
- Repair built on FCCs re-use portfolio.
- 230 councils had declared a climate emergency and reuse and repair would help to combat this.
- The Environment Bill requires the Secretary of State to set legally binding targets for resource efficiency and waste reduction by 31 Oct 2022.
- Re3 would build on commercial opportunities and deliver increased social value.
- Continue delivering and developing the current commercial arrangements and pop-up events.
- Consideration of a local shop needed to be fully investigated.
- Introducing repair cafés into the 3 council areas would be considered.

Arising from the Boards comments and questions regarding the presentation, the following points were made:

- The £1.7m was given direct to charities as a profit share.
- Each shop ran as an individual business which each shop delivering a reasonable amount of profit.
- There needed to be good feed stock for a reuse shop, which was available at the re3 locations.
- There was good demand for a reuse shop following on from the pop-up events.
- There were a number of empty shop units in all three council boroughs.
- It was suggested that there be scope to look at local charity networks first.
- A bike storage facility was due to be opened in Reading under the Primark headquarters, which would be developed to have resale and repair included.
- The majority of bikes received were mainly children's bikes. Often any adult bikes received were bike parts.
- Not all charities that FCC worked with had an existing shop.

It was felt that the Board should get behind the idea of a reuse shop and that it would be unwise not to take this forward in the current climate.

The Chair requested that the presentation be circulated with Members and any feedback be sent to Oliver Burt.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the contents of the briefing.
- ii. Members indicate which of the options, if any, they would like officers and the Contractor to explore further, with the intention of returning to a subsequent re3 Board meeting with proposals.

15. **Progress Report**

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

The report covered:

- User Satisfaction Survey
- Recycling Centre Booking System
- re3 and Council Performance Statistics
- Recycling Centre Bag Splitting
- Fire in the Material Recycling Facility
- Community Compost Scheme
- Communications

The annual User Satisfaction Survey for the re3 Recycling Centres had been conducted in autumn 2022. This was an annual survey and was an online survey to be completed after a visit. The survey was run until similar number of responses had been received as the previous year. Responses were similar as the previous year, with satisfaction falling at Smallmead by 1% to 90% and rising at Longshot Lane by 1% to 89%.

The same questions regarding the booking system had been asked as the previous year. At Smallmead the percentage of residents who said that it was easier to recycle with the booking system in place declined slightly, whilst the number of residents who said that they sometimes forget to cancel their unwanted bookings increased. However, both sites saw a decline in the percentage of users who found it hard to get a slot when they needed one and fewer users said that they preferred being able to come to the Recycled Centres whenever they liked or that they disliked planning their trip in advance.

At the re3 Board meeting in July 2022, Members received a detailed presentation on the current performance of the booking system, user satisfaction statistics and suggestions for changes. Members requested some further information, and this was presented during the meeting in September 2022 at which it was agreed to decide whether the booking system should further be retained at the January 2022 meeting.

Following the Board meeting in September 2022, Members considered several options for supplementing the Booking System. The options and the summarised discussion were detailed within the report.

A number of new and older members at Reading Borough Council had raised concerns about the booking system and as a result 2 briefing sessions for members had been held. Following this Councillor Page had sent communication to the Board detailing the upshot of the internal conversations being had. Overall Reading Borough Council had overall sympathy for the retention of the system and benefits of it, however there were issues surrounding digital exclusion especially with Reading being one of the Boroughs with the highest number of foreign languages spoken within Berkshire. So, with the high turnover of residents and linguistic challenges it was important for the information to be as clear and upto date as possible.

It was discussed that a question should be included within the Council's wider corporate surveys to why residents didn't use the recycling centres.

It was confirmed by Oliver Burt, that the a-d detailed at 5.13 in the report was more a reflection of the correspondence that had happened with members following the September 2022 meeting.

Bracknell Forest Council's view was that following the user survey residents were pleased with the current booking arrangement as the traffic congestion at the Longshot Lane site had eased and slots were readily available to book online and via the council's customer contact centre.

Wokingham Borough Council also didn't want the queues to reappear and got the point that having non bookable days could cause an issue and reintroducing queues. Generally, it was thought that the whole system was working well, and complaints were not received in regards to the booking of slots.

One complaint had been received from a resident who had booked but had visited on the wrong day and had been turned away. It was asked if there was flexibility in regard to this. Sarah Innes stated that the staff would use their own discretion and judgement in these instances, but more guidance could be issued if required.

Oliver Burt stated that the packages of options that the Board had been asked to consider would ensure that the system could be used to the best of its ability and be as flexible as possible.

It was requested that an update report on items a & b at 5.13 in the report be brought back to the Board later in the year, to see how they had been taken forward.

It was also requested that the inclusion of a question for non-users of the recycling centres be raised with whomever was responsible for the corporate surveys at each Council.

The provisional recycling rates for April – November 2022 were presented within the report. At all 3 Councils there was a decrease from the same period in 2021.

At the Joint Waste Disposal Board meeting in September 2022, Officers proposed that the activity be recommenced following Covid, alongside additional activity to help educate residents about the recyclable content of their black bag waste. Members considered the proposal and requested that the costs of the activity be reviewed.

Officers have liaised with the Contractor and following a breakdown of the costs and income it showed that there is a net cost of approximately £40k. This was based on the tonnages and types of waste sorted in 2019 and assumed that there would be one member of staff working full time at each Recycling Centre. As a result of the net cost, Officers do not recommend that the bag splitting operation be recommenced in its previous format and have proposed that alternative proposals be considered with the Contractor and if a financially beneficial option can be found, Officers will bring a recommendation back to the board.

Officers were currently liaising with the Contractor in regard to reviewing the Service Delivery Plans, with the details of any amendments being brought to the March meeting, for approval by the Joint Waste Disposal Board. The Contractor would also take the same list to their own board for agreement.

On the 28 November 2022, staff at the Material Recycling Facility noticed smoke rising from within the mixed dry recyclables, and the Smallmead site was evacuated. Staff were able to move the affected waste to an outside quarantine bay, where it was doused with water by the fire brigade and then sent for disposal at Lakeside Energy from Waste.

A battery was suspected to have been the cause which had been incorrectly placed in the MDR. Officers have facilitated some filming in relation to battery fires to increase awareness with the public and would support the Contractor and Council teams to continue to promote correct disposal.

The re3 Partnership launched the Community re3Grow scheme in 2022 which ran from April – October and 1400 bags have been given to local community groups. In return, evidence of how the compost had been used had been provided. As fewer bags were allocated than were purchased for the project, Officers proposed to relaunch the scheme in February 2023. Prior to relaunching the scheme Officers would reach out to any groups who were allocated compost in 2022 but did not collect it.

Following on from the fire in November several messages on the safe disposal of batteries had been shared with the residents via re3 social media channels and newsletter. Residents had been urged to dispose of batteries separately at the designated places and never place them with their recycling nor in residual waste bins. Re3 hosted TV crews at their facilities on two occasions in November and December to highlight the serious risk of fires that could be caused by inappropriate battery disposal.

Work was currently being undertaken with the Recycle Your Electricals to develop assets that focus on Vape disposal as these were relatively new and there were many unknowns. These would be shared with the Councils Teams and residents as soon as possible.

re3 were supporting a new study, led by the University of Reading that focused on recycling food packaging. The project includes running a workshop to find out what key stage 2 children (aged 7 to 11 years) already knew about recycling food packaging.

Adverts with a food waste reduction theme had been placed in the council magazines, which were distributed to Bracknell and Reading residents and festive communications activities directed at primary school children had been prepared and shared with local schools, in time for Christmas.

The successful public group tours of the Material Recycling Facility in Reading had recommenced after being suspended due to Covid safety rules. The tours were facilitated by the Contractor and supported by re3 Officers and had great feedback.

The overall social media followers count currently stood at over 8,000 across all networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), with Facebook being the most prominent and the most engaging platform.

The re3 Recycling Centre newsletter remained an effective and far-reaching communications tool, currently allowing to engagement with over 47k subscribers. The opening rate remains very high and above the industry average suggesting that residents found this tool very useful. The newsletter was issued at least once a month. With residents receiving essential information on safe and efficient use of the recycling centres, and also detailed urgent changes to the service such as a notice of closure due to the Queen's Funeral.

The re3cyclopedia app had been in use for four years and had been serving residents well. However, following research, an alternative app had been identified that could replace the current app. The new app had more extensive scanning capability and would include some additional features for example bin days notifications. The Officer would be liaising with the Board Members and the Waste Teams in due course.

In response to the residents' feedback received in the User Satisfaction Survey (2021), re3 had been looking at improving maps of the facility. re3 was also looking to provide residents with a virtual tour of the facilities which would include 360 degrees images.

The re3 Marketing and Communications Officer would like to propose a partnership wide anti-litter campaign. The campaign would utilise an existing national app that incentivises litter-pickers. The collaboration between re3 and the council waste and street cleansing teams would be a key to achieve results. The details of the campaign will be discussed with the Board Members and the Waste Team due course.

It was agreed that a partnership wide anti-litter campaign approach was a good idea to take forward.

Wokingham had an adopt a street program which ran itself and had volunteers looked after their streets, Reading also had an adopt a street program and had a similar approach.

Vapes were an ongoing issue, it was concluded that they shouldn't go into the residual waste. This was a national problem, and at the recycling centres there would be a separate bin for recycling vapes to show they are a different waste stream. Having bring back bins for electrical items could be discussed, however collection banks might not be a safe option as this may cause fires to occur. It was suggested that research be undertaken with the contractor, and it be looked at to see what others are doing, and a report be brought back to the board.

Soft plastics were being looked at and was detailed in the Environmental Act for the Councils to be able to collect in 2026 – if not later. The funding stream had not yet been turned on, although an announcement was expected imminently. It was important to ensure there was a secure market. The Board would be briefed as and when there was an update.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the contents of the report.
- ii. Members determine whether the re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board wishes to retain or remove the booking system.
- iii. Members indicate their support for the options to supplement the Booking System, as described at 5.13.
- iv. That Members instruct Officers to relaunch the Community Compost Scheme as stated at 5.41.

16. 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 8 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.

17. Finance 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 final budget for the financial year 2023/24.

When discussing the proposed Agenda-Setting Meeting, it was suggested that this could consist of representatives from each authority on a rotated basis, and that the meeting would be held via Teams.

RESOLVED that:

- i. Members note the Partnership's financial position for the current year.
- ii. Members approve the Partnerships Final draft of the Budget for 2023/24.

- iii. Members note the HWRC patronage allocations for FY23/24. These were obtained from the Booking System data for the period 1st Nov 2021 to 31st Oct 2022.
- iv. Members approve the commencement of an Agenda-Setting Meeting.
- v. Members endorse the proposed quarterly Waste Management Risk Forum.

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

Thursday 2 March 2023 at Wokingham Borough Council.

19. **AOB**

At the last Board meetings, Members agreed to write about the situation with POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants - chemicals applied to soft furnishings as flame retardants).

The letter had been circulated the Board Members prior to the meeting and was not massively different from similar correspondence by waste bodies and associations, but the timing of this correspondence is considered important for the councils and was important to communicate these views to residents.

It was suggested that the letter be copied to EA and DEFRA officers as well as the Minister.

Oliver requested that any amendments and responses be sent back to him within the next 24 hours so that the letter could be sent as soon as possible.

CHAIRMAN