

JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
2 MARCH 2023
(9.30 - 11.05 am)

Present: Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes MBE

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

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor John Harrison, Bracknell Forest Council

20. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The spelling of Francesca Hobson would be amended within the minutes.

RESOLVED that subject to the amendments, the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board held on the 9 January 2023, be approved as a correct record.

22. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

23. Progress Report

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

The report covered:

- re3 and Council Performance Statistics
- Waste Tracking
- WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) Banks
- Recycling of Flexible Plastic Packaging
- Booking System Translations

- Links Between Booking Systems and Fly-tipping
- HWRC (Household Waste Recycling Centre) Reuse Options
- Review of HWRC Charges
- Actions from the HWRC User Satisfaction Survey
- Community Compost Scheme
- Agenda Setting

Sarah Innes reported the provisional recycling rates for April 2022 – January 2023 were detailed within the report alongside a comparison of the full year of 2021/22. Graphs setting out the quarterly performance had also been included which showed that the recycling rates for all three Councils were slightly below the figures for last year. A full year of data would be available at the next meeting in June, Sarah would provide a full breakdown of the data at this meeting however it was already clear that the compostable tonnage, food waste and garden waste, was already below previous year's figures. It was suggested that the cost of living could have had an impact on the amount of food waste collected as people were not wasting as much food.

Since 2004, Local Authorities had to report their waste data to Government via the Waste Data Flow System. This included the tonnages of waste collected and details of how and where each tonne is treated. Later in 2023, or in 2024, these systems were due to be replaced by a digital waste tracking service. Defra was building the system up gradually and it is understood that they would work on plans for local authority usage and provision of data in the first half of 2023. It was currently unclear what the implications of this were. Officers would seek to be part of the discussions so that the implications for data entry and monitoring could better be understood.

At the January meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board, Members had instructed Officers to investigate the idea of using a network of recycling banks to collect small electrical appliances. Officers had spoken to three local authorities who currently use banks to collect these items and investigated how re3 could provide a similar service. As a result, an expression of interest in relation to the Material Focus WEEE fund had been submitted, which had been successful to get to the next stage of funding. Sarah asked for feedback from Members in regard to where the banks should be situated. If the bid was approved there would be 30 banks, 10 banks per authority which would allow each Council to look at a cross section of sites borough wide.

At the January Meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board, Members asked Officers to investigate options for recycling flexible plastic packaging and as a result Sarah had been talking to the Flexible Plastic Fund 'FlexCollect' Project which a small number of Councils were currently trialling. The FlexCollect team were currently looking for more Councils to take part in the trial and Officers have expressed an interest on behalf of the re3 Partnership. A meeting has taken place so that the Delivery Manager for the project could visit the MRF (Material Recycling Facility) and a discussion could take place about the practicalities of sorting, storing and reprocessing the waste. These tests would be undertaken in the coming weeks and subject to the outcomes of testing in the MRF further discussions would take place with the waste collection teams to identify a potential trial location. If the trial were to proceed, then the packaging would be collected in the Councils current kerbside recycling provision.

At the January 2023 meeting, Members agreed to retain the booking system at the Recycling Centres. A variety of ways to supplement the booking system were discussed at this time such as translation. As a result, translation went live in February 2023. An example of this was provided to the board. Concerns were raised

that google translated wasn't always accurate however the benefit was that many languages could be provided, and if internal Council translation facilities had been used, then there was only a total of 6 languages that would have been provided. An FAQ had been provided on the re3 website stating that there may be some errors. Contributors would look at some of the translations of key languages within the Borough.

In 2022, DEFRA funded a project to examine whether there was a link between a national increase in fly-tipping and the use of booking systems at recycling centres, which was also something that had been discussed by re3. An external company conducted surveys and interviews with local authorities and re3 Officers contributed information about the experience of the partnership through these routes. Fly-tipping statistics were also examined in detail for six local authority areas. A report was published in January 2023 setting out the findings and conclusions from the project. The report noted that no academic literature was found which provided evidence of a link between fly-tipping and booking systems. The report would be circulated to the Board.

Following on from the presentation from the re3 Contractor and discussions at the January Board meeting about the current reuse activities undertaken at the re3 facilities and the potential for future expansion to divert items from the waste stream. Members were presented with a list of options to be explored further:

- Repair workshops
- Upcycling
- 'Libraries' (Through which a range of items could be borrowed).
- Permanent reuse shops (for instance at an offsite location)
- Online reuse shops

Currently all Councils had a repair café which was a good position to be in. Monika Bulmer was keen for there to be a repair strategy and work collaboratively and promote the repair cafés.

As a result of increased costs, Officers had reviewed the prices being charged for disposal of non-household waste at the re3 recycling centres. Current prices were designed to recover the cost of handling and disposing of nonhousehold waste and were non-profit making. A table with the proposed price increases was included within the report which included an increase of soil and rubble to £3 per 35L bag for all users. Any agreed changes to the charges would be implemented from 1 April 2023. Changes to the prices would be updated on the re3 website, site signage and the booking webform.

Toilets and sinks would fall under the charge for rubble, Officers were unsure on the collection of these and would look into these.

Councillor Jones stated that he didn't want to increase the cost of soil and rubble for residents and wished to remove it all together in time. However, there were concerns that the cost would then be picked up by others. It was suggested that a report be brought back to the Board regarding the implications of the charges and what the impact of the removal of the charges would be. It was agreed by the Board that Soil and Rubble would not increase to £3 for residents, and a report would be brought back to the board.

The statistical results of the Annual HWRC User Satisfaction Survey had been presented to the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board in January 2023. Since

then, the comments had been analysed. A summary of these were included in the annex to the report. Alongside the comments a list of actions had been compiled, a number of which has already been completed or underway.

Members had previously agreed to relaunch the community compost scheme with the bags of re3Grow left over from the 2022 project in Spring 2023. It was proposed that the bags this year be allocated on a first come first basis relaunches, Officers recommend that this year the compost be allocated on a first come-first serve basis, subject to the applicants meeting the advertised criteria.

Members and Officers discussed the agenda setting requirement that had been proposed as part of the Audit completed in 2022. It was proposed that one member from each Local Authority be nominated to attend the agenda setting meeting and for this to be an online meeting. It was suggested that this be held closer to the meeting date to ensure that everything was dealt with at a meeting closer to the next board meeting.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members indicated how they would like Officers to proceed in relation to the potential introduction of banks for the collection of small electrical appliances, as described at 5.15.
- ii. Members indicated which of the reuse options, listed at 5.33, they would like Officers to explore further, with the intention of returning to a subsequent re3 Board meeting with proposals.
- iii. Members reviewed the proposed revisions to charges for non-household waste, shown at 5.37, and confirm that these should be implemented to deliver full cost recovery apart from the increase to residents for soil and rubble, where a report would be brought back to the board.
- iv. Members instructed Officers to allocate compost under the relaunched community scheme, on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to appropriate allocation between the councils and the fulfilment of the agreed criteria.
- v. Members agreed a date for a first agenda setting meeting as described at 5.50 to be set before the next meeting.

24. Communications Report

The Board received a report briefing them on the Partnership's communications activities.

The report covered:

- re3Grow Community Compost scheme
- Contamination awareness
- Vapes recycling
- Recycling Centres inclusion campaign
- Safety at HWRCs campaign
- Anti-litter campaign

Monika Bulmer, e3 Communications and Marketing Officer, detailed the re3grow community compost scheme which was directed at local organisations and

schools. The scheme would be promoted to the public via local news outlets, social media, newsletters, and directly to potential beneficiaries. The press release and social media assets were currently being prepared and would be available to use by the councils' communications officers. There had been 69 beneficiaries last year, with over 160 bags distributed.

Re3Grow compost had commenced at the end of February, which was now in its fifth year. A new poster, promoting its features had been produced and would be displayed at both sites. It was reported that bags had already been sold.

A set of infographics, presenting the current contamination level in each Councils' recycling bins had been produced. It included environmental impacts and costs, and the infographic for each council. These were included in appendix 1 of the report. Across re3, £487k could have been saved last year, if all items were sorted correctly and it was important to talk about this with residents. Officers would be receiving regular infographics.

Vape recycling had been discussed at the previous meeting and was proving to be a difficult challenge. It has been established that the majority of local vape retailers have not set up the take back schemes. Trading Standards believe this is due to lack of information in relation to their legal obligations. Suggested guidance to residents was to recycle vape pens at the Recycling Centres and not placed in rubbish bins. Monika had spoken to OPSS to seek further guidance and Trading Standards had advised it might be helpful for re3 to support retailers by contacting them and providing guidance on how to set up the take back scheme.

The online booking system webform had be enhanced by integrating translation services for over 100 languages. This new feature would aim at improving accessibility and clarity for residents whose first language is not English. The new feature would be advertised using social media advertising, aiming at multicultural audiences living locally. Further research and analysis would be done to map areas of low usage and to advertise the service in those areas. Target groups who were under consideration were residents who:

- had recently moved to the area.
- lived in rented and shared accommodation.
- had low literacy levels.
- had low technical skills.
- had a disability or impairment.
- lived in a deprived area.

re3 was taking part in the trial safety campaign launched by the FCC Environment across their four contracts. The campaign aims at reducing the number of accidents on site.

The re3 Marketing and Communications Officer presented details of an anti-litter campaign that utilised an existing national app called LitterLotto. These incentivise residents to pick up and dispose of litter correctly. The full scope of the campaign had not gained approval from all partnering councils, however re3 would support any council keen to trial the tool.

RESOLVED that Members note the contents of this report.

25. **Legislation Report**

The Board received a report briefing Members in relation to the emerging detail from the Environment Act 2021, as it related to waste management.

There had been two rounds of public consultations (2020 and 2021), in which Government sought input on how the three main limbs of the strategy (Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), Deposit Return Scheme (DRS). The consultation documents had been released on these two areas, but the documents on Waste Collection Consistency were still awaiting release.

Extended Producer Responsibility – The Government wishes producers of packaging to pay the full net cost of collection and treatment associated with the packaging placed into circulation. This is to encourage better overall design of packaging. Under EPR, producers will pay modulated fees, set according to the assessed environmental impact and/or treatment cost of the packaging they put into circulation. Councils would be assessed according to the relative 'Efficiency' and 'Effectiveness' of their service. Councils would be placed within a performance cohort, wherein their costs and their performance will be benchmarked against a 'best in class' council. Cohorts would be drawn from councils that shared some similarities.

Individual councils deemed to be sub-optimally 'efficient' and/or 'effective' may be presented with an Improvement Notice. When an Improvement Notice is issued, it would also identify future year funding reductions.

Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) - A deposit, an additional sum on top of the normal sale price, would be added to in-scope packaging, at the point of sale. It was noted that these were drink containers, bottles and cans specifically, but not all bottles and cans! The deposit would most likely be a sum such as 20p per item which was a sum that had been widely referred-to throughout the consultations. This would apply to both single and multi-pack items.

Waste Collection Consistency – Even though the report was yet to be published, it was already known that Councils would be mandated to collect newspapers and magazines, cardboard, glass bottles, plastic bottles, plastic pots/tubs/trays and steel and aluminium cans or tins. Plastic film, aerosols, cartons and foil would be added to the list of mandated materials, most likely in 2027.

Glass collection and plastic film collection and processing would need to be added to re3's current services to achieve compliance.

It was important to note some of the potential outputs and issues that could arise. It was likely that there could be a financial squeeze from producers. The elderly and disabled hadn't been factored into DEFRA's impact assessment, which was still an issue. The cost of living was a big factor, for example the three SNP candidates had recently stated that they would pause their DRS, which was ahead of the one in England, due to the cost issues involved. There were repercussive contract costs as there were certain things within the contract that may need to be changed due to the change in legislation. There was also the issue of possible changes in packaging changes and packaging being phased out which could affect what was contracted to be collected which may complicate things.

Arising from the Members comments and questions, the following points were made:

- Detailed clarity was still being awaited for glass collection. It was unsure when this would be announced, or what the precise requirements would be.
- There would be some support financially provided by the Government, this would be based again on cohorts and a formula.

- Re3 Councils could be based in different cohorts.
- The formula would be based on conditions that took into account demographics.
- The effective and efficiency calculation would drive down costs.
- It was felt best in class could be cause negativity and was a negative approach. It was suggested that a letter be drafted to DEFRA from the Board in regards to this.

RESOLVED that Members note the contents of the report.

26. **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 items 9 & 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.

27. **Financial Management Report**

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

RESOLVED that Members note the Partnership's financial position for the current year.

28. **Contract Transition Report**

The Board received a report briefing Members on steps that would be required as the three Councils considered, planned and then delivered the transition of the contract.

RESOLVED that

- Members note the contents of the report.
- Members endorse the contents of the draft Transition Plan and the proposal for indicative costs and timelines to be presented to the re3 Board (as at paragraphs 5.21 to 5.23).
- Members incorporate future reports on Transition, in its agenda for future meetings of the re3 Board.

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

Thursday 15 June 2023 at Reading Borough Council.

CHAIRMAN