

JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
21 SEPTEMBER 2023
(9.30 - 11.41 am)

Present: Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Mary Temperton

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

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
Damian James, Bracknell Forest Council
Claire Pike, Bracknell Forest Council
Richard Bissit, Wokingham Borough Council
Graham Rasdall-Lawes, Reading Borough Council

Apologies for absence were received from:
Councillor Helen Purnell, Bracknell Forest Council

43. **Election of Chair**

RESOLVED that Councillor Karen Rowland (Reading Borough Council) be appointed as Chair for the remainder of the municipal year 2023/24.

44. **Appointment of Vice-Chair**

RESOLVED that Councillor Ian Shenton (Wokingham Borough Council) be appointed as Vice-Chair for the remainder of the municipal year 2023/24.

45. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

46. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no Urgent Items of Business.

47. **Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Councillor Kerr asked that an action regarding investigating a no-plastic solution for collecting soft plastics be added to the minutes of the previous meeting.

48. **Presentation from Rory Brien, General Manager re3 Ltd**

The Board received a presentation from Rory Brien, General Manager for re3 from FCC on issues currently pertinent to re3 business.

Waste composition analysis had shown the percentage of waste which could have been recycled which was in waste bins, and Rory explained there was approximately £5m total savings which could have been achieved by Councils if all waste had been placed in correct containers. Re-sampling was underway for waste composition analysis for this year, and the outcome of this would be applied to waste flow forecasts across the re3 Councils to see if the potential savings figures were still relevant, taking into account fluctuation in material recycling values. This year's resampling would take into account any materials in general waste which could have been collected under the FlexCollect scheme. The outcome of the resampling would allow Councils to identify any particular waste placed in the wrong bin which could be addressed through local communications and initiatives.

Rory commented on whether near zero landfill as achievable for the re3 district. At present, lots of the landfilled waste through re3 was bulky fly-tipped materials. New legislation diverted some materials to Energy for Waste, if the material was shredded and appropriately mixed with other material. FCC were investigating whether a new shredding facility within re3 or be using an existing FCC shredding facility would deliver additional savings to Councils. Rory also commented that as re3 managed some asbestos at its sites, it was not possible to achieve absolute zero landfill but there was the potential for 99% diversion.

Members noted that re3 were looking to build on the Reuse pop-up shops in October and were working with Sue Ryder to divert as many items as possible from disposal.

Rory presented on the prevalence of single-use vapes and the incorrect disposal of them. According to surveys, only 17% of single-vape users claimed to recycle them. 700 fires per year were linked to disposed batteries and vapes, which could start fires when damaged in the general waste collection process. In the year to date, there had been 8 fires across re3 sites linked to batteries of vapes within the waste. Although none of these fires had progressed to cause serious damage, the fire service had been called three times. Once a fire was extinguished, any material which was wet could no longer be reprocessed or sold. There were concerns about what would happen if there was a large incident at either Longshot Lane or Smallmead, and the potential disruption to service could be catastrophic. It was stressed that communications with the public needed to be increased on the subject, and the correct disposal of batteries and vapes should be promoted. FCC were investigated potential single-use vape drop-off points in public places such as universities, libraries and other suitable community sites.

Members thanked Rory for his presentation and the following points were noted arising from questions:

- Members were interested to find out how re3 authorities compared with other local authorities on the waste composition analysis. It was commented that the Local Government Association may have access to this data and officers agreed to investigate this further. **(Action: Oliver Burt?)**
- The drop-off units for single-use vapes were specially designed to minimise the danger of batteries exploding. The Government was exploring putting the responsibility on the producer for disposal of single-use vapes, but this was not yet in place. It was commented that the single-use vape market had taken off so quickly that the associated infrastructure for disposal had not yet caught up.
- The existing FCC shredding facility was in Oxfordshire. Proposals for an re3 shredding facility would include a traded service to other neighbouring

authorities and trade waste commercial organisations, and any costed proposals would be presented to re3 members for their consideration.

- There was already a kerbside bulky item collection, and there was not thought to be significant interest in a kerbside collection for wood specifically. Rory agreed to send the figures around wood in general waste bins which had been explored through compositional analysis. **(Action: Rory Brien/Oliver Burt)**
- Members requested that officers consider appropriate avenues for ongoing lobbying in terms of vape disposal responsibility. **(Action: Oliver Burt)**
- Members requested separate reports to come to a future meeting on the options and costs associated to single-use vapes, and the shredding facility proposition with options and costs. **(Action: Oliver Burt)**

49. **Progress Report**

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

The report included the usual review of performance statistics, including provisional recycling rate figures. The data for April to September 2023 compared to the same period in 2022 showed that recycling rates had gone up across all three Councils. Garden waste had also gone up, likely driven by the wet weather over the summer. Other recyclable tonnages had gone down, and the impacts of this would be addressed by the finance report.

Arising from questions, the following points were noted:

- There was no suggestion that additional funding from Government would be issued for DIY waste.
- Members queried the procurement process around the WEEE banks, and it was confirmed that no bids had been received in the initial round. There had been subsequent discussions with companies around the branding on the banks, and if an agreement on branding was achieved, officer planned to apply for a waiver from the corporate procurement rules to proceed with Material Focus. Members requested that officers conduct market testing based on the new branding arrangement before proceeding with the initial company, to ensure best value for money. **(Action: Oliver Burt / Sarah Innes)**
- Other neighbouring Councils were using the identified company to deliver their WEEE bank collections.
- Officers agreed to find out whether single-use vapes would be accepted in WEEE banks, and whether this would inundate the drop off points. **(Action: Oliver Burt / Sarah Innes)**
- The booking provider for the Recycling Centres had been asked about identifying demolition and DIY waste ahead of time to ascertain which items were chargeable and which were free of charge, and it was hoped that a technical solution could be found to monitor chargeable waste. A report would follow to the January Board meeting. **(Action: Oliver Burt)**

RESOLVED that

- 1 Members note the contents of this report;
- 2 Members approve the rescheduling of the AGM to be at the summer meeting of the re3 Board from 2024 onwards;

- 3 Members approve the Strategic Principles as described at 5.42 and listed at 5.44.

50. **Communications Report**

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

The work towards installation of the new recycling app provided by Scrapp was progressing, and the final stages of the data sharing agreement were being confirmed. It was hoped that the app would be received for testing and promotional materials by November 2023. Scrapp were working with the IT teams in each Council to ensure notification reminders and other locality specific elements would work smoothly. Residents would be able to access the existing app until January 2024. The virtual tours of the Recycling Centre and Materials Recycling Facility were progressing well and the final product was due shortly, and Monika agreed to share the product with Board members when available. **(Action: Monika Bulmer)**

Communications activity for the FlexCollect recycling trial were progressing well, and had received coverage in national media. Monika thanked all Board members for their promotional work. Officers had continued to engage with trial participants for their feedback, and had used the Next Door app and a Facebook group.

The PodBack service was going well and was being regularly promoted. Residents had been using the service to bring their coffee pods for recycling, and positive feedback had been received.

The amount of food waste had dropped, and Council communications teams had pushed food waste messaging through the summer. Further communications work on food waste was planned, including an opportunity to discuss food waste at New Directions college food courses.

Recycling Week was scheduled for 16 to 22 October 2023, and there would be enhanced communications from each Council during this time.

Material Recycling Facility tours had been scheduled for Board members in September and October. Other Council members were welcome to attend and were asked to contact Monika to book a place.

In response to questions, it was noted that Wokingham Borough Council had recently finished their new website, work on which had postponed work on the Scrapp app however now the website was live, officers were happy to promote the new app.

Members received and noted the report.

51. **Environment Act Report**

Oliver Burt, re Strategic Waste Manager and Project Director presented the Environment Act report.

The Board considered the potential local implications of the Deposit Return Scheme, including contractual implications and some access issues for residents.

DEFRA had released a statement on 20 September 2023 to rename the Consistency in Recycling project 'Simper Recycling' amongst other changes to the scheme, and

members were asked whether the proposed actions highlighted in the report remained relevant after this Government announcement.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- It was unlikely that compositional analysis of waste would be detailed enough to cross-reference the types of inappropriate material being put in bins, to see whether residents who put glass in their bin also put other recyclable materials in their bin.
- Colour separation for glass was not required, as the technology was in place to sort the colours at the material recycling facility.
- It was unlikely that the sale of glass would be sufficient to cover the kerbside collection cost, and if kerbside collection was mandated, it was not yet clear where the funding to do so would come from.
- While residents would not have another bin to contend with on the kerbside, there were challenges around how glass collection would be practically implemented and at present, the only option would be to run a separate glass collection due to the fact that paper and glass could not be mixed in the recycling process. It was possible to collect plastic, glass and cans in one collection, however this would incur additional costs through the re-engineering at the plant.
- While the report as published proposed to lobby government, it was unlikely that any further detail would be released following the DEFRA statement. Instead, officers proposed to start to gather information and plan in anticipation of further details from the Government.
- Board members requested that any work done on the cost of glass collection should include the environmental cost of the collection, including increased emissions. **(Action: Oliver Burt)**
- There was no clarity on Extended Producer Responsibility yet, and members requested that officers write to appropriate government ministers to ask for clarity on plans for Extended Producer Responsibility. **(Action: Oliver Burt)**

In summary, the Board agreed that:

- 1 re3 officer should progress information gathering and lobby government wherever possible for further detail
- 2 local surveys should continue to take place as outline in 5.17 of the report

52. **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 12 and 13 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

53. **Financial Management Report**

Jayne Rowley, re3 Principal Finance Officer presented a report to brief the Board on the Partnership's current financial position.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that

- 1 Members note the Partnership's financial position as at the end of 2022/2023 as described at 5.1 and 5.2;
- 2 Members note the financial outlook for 2023/2024 as described at 5.5;
- 3 Members note the 1st draft budget for FY2024/2025 as described from 5.16;
- 4 Members approve the proposed date change from 31st October to 31st July as the date from which the preceding 12 months of booking system data will be used to apportion HWRC costs between the 3 Council;
- 5 Members endorse the steps, described at 5.13, to seek to address the current year financial outlook.

54. **Data and Privacy Report**

Oliver Burt re Strategic Waste Manager and Project Director presented a report on Data and Private report in light of a recent issue.

RESOLVED that:

- 1 Members note the contents of this report;
- 2 Members agree to receive a future report detailing the feedback and/or requirements from the referral of the re3 partnership to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO), as described at 5.14, with potential recommendations.

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

11 January 2024 (Wokingham)
7 March 2024 (Reading)
13 June 2024 (Bracknell)
19 September 2024 (Wokingham)

CHAIRMAN