

Staffordshire Local Government Association

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE-ON-TRENT JOINT WASTE MANAGEMENT BOARD HELD ON MONDAY 28 OCTOBER 2015 AT DISTRICT COUNCIL HOUSE, LICHFIELD

Present:

Cannock Chase District Council

Cllr. A. Dudson
Mr. R. Kean
Mr. J. Presland

Staffordshire County Council

Mr. I. Benson
Cllr. Mrs. C.G. Heath
Miss. S Talbot

East Staffordshire Borough Council

Cllr. Mrs. P. Ackroyd
Mr. P. Farrer

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Cllr. A. Forrester
Mrs. N. Kemp
Mr. K. Parker

Lichfield District Council

Cllr. I Eadie
Mr. N. Harris

Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Ms. C. Gibbs

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Cllr. A. Beech
Mr. A. Bird

South Staffordshire District Council

Cllr. M. Bond
Mrs. J. Smith

Stafford Borough Council

Cllr. F. Finlay
Mr. M. Street

Tamworth Borough Council

Mr. A. Barratt

Also in attendance: Mr J. Lindop (Staffordshire County Council).

Apologies: Mr. B. Brockbank (Stoke-on-Trent City Council); Ms. K. Cocks (Waste Partnership Officer); Cllr. T. Follows (Stoke-on-Trent City Council); Mr. T. Nicholl (Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council); Mr. H. Thomas (Stafford Borough Council); Ms. M. Thurgood (Tamworth Borough Council); Mr. G. Withington (East Staffordshire Borough Council).

PART ONE

Minutes

79. **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

80. There were no matters arising which were not dealt with elsewhere on the Agenda.

Joint Waste Management Board Sub Group - Update (Schedule 1)

81. The Board received progress reports in respect of the following projects from Andrew Bird:-

- Food Waste Prevention Project Group (closed project);
- Dry Recyclables Processing Contract Procurement (closed project);
- Four Ashes Joint Campaign (on-going project);
- Cannock Chase District Council Waste Collection Contract (on-going project);
- Holistic Savings for Staffordshire (on-going project);
- 'Love Your Bin Man' (new project);
- Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Funding Application (new project);
- Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) Training Collaborations (new Project).

Members noted the good progress which had been made in various partnership projects, including those which had been completed since their previous meeting.

With regard to Four Ashes Joint Campaign, the County Council's Commissioner for the Sustainable County informed Members that he would shortly be meeting with representatives of Veolia (the operators of the Energy Recovery Facility at Four Ashes) and would therefore remind them of the need to make further progress on this project.

With regard to Holistic Savings for Staffordshire, the Chairman said that the success of the bid to the Local Government Association (LGA) for grant funding of £20,000 to assist with this project was good news. The LGA's intention was to disseminate the information gained to other Authorities as good practice with a view to giving assistance in the identification of their own savings.

With regard to the 'Love Your Bin Man' project, the Board congratulated South Staffordshire District Council on this initiative and looked forward to the circulation of the template so that other authorities could run similar campaigns, as required.

With regard to WEEE funding Application, Mr. Bird clarified that if successful, the bid would support the Staffordshire County Council led social media project on waste electrical and electronic equipment re-use at the Cannock Re-Use Shop located at the Household Waste Recycling Centre.

With regard to CPC Training Collaborations, a full options appraisal report setting out the potential for collaborative driver training between Partners with a view to achieving economies of scale was currently being drafted. A more detailed progress

report would be available for their consideration at their next meeting in January 2016.

82. **RESOLVED** – That the reports be received and the progress on projects made to date be noted.

Strategic Waste Management Action Plan - Performance Report (Schedule 2)

83. The Board considered a report of the Chairman of the Staffordshire Waste Officers' Group regarding the progress made towards delivery of the Strategic Waste Management Action Plan. This report was presented by Andrew Bird owing to Trevor Nichol having submitted apologies for absence at the meeting.

From the data which had been received, most Authorities had collected less residual waste per household (NI191) in this period (Quarter 1) when compared to the corresponding quarter in 2014/15. However, this trend was less clear when compared to the statistics for Quarter 4. Whilst performance under NI192: "Household Waste Sent for Reuse, Recycling or Composting" had also declined for all Partners when compared to Quarter 1 2014/15 it had increased when compared to Quarter 4 in 2014/15. With regard to NI193: "% of municipal waste landfilled", the County Council's performance indicated a reduction when compared to Quarters 1 and 4 2014/15 and whilst the quarterly statistics for Stoke-on-Trent City Council indicated that 3.13% of municipal waste collected had been sent to landfill, it was not possible to make comparisons with their previous performance owing to the unavailability of the relevant data.

During his presentation Mr. Bird commented that generally performance remained strong when compared to other authorities nationwide.

In the discussion which ensued, Members looked forward to an improvement in the statistics relating to N191 and N193 and re-affirmed the need to continue promoting the message of 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle' with the public for both environmental and financial reasons.

84. **RESOLVED** – That the report be received and noted.

Items for Discussion (Schedule 3)

85. The Board were provided with (i) an Overview Report by the Staffordshire Waste Partnership Officer giving an explanation of the information circulated in connection with this item, together with various other matters for them to have regard to during their deliberations; (ii) a Staffordshire Waste Partnership Baseline Review Spreadsheet and Summary Table; (iii) a Staffordshire Waste Partnership Comparison Table; (iv) a Staffordshire Waste Partnership Contract Register; (v) Disposal Costs Table and; (vi) a verbal report from the County Council's Commissioner for the Sustainable County regarding Household Waste Recycling Centres. This was to assist them in determining the future direction of the Partnership with regard to achieving holistic savings.

During the discussion which ensued the officer representative of Stafford Borough Council queried the inclusion of Recycling Credits in (ii) above as a Waste Disposal Authority/Unitary Authority expense and not an income to Waste Collection Authorities'. In reply the County Council's Commissioner for the Sustainable County said that this matter had been discussed at the Staffordshire Waste Officers' Group and on the advice of the County Council's accountant they had not been included twice so as to avoid double counting. However, Mr. Bird commented that whilst the tables could be revised to include Green Waste Recycling Credits as income, it would not substantially alter the management information which it highlighted. Continuing he said that the next step would be to incorporate the necessary financial information from Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

The officer representative of Cannock Chase District Council and Member representative of Stafford Borough Council both stressed the importance of comparing the net costs of the respective waste disposal operations of Partner Authorities.

With regard to (iii) above, Mr. Bird commented that the information shown clearly indicated the extent to which the Partnership had advanced in terms of meeting their recycling targets since formation in 2006/07. The majority of Authorities' recycling rates for 2014/15 were well in advance of the UK average. However, with regard to Stoke-on-Trent City Council, although they were currently below the national average, their performance had shown a significant improvement since 2006/07.

In response to a question from a Member regarding Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's outstanding performance with regard to recycling, their officer representative explained that households' residual waste bins in the District were smaller than those issued by other Partners and Mr Bird said that this might provide a useful lesson which other Authorities could implement going forward.

With regard to (iv) above Mr. Bird clarified that Newcastle Borough Council were currently procuring a new waste collection contract and were therefore not represented in the table at the present time. However, it was hoped to be able to include details of their new contractors in the near future. Continuing Mr. Bird said that the information contained in the table highlighted the opportunities which might exist for joint contract procurement and confirmed that the Borough Council had previously circulated details of their Materials Recovery Facilities contract in order to give Partners the opportunity to join if they so wished.

In reply to a question from the Member representative of Stafford Borough Council regarding income generation from road sweepings, the County Council's Group Manager – Waste Management and Environmental Projects said that whilst there was currently no cost to the County Council from providing this service, she was unaware of any opportunities for generating income from this waste at present. However, she undertook to investigate the matter further and report back to the Board as necessary.

Mr. Bird explained that with regard to (v) above, direct comparisons between Authorities were difficult owing to detail differences in their respective contracts. However, used with the information provided in (ii), an approximation of the collection and disposal costs per household per district could be obtained. An officer representative from Cannock Chase District Council questioned whether the tonnage and cost information should also be shown by geographical area having regard to the proximity of some Household Recycling Centres (HWRCs) to population centres in neighbouring District/Boroughs. In reply Mr. Bird expressed his view that this information was unlikely to add anything further to the debate. However, he undertook to include an additional note to accompany the table explaining that residents in certain areas may use HWRCs in neighbouring Districts/Boroughs.

With regard to (vi) above The County Council's Commissioner for the Sustainable Environment re-iterated his Authority's position with regard to the identification of savings which had been set out at previous meetings of the Board. He explained that the only realistic option remaining for his service area to achieve significant savings was to close one or more of the 15 HWRCs currently in operation. However, this would not be without difficulties owing to the terms of the respective contracts in place. An alternative would be to reduce the operating hours of certain HWRCs but this was unlikely to produce the level of savings required by his Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). In addition, HWRC's provided an alternative to residents in the event of a change in their weekly waste collection services.

Notwithstanding the above the County Council had undertaken a cost benefit analysis which identified Biddulph and Burntwood HWRCs as the most likely candidates for closure if such a policy was to be pursued. However, Mr. Benson emphasised that there were no such proposals currently being considered.

The Officer representative of South Staffordshire District Council asked for an indication of the level of savings and waste arisings to be expected if the closure of the two sites went ahead. In reply, Mr. Benson said that whilst this policy would save approximately £145,000 per year, the total volume of waste collected from the remaining sites was not expected to decline. However, these relatively small savings were set against a background of the £1.5m MTFS target.

The Member representative of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council commented that the closure of the Biddulph HWRC might result in an increase in fly tipping in this predominantly rural District.

Mr. Bird enquired about the feasibility of charging for non-household waste at HWRCs to provide an additional income stream. In reply Mr. Benson said that this was currently being investigated. However, current legislation prevented the County Council making charges for household waste collected at HWRCs. Continuing, he said that it was hoped charging would also reduce the volume of trade waste deposited at HRWCs.

The officer representative of East Staffordshire Borough Council enquired as to the progress which had been made in the provision of a HWRC at Uttoxeter. In reply, Mr. Benson informed the Board that whilst there were certain planning matters still to be resolved it was hoped the site would be opened to the public in November 2015.

Green Waste Recycling Credits (Schedule 4)

86. The Board were provided with a copy of email correspondence from the County Council's Chief Executive to all Staffordshire District/Borough Chief Executive's dated 20 October 2015 setting out his Authority's updated proposals with regard to the level of Green Waste Credits to be paid by the County Council from 2016/17 onwards.

The County Council had an existing Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) target saving of £1.5m and currently the only viable option for achieving this was considered to be to change in the Green Waste Credits paid to Waste Collection Authorities (WCA) to a level which reflected the cost of treatment only. However, whilst the County Council had the power to impose this change on WCAs they were fully aware of the financial and political pressures such a change would mean to District/Borough Councils and would therefore rather the target savings be achieved by other means, if possible.

In view of the above, it had been provisionally agreed at a meeting of the Staffordshire Chief Executives on 7 October 2015 that the County Council would not seek to impose this saving if the WCAs agreed to freeze the current 3% annual inflation rise in Green Waste Recycling Credits until 2018/19. In addition, the Chief Executives had agreed that the Staffordshire Waste Partnership should continue to work closely together in order to help the County Council meet the savings target set out above through a holistic and pan Staffordshire approach across collection, recycling, re-use and disposal functions.

The County Council's Chief Executive had made clear that his Authority were not in a position to sustain the financial pressure indefinitely and if the Partnership were unable to find savings across the system by 2019, then it was highly likely the County Council would have to revisit the options for making savings which would not exclude Green Waste Credits.

The County Council's Commissioner for the Sustainable County referred to the discussions which had taken place at previous meetings of the Board and the recent meeting of the Staffordshire Chief Executives and outlined the options available to them for the payment of Green Waste Recycling Credits ie (i) retain the annual 3% uplift currently paid to District/Borough Councils by the County Council; (ii) agree an annual increase based on a recognised inflation rate eg the Retail Price Index (RPI) or (iii) freeze the current level of credits paid.

In the full and wide ranging discussion which ensued representatives of several Partner Authorities questioned the accuracy of the above-mentioned email saying that their understanding was that Staffordshire Chief Executive's had provisionally agreed a 1% annual uplift until 2018/19 rather than a freeze in the current level. However, the officer representative of Cannock Chase District Council confirmed that the email reflected his Authority's understanding of the present situation.

With regard to the three options Mr. Benson had outlined, the Member representative of Lichfield District Council expressed his Authority's willingness to accept an increase based on the level of the RPI provided that all other Partners were agreeable and committed to achieving holistic cost savings in waste services.

The officer representative of South Staffordshire District Council reported that her Chief Executive had provisionally agreed to a freeze in credits at the above-mentioned meeting of the Staffordshire Chief Executives. However, her Authority were content for the Board to reach a consensus based on the options set out provided that there was no cost shunting onto waste collection Authorities post 2018/19.

In response to a question from the Member representative of South Staffordshire District Council, Mr. Benson confirmed that the savings targets for waste in the County Council's MTFS had not been included on the assumption that all Waste Collection Authorities would be introducing charges for Green Waste Collection.

The Member representative of Stafford Borough Council cited likely increases in staffing costs over the next two years up to 2019/20. He therefore expressed his preference for the increase in credits to be in line with the RPI rather than zero if the current annual 3% uplift was now unaffordable by the County Council.

The officer representative of East Staffordshire Borough Council referred to the penultimate paragraph of the above-mentioned email which stated that the County Council would revisit options for making savings which would not exclude revisiting Green Waste Recycling Credits in the event that the Partnership were unable to find savings across the system by 2019 and looked to the representatives of the County Council to provide an assurance that the £1.5m target would be removed from their MTFS, at least until 2019/20, if the Board now agreed to an RPI uplift.

In reply the County Council's Member representative said that there was no need for the MTFS to be amended having regard to the Partnership's intention to identify substantial holistic savings in their waste operations. Mr. Benson clarified that if the Partnership now agreed to an RPI uplift, the MTFS target would be put on hold until 2019/20. He also added that his Authority had not given consideration to reducing the level of Dry Recycling Credits currently paid to District/Borough Councils.

The Chairman then took a vote on the proposal to reduce the annual increase in Green Waste Recycling Credits to the level of the RPI to which all Partners indicated their agreement except East Staffordshire Borough Council who said they were not in favour of proposal.

87. **RESOLVED** – (a) That the annual increase in the level of Green Waste Recycling Credits paid to Waste Collection Authorities by the County Council be reduced from the current 3% to the level of the Retail Price Index for the two year period until 2019/20.

(b) That (a) above be on the understanding that there will be no cost shunting onto District/Borough Councils by the County Council at the end of the two year period.

(c) That all Partners work closely and constructively towards achieving substantial holistic savings in waste by 2019/20.

Discussion on How to Move Forward

88. The Board discussed how they wished to move forward in respect of achieving holistic savings in waste having regard to the financial pressures all Authorities were currently facing.

The Member representative of Lichfield District Council expressed his view that the Partnership should consider all options in relation to achieving savings, including full externalisation of waste services and he referred to future spending pressures which he said were likely to increase significantly. Continuing he said that this work should be undertaken as a matter of urgency and that he had hoped for greater progress to have been made by now.

In response, the County Council's Commissioner for the Sustainable County said that he agreed with the Member's view. The officer representative of South Staffordshire District Council suggested identifying an officer lead to drive this work forward having regard to the timetable for meetings of Staffordshire Waste Officers' Group (SWOG).

The officer representative from East Staffordshire Borough Council suggested a separate project looking at food waste minimisation and the impact on residual waste to run concurrently with the Holistic Savings project. However, the officer representative of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council said that the £20,000 funding grant secured from the Local Government Association would not be sufficient to do this.

The representatives of South Staffordshire and Lichfield District Councils proposed that the Staffordshire Waste Partnership Officer be asked to arrange a meeting of a Sub-Group of the Board as a matter of urgency to examine in detail the various service delivery options available which were likely to produce the required level of savings and for their findings/preferences to be reported to the SWOG for action.

Representatives of Partner Authorities then expressed their agreement with this proposed way forward.

In response to a request for clarification by the Clerk, the Chairman said that the existing Joint Waste Management Board Sub-Group should deal with this matter.

89. **RESOLVED** – (a) That an additional meeting of the existing Joint Waste Management Board Sub-Group be arranged as a matter of urgency to investigate the options for waste service delivery in the County with a view to producing significant holistic savings.

(b) That the outcome of the Sub-Group's deliberations be reported to the next meeting of the Staffordshire Waste Officers' Group for consideration, as necessary, with a view to taking this matter forward.

Note by Clerk: The September 2014 RPI indexation was 257.6 compared to 259.6 in September 2015. Therefore, a 0.78% RPI uplift (ie $259.6/257.6 = 1.0078$ or 0.78%) annual RPI uplift will be applied for the financial year 2016/17.

The uplift for 2017/18 will be calculated based on the September 2016 indexation figures.

Waste Service Changes

90. The Board noted the following waste service changes by Partner Authorities which had occurred since their previous meeting:-

Cannock Chase District Council

The Member representative of Cannock Chase District Council informed the Board that his Authority had recently undertaken a procurement exercise with assistance from the County Council's Procurement Service for the provision of (i) their kerbside waste and recycling collection service and (ii) collection of organic waste service. Both these contracts were set to run concurrently for seven years from 1 April 2016 with an option to be extended for a further seven years.

The results of the exercise had recently been evaluated against the Authority's original cost models and at their meeting on 12 November 2015 their Cabinet were to be recommended that (i) the new service provider be Biffa Municipal Limited and (ii) that food waste be removed from the current garden and food waste collection service.

Date and Venue of Next Meeting

91. **RESOLVED** - That a further meeting of the Board be held on Wednesday 27 January 2016 hosted by Staffordshire County Council.

CHAIRMAN