

Staffordshire Local Government Association

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE-ON-TRENT JOINT WASTE MANAGEMENT BOARD HELD ON TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER 2015 AT CIVIC OFFICES, NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME

Present:

Cannock Chase District Council

Cllr. A. Dudson
Mr. J. Presland
Nirmal Samrai

Staffordshire County Council

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

East Staffordshire Borough Council

Cllr. Mrs. P. Ackroyd
Mr. A. O'Brien

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Ms. N. Kemp
Mrs. J. Redfern

Lichfield District Council

Cllr. I Eadie

South Staffordshire District Council

Cllr. M. Bond
Mrs. J. Smith

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Mr. D. Adams
Cllr. A. Beech (Chairman)
Mr. A. Bird
Mr. T. Nicoll

Stafford Borough Council

Mr. M. Street

Tamworth Borough Council

Mr. A. Barratt

Also in attendance: Mr J. Lindop (Staffordshire County Council) and Ms K. Cocks (Staffordshire Waste Partnership Officer).

Apologies: Mr. B. Brockbank (Stoke-on-Trent City Council); Cllr. F. Finlay (Stafford Borough Council); Cllr. T. Follows (Stoke-on-Trent City Council); Ms. C. Gibbs (Stoke-on-Trent City Council); Mr. H. Thomas (Stafford Borough Council); Cllr. Ms. M. Thurgood (Tamworth Borough Council).

PART ONE

Minutes

92. **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

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

Holistic Savings – Options/Proposals for Consideration

94. The Board received an oral report from the Waste Partnership Officer informing them of the outcome of a meeting of Staffordshire Chief Executive's on 3 December 2015 at which they had given consideration to achieving holistic savings in waste across Staffordshire.

Following their meeting, a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had been circulated setting out the way in which partner Authorities would work together on waste management issues in order to maximise efficiency and value for money. Furthermore, the MoU signified a commitment to change in order to deliver savings whilst delivering efficient standards that were fit for purpose in the light of the financial, legal, technical and operations factors applicable, from within an overall financial envelope of approximately £55m across all ten Authorities.

Although not yet agreed and signed by all parties, the MoU referred to the need to procure external support to conduct a full appraisal of all the options available. Furthermore Chief Executives envisaged that this work would be funded from savings made from a reduction in payment of Green Waste Recycling Credits to District/Borough Councils by the County Council. The County Council's Commissioner for the sustainable environment stated that he was not aware of any such commitment having been made and expressed concern that if this work was to be funded from his Authority's savings, then this would mean those savings targets would not be met and the budgetary pressure would remain.

The Waste Partnership Officer highlighted Section 7 of the MoU "Exceptions" which set out various fixed waste policy positions of certain Partner Authorities which the above appraisal would have to have regard to. In addition, she referred to the European Union (EU) which had recently adopted an ambitious Circular Economy Package including revised legislative proposals on waste and recycling which may also have to be reflected in the appraisal.

Continuing, the Waste Partnership Officer informed them that Chief Executives had tasked her with producing a detailed scope for the review and; set out the key stages for obtaining Partnership approval. Initial comments on the draft Scope would be sought from the Chairman of the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) following which details would be circulated to all Chief Executives in January 2016. The Staffordshire Waste Officers Group would then consider the draft Scope at their meeting on 20 January 2016 for final sign-off by the Board in February 2016.

Therefore, in order to meet this timescale, it was now necessary for them to decide on the future relationship between achieving holistic savings and recycling rates ie (i) should savings be made despite any adverse effect on performance; (ii) should current recycling rates be maintained or (iii) should savings be achieved through increased recycling. They noted that (iii) would require enhancements to current service provision and therefore an additional financial commitment from Partners, at least in the short term, may be required.

During the discussion which ensued the Chairman of LARAC referred to the new EU Circular Economy waste targets which were currently being examined by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) prior to publication. A new target recycling rate of 65% is being proposed. Currently SWP authorities range from 36 to 55%. It was anticipated that these would include additional targets for material not previously included in the current targets such as furnace/incinerator bottom ash and garden waste. Furthermore, separate food waste collections may be required having regard to the likely ban on biodegradable waste being sent to landfill. Therefore, penalties may be imposed on local Authorities who failed to achieve adequate performance in these respects.

The County Council's Commissioner for the Sustainable County expressed his view that to give consideration to recycling rates at this juncture would be premature having regard to the primary aim of the review which was to produce holistic savings. He said that it would be more appropriate to consider all the options available and then examine their likely impact on recycling rates. The Member representative of Lichfield District Council agreed that the review need not be 'rate focused'. However, it was important for progress to be made in accordance with the timetable laid down by the Chief Executives and for Authorities to be flexible and imaginative in their approach.

The Waste Partnership Officer referred to a quote she had already received from a firm of external consultants for a Waste Composition Analysis (WCA) in order to provide the level of detailed data necessary to complete the review. Whilst data from a previous analysis was available, this had been undertaken in 2007 and therefore may be out of date.

The officer representatives from the County Council commented that following the decision of the Board at their meeting on 28 October 2015 the anticipated savings achieved from the changes in the payment of Green Waste Credits to Waste Collection Authorities by the County Council would not be sufficient to fund either a full Waste Composition Analysis or external review. In reply, the Chief Executive of East Staffordshire Borough Council said that the Board should not be pre-occupied by the cost of the review. Continuing he said that any comprehensive examination of waste services for the purpose of producing savings would necessarily also take-in the effect of proposals on recycling rates. He went onto stress the importance of gaining political buy-in from leaders at Partner Authorities and said that Chief Executives had recently assuming a central role in driving this work forward because of to the urgent need to make progress.

The officer representative of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council commented on the likely level of savings available from the reconfiguration of services owing to current operations already being 95% efficient and the officer representative of Tamworth Borough Council stated his view that standardization of services was key to producing significant savings.

The Waste Partnership Officer referred to correspondence she had had with John Enright, Waste Programme Lead for Joint Working at DEFRA Local Partnerships who had offered to review previous cluster working reports for SWP authorities at no charge to the Partnership. She informed them that subject to the Board's approval, this work could be initiated immediately. The Officer representative of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council then questioned whether John Enright should be asked to supplement his offer with a boarder approach to a review and for this work to be funded from the £20,000 grant received from the Local Government Association.

Representatives of Partner Authorities expressed their support for such a proposal.

The officer representative of South Staffordshire District Council spoke of the importance of including suitable wording in the scope which emphasised the need to achieve holistic savings and avoid cost shunting between Authorities. It was also necessary to specify a timetable for completion of this work which satisfied the expectations of Partner Authorities and specifically the Chief Executives having regard to their MoU.

In reply, the Waste Partnership Officer said that she would draft an outline scope having regard to the general comments made by Members and their wish for Mr. Enright to undertake the broad review. In the event that this work could not be funded entirely from the grant received from the Local Government Association then she would report back to the Board with a view to seeking approval for additional expenditure to meet any shortfall. However, it was anticipated that the grant would be sufficient.

With regard to the presentation of the final report by Mr. Enright, the officer representative of South Staffordshire District Council suggested that a joint event be held at a central location, on a date to be arranged at the end of February 2016 to which the Board, Partner Chief Executives and the Staffordshire Waste Officers' Group be invited. Members of the Board then expressed their agreement with this way forward.

95. **RESOLVED** – (a) That the oral report be noted.

(b) That the Waste Partnership Officer draft an outline scope for a comprehensive independent review of all waste services in Staffordshire with a view to producing holistic savings and avoiding cost shunting.

(c) That John Enright of DEFRA Local Partnership be asked to undertake a broad brush review of waste services in Staffordshire as set out in (b) above.

(d) That the meeting of the Board which was to have taken place on 27 January 2016 be postponed to a date to be arranged, not later than the end of February 2016, but the exact timing to be dependent on the production of the report from the review by John Enright.

(e) That all Partner Authority's Chief Executives and the Staffordshire Waste Officers' Group be invited to attend the re-arranged meeting to hear the presentation by John Enright following completion of the review.

(f) That the Honorary Secretary make the necessary arrangements for the re-scheduled meeting of the Board to be held at County Buildings, Stafford.

Date and Venue of Next Meeting

96. **RESOLVED** - That a further meeting of the Board be held on a date to be arranged at the end of February 2016, to be hosted by Staffordshire County Council.

CHAIRMAN