

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environmental Excellence Panel** held by video link on **Thursday 8 October 2020** at **6pm** when there were present:

Cllr J Leggett – Chairman

Cllr D J Britcher

Cllr K S Kelly

Cllr S M Prutton

Cllr A D Crotch

Cllr K E Lawrence

Cllr J M Ward

Cllr J F Fisher

Cllr G K Nurden

Cllr S Catchpole, Cllr K Leggett and Cllr T Mancini-Boyle also attended the meeting for its duration.

Also in attendance were the Assistant Director – Community Services, Assistant Director – Regulatory, Recycling and Partnerships Officers (MB and NN), Policy and Partnerships Manager, Policy and Partnerships Officer, Democratic Services Officer (LA) and the Democratic Services Officer (JO).

40 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr B Cook.

41 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

42 RECYCLING INITIATIVES SCOPING REPORT

The Recycling and Partnerships Officer (MB) introduced the report which presented high level options and project proposals for reaching a 60 percent recycling rate by 2025, as set out in the Environmental Strategy, which was an uplift from the current rate of 49.6% of 10-11.5 percent.

Broadland Council already had the highest recycling rate for both 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 in Norfolk (49.6%) although this included a significant amount of green waste from brown bins. In comparison, South Norfolk and Norwich were top in terms of dry recycling.

The 60 percent recycling rate ambition by 2025, was in line with the Government's 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy that had a target of 65 percent by 2035.

The Recycling Team for Broadland and South Norfolk currently consisted of 1.2 FTE Recycling and Partnership Officers, as well as one temporary FTE officer funded until the beginning of March 2021, plus a vacant apprentice post that had yet to be filled.

The Team covered approximately 120,000 properties across Broadland and South Norfolk with the potential for approximately 228,000 recycling collections to take place per fortnight.

Work within the Team was split between implementing projects to improve recycling rates and to reduce contamination, whilst 40 percent of officer time was the preparation of data and completing statutory returns for both Broadland and South Norfolk, which impacted on capacity to manage large recycling initiatives.

Research into the top recycling authorities in England had been undertaken in order to better understand drivers for success. The main trends identified included smaller residual waste bins (140L or 180L compared to the 240L used by the Council), widespread food and garden waste services and collection of additional materials at the kerbside. All of which could promote residents behaviour change, to increasing the recycling rate.

In order to achieve the 60 percent recycling target a number of options that had been found to have the greatest impact on reducing waste production and increasing recycling, were proposed for consideration.

These were:

- weekly food waste collections
- three weekly collections for general waste
- smaller bins for general waste and improvements to kerbside recycling.

However, Members were asked to note that the adoption of any of the proposals would have significant financial implications that would need to be carefully considered.

For example, expanding the weekly food waste service to all households in Broadland would include a capital requirement of £102,888 and increased revenue costs by £311,244 per year. An alternative option would be to promote food digesters, but this would only be viable if the homeowner had adequate garden space and would not contribute to composting tonnages.

A free garden waste service would increase use, but the cost would be £670,844 per year and result in a loss of £1,498,579 in revenue. The Government were potentially looking at introducing a free service, but had

confirmed that they would cover the cost of funding it.

Reducing the size of the residual bins from 240L to 180L would lower residual waste, as more would be recycled. However, replacing the bins would cost £937,500 along with £187,500 for their delivery. Consideration would also need to be given to how the old bins were disposed of.

Collecting residual waste on a three weekly basis had also been shown to produce cost savings, decreased residual waste and increased recycling rates. However, as with smaller bins, residents have proved resistant to such proposals and a separate nappy collection service might be necessary. It was not proposed to both reduce the size of bins and collect them on a three weekly basis.

A kerbside collection service for textiles, batteries and small electrical items was another possible initiative that would increase recycling and be convenient for residents.

Consistent communications campaigns would keep recycling fresh in residents' minds, and could take advantage of the lessons learned during the behavioural change project carried out in Sprowston. Texting residents was also an idea that had successfully been used elsewhere.

The Panel was requested to consider and identify any proposals that should be taken forward to include a full assessment of opportunities and risks, detailed costings and resource requirements, in addition to timescales for delivery.

A Member noted that some of the top achieving recycling districts had very different geographical characteristics to Broadland that would be very difficult to emulate. He also suggested that a three weekly collection would not work and noted that during lockdown residents were buying far more online, which generated greater quantities of cardboard.

In respect of cardboard the Panel were advised that it could be left alongside the recycling bin, if the weather was suitable. It was also confirmed that waste from bins of 180, 240 and 360 litres could be collected with the same vehicle.

Another Member was in favour of three weekly collections as well as communicating to residents via text, but thought that free garden waste collection would be too costly.

In respect of recycling contamination, it was confirmed that specific areas had been targeted in the past via a Materials Recycling Facilities audit to detect problem areas. Students had then been used to monitor bins, with

contaminators being followed up by intervention techniques (bin tags, leaflets, letters and visits) to address contamination. Work could also take place with housing associations and private landlords that used communal bins, which were sometimes hot spots for contamination.

The Panel was also advised that the refuse crews could help with contamination campaigns and it was noted that new estates frequently led to polystyrene contamination when new household bought new products for their home.

It was noted that one of the Government's targets was the earlier separation of materials, for example separate kerbside collections for glass etc. rather than co-mingled collections.

A Member suggested that smaller residual bins should be rolled out to new residential properties and as bins were replaced. He also suggested that an initial free period of six months might be an incentive for residents to take up the garden waste collection service.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance noted the success of the leafleting campaigns, which would be worth funding, as they would cover the cost in increased recycling credits.

In response to a query regarding trialing smaller residual bins or three weekly collections in a small area, the Policy and Partnerships Manager confirmed that a trial could be arranged, but would come at a price and would depend on how quickly Members wanted to get to the 60 percent recycling target.

The Chairman noted that three weekly collections could be very complex and hard for residents to understand, which could lead to greater contamination.

In summing up, the Chairman requested that more information should be provided on one-off electrical collections; the feasibility of extending food waste collection to market towns, increasing recycling publicity campaigns, encouraging more Brown Bin customers and linking in with Norfolk Recycles, a body that encouraged the reuse of household products.

RESOLVED

To note the report and agree that the following proposals should be taken forward for further development, before being brought back to the Panel for further consideration:

- behaviour change,
- extending food waste collection,

- smaller bins for some residents,
- text messaging to residents, and
- improving communication (leaflets, stickers etc.)

43 RECYCLING BEHAVIOUR CHANGE REPORT

The report outlined the Behaviour Change project that commenced in Sprowston in February 2020 and provided an update on the current situation and options for ways forward.

The aim of this project had been to reduce levels of contamination in kerbside recycling bins, by targeting indoor recycling behaviours and began with an information gathering questionnaire followed by delivery of an indoor recycling container to each household, an email newsletter campaign and weekly infographics on different recycling topics.

Monitoring individual and communal bins had taken place twice a week for eight weeks, with the number and type of contaminants being documented to form the baseline data for the project. Two audits were also conducted at the MRF. It had been intended that the data would also be gathered again at the end of the project to compare findings and draw conclusions.

The Recycling Team had the questionnaire results in a raw format, however no quantitative results had been gained from the project as post-project data collection did not occur. The project stopped mid-implementation, so any data gathered now would not only be incomplete but also impacted by COVID-19.

The Team was keen to continue implementing behavioural insights in future projects and activities.

It was suggested that to bring the project to a close, a letter could be sent out to residents reiterating the aims and sharing the remaining infographics which were currently up on the Norfolk Recycles website. The remaining email newsletters, to which 183 residents signed up to, could be completed by the Jump survey company. This would allow residents to receive educational recycling information and the chance to win the remaining prizes. It was emphasised that this was not resource intensive, and would allow the Recycling Team to focus on future initiatives to increase the recycling rate.

Replicating the project had been considered, but this would be resource intensive and requiring a large commitment from the Recycling Team. It was, therefore, proposed that although the project was not complete it be brought to a close.

However, this work would not be wasted as the learnings from the project to 'nudge' residents through behavioural insights would help towards achieving a 60% recycling rate for Broadland.

In response to a query from the Chairman, Officers confirmed that if one lesson had been learned from the project, it was to have a contingency plan in place to complete the project. Such as obtaining more email addresses to deliver the infographics, or letting people know where they were available online.

A Member suggested that the letter to residents who took part in the project should at least contain the initial data taken to provide them with a snapshot of their recycling rate. It could also ask them to sign up to a newsletter, so that more email addresses could be obtained for any future follow up post pandemic.

A Member agreed with these suggestions and added that it would be useful to try to get feedback from residents regarding their own recycling behaviour and any possible reasons for the levels of contamination found in their recycling.

Officers confirmed that they could implement these suggestions as part of the project closure.

The Panel were also advised that as the estate consisted of one round for Veolia the load could be isolated at the Material Recycling Facility for auditing and sampling, to assess if any improvements had been made since the initial data was gathered.

The Assistant Director - Community Services reminded the Panel that the Recycling Team, had very limited resources and it should be ensured that projects that were undertaken by it should take this into account.

RESOLVED

to note the content of the report; and

RECOMMEND TO CABINET

to bring the project to a close, with a letter to residents that would include Members' suggestions regarding sharing data, collecting feedback and contact details, as well as gathering an analysis of current levels of contamination on the estate.

44 CONSULTATION ON THE GOVERNMENT'S WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN – SUGGESTED RESPONSE

The report presented the Council's proposed responses to the Government's Consultation on the Waste Management Plan for England.

The Waste Management Plan for England was required to be reviewed every six years and the Plan being consulted upon did not include any new policies or announcements.

The questions asked were:

- (1) If the Waste Management Plan for England met the requirements of Schedule 1 of the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011?
- (2) If the Council's agrees with the conclusions of the Environmental Report (which supported the Waste Management Plan)?
- (3) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'There will be no additional burdens for businesses, consumers and local authorities arising directly from the adoption of the Plan'

The Council proposed response was to agree with all the questions. The County Council had also agreed with the questions.

The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) had additional concerns regarding possible additional burdens and responsibilities on local authorities and a paper setting this out had been circulated to the Panel.

The Panel were asked if they agreed with the proposed responses and asked if they would like to have the LARAC comments added to the Council's responses.

Members were informed that this was a six yearly review that was required by legislation and that the consultations to be held next year would be a more appropriate opportunity to provide feedback.

RESOLVED

to note the content of the report and agree with the suggested responses, as presented in the report.

45 UPDATE ON WASTE PROCUREMENT

The Assistant Director – Community Services advised the meeting that since the Member Workshop last week Officers had been working with Eunomia to agree the specification for soft market testing with all six of the potential contractors on 19 and 20 October 2020.

Members were asked to clarify two points ahead of this exercise: firstly was a ten year contract, with a possible ten year extension acceptable and secondly would a depot located outside the District be acceptable?

The Panel confirmed that the contract length was acceptable and that the location of the depot should not be an obstacle to agreeing the contract.

Members were advised that a visit to the Frettenham depot could be arranged for the Panel and that the visit could be timed to coincide with the trial of an electric refuse vehicle next week.

A number of Members expressed an interest in visiting the depot and the Assistant Director – Community Services confirmed that he would email those Members with further details following the meeting.

46 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The following items were added to the Work Programme:

26 November 2020	• Environmental Strategy Progress • Fly tipping • Anti-Social Behaviour & Crime
28 January 2021	• Recycling Initiatives • Waste Contract Procurement • MRF Contract Update
25 March 2021	• Waste Contract Procurement

The Chairman advised the meeting that a graduate apprentice would be starting at the Council next week and would be scoping out the implementation of the Environmental Strategy and drafting a Delivery Plan. The Chairman also advised the meeting that a budget report to the November Cabinet would include a request for £44,000 to help deliver the Environmental Strategy.

47 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the remaining business because otherwise, information which was exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, would be disclosed to them.

48 EXEMPT MINUTES

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2020 were agreed subject to a number of amendments, as detailed in the exempt Minutes.

The meeting closed at 8.16pm.