

# Warwickshire Waste Partnership

Wednesday, 15 January 2020

## Minutes

### Attendance

#### Warwickshire County Council

Councillors: Neil Dirveiks  
Jenny Fradgley  
Heather Timms (Chair)  
Andy Wright

Officers: John Cole – Trainee Democratic Services Officer  
Ruth Dixon – Waste Strategy and Commissioning Manager  
Tamalyn Goodwin – Project Manager, Waste Strategy and Commissioning  
Andrew Pau – Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Waste & Environment)

Observers: Councillor Keith Kondakor

#### North Warwickshire Borough Council

Councillor Margaret Bell  
Richard Dobbs – Assistant Director (Streetscape)

#### Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

Councillor Jill Sheppard  
Katie Smith – Contract Management and Environment Officer

#### Rugby Borough Council

Councillor Howard Roberts  
Dan Green – Head of Environment and Public Realm  
Jim Perkins – Interim Waste and Transport Manager

#### Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Councillor Ian Shenton  
Craig Bourne – Contracts Manager (Streetscene)

#### Warwick District Council

Councillor David Norris  
Gary Charlton – Contract Services Manager

#### Environment Agency

David Hudson – Environment Agency Manager for Gloucestershire and Warwickshire

## **1. General**

### **(1) Apologies**

Councillor John Horner and Glen McGrandle sent their apologies.

### **(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

There were none.

### **(3) Minutes of the previous meeting, including matters arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2019 were approved as a correct and accurate record.

## **2. Environment Agency - Waste Crime**

David Hudson (Environment Agency Manager for Gloucestershire and Warwickshire) presented a verbal report regarding the growing national problem of waste crime.

David Hudson advised that instances of large-scale waste abandonment had increased and that this represented a distinct challenge to that of conventional forms of waste crime such as littering or fly-tipping. He reported that in 2015, illegal waste activity was estimated to have cost over £600million in England alone, with some estimates suggesting an even higher figure of £1billion.

David Hudson reported that organised criminal activity accounted for many instances of serious waste crime. He displayed some slides which demonstrated the scale of the problem and advised that remote locations were often targeted alongside abandoned buildings, agricultural land and construction sites.

David Hudson stated that large-scale abandonment of waste constituted an obstacle to redevelopment due to the high cost of clearance and disposal, and that as an outcome a negative value had been attached to many affected sites. He commented that a serious risk to safety had been identified in many cases and drew attention to the abandoned Twyford factory in Staffordshire which had been accessed illegally to house thousands of bales of waste. He advised that, in the event of a fire, it was considered likely that the site would burn for over five weeks resulting in widespread disruption to transport infrastructure and serious implications for the local economy.

David Hudson outlined the motives of waste crime and reported that organised criminals sought to avoid disposal costs and landfill tax by illegally dumping materials. He added that it was common for hazardous and high-risk waste to be disguised as low-risk waste, contributing to an exacerbated problem for landowners duped into accepting waste by scammers.

David Hudson advised that Defra had set up an independent review into serious and organised waste crime in 2018. The review found that this type of activity had been subject to deliberate colonisation by existing criminal groups who had identified it as a potentially lucrative opportunity. David Hudson reported that a Joint Unit for Waste Crime (JUWC) had been established which

included representation from law enforcement agencies, environmental regulators, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the National Crime Agency (NCA).

David Hudson reported that in each of the 20 cases of waste abandonment referred by the Environment Agency (EA) to the NCA, it had been found that the perpetrators were involved in other forms of unlawful activity including drug-related crime. It was considered that early intervention, prevention and disruption were essential strategies in addressing the problem; David Hudson stated that partnership working with local authorities would be required to make a positive impact. He emphasised the importance of acting quickly to detect and report cases of waste crime to enable a swift response from all the agencies involved. He advised that, where evidence existed, the EA could seize plant equipment and prevent further incursions.

David Hudson identified measures which could be taken by local authorities to address the problem of waste crime, including:

- Engagement with the public including guidance in respect of the early signs of large-scale waste crime (to encourage reporting by members of the public and enable early detection) and promotion of the Environment Agency telephone number;
- Engagement with landowners to provide advice in advance of possible contact from fraudsters including the need for clear and robust tenancy agreements;
- A briefing for Council Officers to improve awareness and facilitate early intervention.

David Hudson added that scheduling of a meeting with Warwickshire County Council and partner organisations to consider the implications of waste crime across the region could offer benefits.

In response to Councillor Fradgley, David Hudson advised that, in many instances, a landowner is duped into giving consent for their land to be used to store waste materials. He commented that the perpetrators often appeared to be credible with a seemingly legitimate explanation for their request; later it became apparent that the material would not be collected as agreed. He advised that it was often left to the landowner to cover the cost of disposal.

Councillor Bell commented that the EA had reacted effectively to a report of waste crime in North Warwickshire, however it had been felt that the Police did not have a clear understanding of the nature of the offence. She suggested that a briefing for the Police would be beneficial. David Hudson responded that a meeting between the EA and the Police had been scheduled, alongside work already being undertaken with the Rural Crime Team, to ensure that all Officers are able to react effectively.

In response to Councillor Norris, David Hudson advised that, despite diligence shown by local authorities, examples of waste materials being diverted from their intended destinations had been observed in parts of the UK. He stated that even a seemingly secure supply chain could be subject to abuse and that it was known for official documents to be falsified.

## **Action**

Andrew Pau (Strategy and Commissioning Manager, Waste & Environment) agreed that continued vigilance was needed. He stated that he felt it would be possible to arrange the proposed meeting with Warwickshire Police, Fire and Rescue Service, Waste Collection and Disposal Officers

(District, Borough and County), Environmental Health, Planning Officers, EA and any other interested parties.

### **3. Waste Management Performance Data**

Andrew Pau (Strategy and Commissioning Manager, Waste & Environment) presented the Performance Data Report which was a standing item.

Councillor Dirveiks observed that total household waste had increased by 0.3% since last year's figures and asked if this was a result of an increase in the number of households in the County. Ruth Dixon (Waste Strategy and Commissioning Manager) responded that the number of households was estimated to have grown from 253,000 to 260,000 within this period which could account for the increase in household waste.

Andrew Pau referred to the Disposal Authority (Recycling by Percent) League Table 2018/19 which indicated that, although Warwickshire County Council's performance was consistent with the levels recorded in 2017/18, the Authority had dropped by two positions to tenth place. He referred to the Collection Authority (Recycling by Percent) League Table 2018/19 and highlighted improvements made by the five District and Borough Councils since 2017/18.

#### **Action**

Andrew Pau advised that updated figures, including data which had become available since publication of the report, would be circulated to Members of the Partnership by email.

### **4. Smarter Joint Working (Including Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) Update)**

Richard Dobbs (Assistant Director (Streetscape), North Warwickshire Borough Council) introduced the report which provided an update on preparatory work for construction and commissioning of a new MRF.

Richard Dobbs reported that partner councils (Coventry City Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Walsall Council) had now entered into a Joint Working Agreement (JWA). He reported that advice had been sought at a pre-planning stage from highways and ecology personnel as well as from Severn Trent Water and that the outlook was promising.

Richard Dobbs stated that a tender evaluation was scheduled and that talks with bidders would take place from late January 2020. He reported that it was a complex project, but good progress was being made which constituted a significant achievement given the number of partners involved.

In response to Councillor Kondakor, Richard Dobbs advised that the impact of the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) consultation was not known but that modelling of different scenarios had been undertaken by technical consultants. It was considered that the outcome of the DRS consultation would not affect the viability of the MRF scheme.

In response to Councillor Shenton, Richard Dobbs stated that the initial target for the MRF to be operational by 2022 had been revised to Spring 2023 and he was hopeful that the project would

meet this target. He added that plans had been co-ordinated to ensure that waste materials would be available for processing as soon as the MRF was declared operational, but that alternative arrangements had been identified in case of a delay.

In response to Councillor Shenton, Richard Dobbs reported that the outcome of discussions with potential additional partner authorities would be known by the end of January 2020. He added that headroom for additional partners had been factored into the project plan and that increased participation from local authorities could be absorbed by the MRF's capacity to receive commercial and industrial waste.

Richard Dobbs reported that it was anticipated that Tamworth Borough Council and Lichfield District Council would soon reach a decision in respect of their involvement in the scheme. He added that investment modelling had been undertaken to consider the outcome of different scenarios, including additional partners and a reduction in single use plastic, and it was determined that the project was on a secure footing.

In response to Councillor Norris, Richard Dobbs advised that the impact of Brexit had been considered. He commented that it was impossible to mitigate all risk, but that detailed planning work had taken place. He added that it was doubtful that waste exports to EU nations would cease, albeit at an increased cost, but that a domestic market existed for most waste products.

In response to Councillor Norris, Richard Dobbs commented that partner authorities would be reliant upon the MRF to dispose of waste irrespective of the impact of Brexit. He added that the DRS was likely to result in an additional supply of mixed plastics for sorting and the new facility would be well placed to accept this waste. He commented that local authority waste was anticipated to increase which underlined the validity of the proposal.

Andrew Pau (Strategy and Commissioning Manager, Waste & Environment) advised that an announcement in respect of the second round of the DRS consultation was expected soon and that a potential implementation date would become clearer as the initiative progressed.

## **5. Action on Climate Change**

Andrew Pau (Strategy and Commissioning Manager, Waste & Environment) presented a verbal report in respect of the declaration of a climate emergency by Warwickshire County Council (WCC) and the five District and Borough Councils, and the commitment to address climate change.

Andrew Pau reported that a cross party Task and Finish Group had been established with a focus on demonstrating how WCC will move towards carbon neutrality. He advised that a report would be presented to Cabinet on 30 January 2020.

The Chair commented that the effectiveness of the response from local authorities to the climate emergency was dependent upon the level of support offered by central government. She advised that a letter to Parliament had been produced to outline the Authority's requirements in respect of resources and changes to legislation; she encouraged partnership councils to act similarly.

In response to Councillor Kondakor, Councillor Norris explained that Warwick District Council had examined options in respect of electric refuse collection vehicles. He advised that a model was in

production which had attracted national interest from local authorities and that trials had indicated a positive outlook; however, concerns remained regarding the usability of the technology and the likely effect that a fully electric powered fleet would have on the national grid. In response to the Chair, Councillor Norris advised that insufficient data was available to determine if the electric collection vehicle would be suited to rural conditions. He commented that the vehicle required large amounts of power and any decision to convert to an electric fleet would require detailed planning.

Councillor Fradgley commented that hydrogen fuel cell technology was in development and could eventually offer a more sustainable alternative to electric power. She highlighted that this was a transitional phase and suggested that contracts with external providers be versatile to allow flexibility to adapt. Gary Charlton (Contract Services Manager, Warwick District Council) advised that a provider was unlikely to consent to a risk-free contract and that withdrawal from a contract could be expensive.

Councillor Norris agreed that hydrogen fuel cell technology offered a more environmentally friendly solution, however, he highlighted that the major fuel companies were now introducing charging points which suggested that electric power would become the mainstream alternative to fossil fuels for the foreseeable future.

## **6. Updates from Waste Partners**

Ruth Dixon (Waste Strategy and Commissioning Manager) provided an update in respect of the trial scheme proposed to be undertaken at Cherry Orchard Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) in Kenilworth to encourage sorting of recyclable from non-recyclable materials. She advised the scheme was due to commence in February 2020 and that a less busy time of year had been chosen to improve conditions for the trial. She explained that the principle of the initiative was to encourage users of the HWRC to pre-sort waste items in order to improve recycling rates and prevent loss of recyclable materials; a sorting space would be made available at the facility to encourage this practice.

Ruth Dixon reported that publicity material for the initiative had adopted the tagline “let’s sort it together” and that efforts had been made to emphasise the positive local benefits of the scheme. She advised that the project would be launched with a banner and ‘meet and greet’ representatives at the HWRC entrance; the facility would be well staffed to ensure smooth operation of the new arrangement. She explained that if the trial was a success it would be introduced in the County’s other HWRCs.

In response to Councillor Kondakor, Ruth Dixon advised that Leamington Spa Repair Café had been consulted alongside All Together Greener in Kenilworth. Andrew Pau (Strategy and Commissioning Manager, Waste & Environment) added that an objective of the scheme was to remove electrical items from the waste stream and if possible, to test items for resale by Age UK.

Dan Green (Head of Environment and Public Realm, Rugby Borough Council) observed that the range of materials identified as recyclable at the HWRC differs from that specified as recyclable for kerbside collection. He suggested that this distinction be emphasised in the promotional literature. Ruth Dixon indicated that a draft copy of the “let’s sort it together” leaflet would be made available and that input from Partners would be welcomed for improvements in future trials.

Ruth Dixon advised that the Warwickshire Waste Partnership Conference 2020 was scheduled for 11 March 2020 at Shire Hall, Warwick; the theme of the event would be waste and climate change. The Partnership was shown a draft programme for comment.

In response to Councillor Norris, the Chair advised that WCC's Climate Emergency Report had not yet been made available to the public, she was supportive of presenting a unified message across the six authorities but emphasised that the process initiated by the declaration of a climate emergency was still in its first phase. The Chair emphasised that the Conference was an opportunity for ideas sharing rather than decision making.

Craig Bourne (Contracts Manager (Streetscene), Stratford-on-Avon District Council) requested that consideration of the new Warwickshire Waste Partnership Strategy be included as an agenda item at the next meeting of the Partnership and at the Conference.

Councillor Norris advised that Warwick District Council had liaised with 14 potential waste contractors and received three tender responses with a view to renewing contracts from April 2021. He advised that options for electric vehicles had been considered.

Councillor Shenton emphasised the value of school visits to raise awareness of recycling and waste practices and suggested that a common approach across the County would present benefits. Councillor Bell commented that Mars Wrigley offered an educational programme to schools to discourage littering. She suggested that the Partnership could notify schools of this service. The Chair agreed that the subject merited attention and should be developed by the Waste Partnership at future meetings.

The Chair referred to work in progress to consider the cost of collecting and disposing of food waste and its impact on the environment. She commented that the current data was incomplete and showed some irregularities. She requested that further consideration be given by Partners to the longer-term outlook for arrangements for partnership working.

## **Action**

Ruth Dixon indicated that a draft copy of the "let's sort it together" leaflet would be circulated to Partners.

## **7. Any Urgent Items**

There were none.

## **8. Agenda Item Suggestions for Next Meeting**

Craig Bourne (Contracts Manager (Streetscene), Stratford-on-Avon District Council) requested that consideration of the new Warwickshire Waste Partnership Strategy be included as an agenda item at the next meeting and at the Conference.

## 9. Dates of Future Meetings

The Waste Partnership noted the dates of future meetings:

- 18 March 2020, 2.00pm, Shire Hall, Warwick
- 10 June 2020, 2.00pm, Shire Hall, Warwick
- 30 September 2020, 2.00pm, Shire Hall, Warwick
- 9 December 2020, 2.00pm, Shire Hall, Warwick
- 17 March 2021, 2.00pm, Shire Hall, Warwick

The meeting closed at 3.35pm

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Chair