

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
GMCA WASTE AND RECYCLING COMMITTEE  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21 APRIL 2021 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor Alan Quinn	Bury
Councillor Rabnawaz Akbar	Manchester
Councillor David Lancaster	Salford
Councillor Robin Garrido	Salford
Councillor Helen Foster Grime	Stockport
Councillor Alison Gwynne (Chair)	Tameside
Councillor Steve Adshead	Trafford

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

David Taylor	GMCA – Executive Director, Waste & Resources
Paul Morgan	GMCA – Waste & Resources
Justin Lomax	GMCA – Waste & Resources
Lindsey Keech	GMCA – Waste & Resources
Michelle Whitfield	GMCA – Waste & Resources
Michael Kelly	GMCA – Waste & Resources
Gwynne Williams	GMCA – Deputy Monitoring Officer
Nicola Ward	GMCA – Governance & Scrutiny

**WRC 21/14            APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received and noted from Councillors Yasmin Toor, Tom Besford and Adele Warren.

**WRC 21/15            CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no announcements or items of urgent business reported.

**WRC 21/16            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest reported by any Member in respect of any item on the agenda.

**WRC 21/17            MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2021**

## **RESOLVED/-**

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 13 January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

## **WRC 21/18                      CONTRACTS UPDATE**

Justin Lomax, Head of Contract Services, Waste and Resources Team introduced a report which provided an update on all contracts between the period of April-December 2020. Highlights from the report included –

- Current recycling rates were at 46% (same as 2019)
- Over 50,000 tonnes had been diverted away from landfill over this period, a 7% increase on last year.
- Rejection levels at the Materials Recovery Facility were c. 18% resulting in 6,500 tonnes being unable to be processed.
- 2 RIDDORS had been issued at Household Waste Recycling Centres since the last meeting, one was relating to failed hydraulics on a shovel and the other relating to a back injury as a result of moving a box of rubble. Both issues had been addressed and appropriate actions taken.
- Despite the covid closures, there had been 547,000 visits to HWRCs, with a significant peak in July 2020 following the first lockdown period. Footfall had now levelled and remained lower than numbers in 2019 and 2018.
- The van permit scheme was in the final stages of development with a soft launch planned for June and a formal launch in July 2021.
- The Environment Agency were consulting on the level of permissible plastic in compost, reducing from 5% to 0.5%. GM levels were c. 10% currently, so this may result in increased levels of rejections and processing costs.
- Carpet recycling now required an environment permit as it has been re-classified as waste. This may result in less opportunities to recycling via equestrian outlets.

Members noted the increased level of rejections and officers confirmed that levels of diligent checking and communications with the public had been increased.

In relation to the disposal of domestic plasterboard, Members questioned whether there would be further facilities put in place across Greater Manchester. Due to the waste type, plasterboard had to be processed separately and therefore there were only the facilities to receive this waste at weigh bridge locations currently. Officers confirmed that additional provision was being considered and any developments would be reported back to the Committee.

Members were concerned about the general increase in contamination of biowaste and urged for stronger enforcement and further education to be delivered. Officers relayed

the challenges as crews were only able to see what was on the top of the green bin and therefore often missed plastic bags, non-green garden waste, tools, plastics etc. Good practice from other local authorities was also being sought in relation to how to best educate the public regarding the impact of contamination.

Specifically, the issue of contaminated bins in shared flat facilities was raised and whether there were any plans to address this concern. Officers reported that best practice from London boroughs had been reviewed as they used a 'bin champion' arrangement where one resident was responsible to check the bins and communicate regularly with other residents. This could be an option for GM to pursue further, however it would require the support of the Local Authority and respective landlords. Members reported of cases where bin holes had been designed to only receive waste of one type had helped to minimise incidents of contamination.

It was considered that Covid-19 may have impacted contamination rates as families had been under significant pressures and recycling correctly may have slipped off their priority list as a result. Communications regarding previous campaigns had seen strong public support when delivering a simple, straightforward message that focussed on reward rather than sanction. In relation to contamination, Members suggested that an awareness campaign as to the cost saving to the council/tax/individual as a result of disposing correctly may be a good option to support behavioural change.

The change of classification for carpet waste was disappointing to the Committee, however, they were informed that although not of the same scale, sound insulation in car doors was another potential outlet.

In relation to the plant installation at Reliance Street, officers reported that the building was now in place and it was still on track to commence operation from August 2021. However, there had been a delay on the commissioning of works for the Raikes Lane site and a further update would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

#### **RESOLVED/-**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That further information on the increase of plasterboard disposal provision would be brought to the Committee in due course.
3. That it be noted that Michelle Whitfield would share some practical examples of good practice sharing directly with Cllr Lancaster.
4. That an update on the installation of the turbine at the Raikes Lane Facility would be provided at the next Waste & Recycling Committee meeting.

## **WRC 21/19 COMMUNICATIONS AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE PLAN UPDATE**

Michelle Whitfield, Head of Communications and Behavioural Change, GMCA Waste and Resources Team updated the Committee on the latest communication and engagement activities.

The National Food Waste Action Week had taken place at the beginning of March which had been a relevant and useful campaign and the social media response was positive, however the results were still awaited from WRAP.

The Education Team had been undertaking virtual sessions to support home schooling and community groups in their waste and recycling messaging. Feedback had been positive and there were some interesting lessons to have been learnt. The Education Centre was now undergoing a refit to ensure that it could be as interactive as possible as it begins to be used again.

There was an ongoing campaign in relation to the appropriate disposal of nappies, as often these were mistakenly put in the paper re-cycling bin and in support of this, Keep Britain Tidy had written to nappy manufacturers to identify further ways they could promote these key messages. There had been a particular targeted campaign undertaken with Tameside Council which was to be compiled into a case study from which further lessons could be learnt regarding future campaigns, however officers were well aware that behavioural change takes time, and the results of such campaigns may not be seen immediately. Members reported the initial difference that this campaign had made and welcomed the efforts of the Communications Team. Further to this, Members suggested that some specific communications regarding the disposal of nappies be included with information packs for new parents.

In addressing the wider issues regarding contamination of waste bins, there had been an increase of officers on the ground, with some Local Authorities employing additional officers to support residents to recycle correctly, especially with regards to paper waste. Further campaigns were planned post lockdown, including those with a focus on the correct disposal of mattresses and batteries. Members questioned as to the use of volunteers in promoting recycling activity, officers agreed to look into this option but reported that often local recruitment for short term paid work has been effective as they have had a greater understanding of the communities in which they live. Furthermore, Members suggested that a standard use of pictorial instructions for bin use would allow for a clear GM shared message to become easily recognisable and reduce incidents of confusion.

From June/July there would be extended opening hours for the recycle shops and a further communications campaign to raise awareness of what can be donated, and where items were to be sold.

The R4GM Fund was open for applications, and a Grants Manager had been recruited to help community groups to apply for funding. This opportunity had been actively promoted through the Greater Manchester networks.

In relation to social media coverage, the dashboard for January/February had indicated that interaction had dropped slightly since the new year. However, the vacant post for the Digital Communications Officer had not been recruited to, so further work in this area would be being developed. Members urged that this would be the perfect time to ramp up communications as post pandemic gave a fresh start for considering waste differently.

Members urged that the correct message that only plastic bottles can be recycled in Greater Manchester be further promoted, as current packaging was often incorrect in its labelling and this led to further confusion. Officers confirmed that Keep Britain Tidy were undertaking further work to reset the rules on accurate recycling guidance on packaging as they recognised that it was misleading to the consumer.

Those who chose not to recycle were recognised by the Committee as requiring a different approach to those who made mistakes with their recycling. Greater enforcement was called for to tackle those who repeatedly refuse to recycle as it had been proven that this was the most effective way to change behaviours. Officers agreed that different approaches were needed, and often tailored support had been proven to encourage people to recycle more.

It was considered that small general waste bins with insufficient room for larger families may result in them having to use their recycling bins for the incorrect waste. This had been raised previously with officers and it was anticipated that the new national guidelines may make a difference to the future size of general waste collections. However, it was also recognised that busy lives can often impact effective recycling and it was important to be flexible with bin provision to support the requirement of families with certain needs. This was reported to have been effective in Trafford, where families were able to request temporary additional facilities and in other incidents had shared bin space with their neighbours who needed less.

#### **RESOLVED/-**

1. That the progress against the communications and behavioural change plan be noted.
2. That the progress on the joint SUEZ and R4GM communications and engagement plan be noted.
3. That consideration be given to the use of a standardised pictorial messaging in relation to re-cycling bins across Greater Manchester.
4. That further consideration be given as to how best to promote the correct method of nappy disposal to new parents.

## **WRC 21/20 ENGLAND'S RESOURCE AND WASTE STRATEGY UPDATE**

Sarah Mellor, Head of Sustainable Consumption & Production GMCA took the Committee through a report which provided an update on recent Government consultations that relate to England's Resource and Waste Strategy.

Three inter-related policies had been recently published, including the Waste Prevention Programme, the Deposit Return Scheme and the Extended Producer Responsibility guidelines, however the outcomes of the Consistency Collections Consultation were still awaited.

Work was already underway with Local Authorities to determine Greater Manchester's forward position but the outcomes of the Consistency Collections Consultation were really important to determine future modelling.

Members reiterated their concerns regarding separate food waste collections in relation to the number of additional bins being required and other factors. It was reported that Government believed that separate collections would indicate a better standard of return, however any statutory guidance would be best practice and the implementation of such collections would be a local decision. In preparation, officers were undertaking relevant modelling to ensure that Greater Manchester's full quota of funding could be received so that there would be no additional cost to Local Authorities.

In relation to mandated fortnightly residual waste collections, Members were concerned that this would reduce recycling rates and have significant cost implications. Furthermore, three weekly collections were well established in many areas of Greater Manchester so this would potentially cause unnecessary confusion for residents. However, it was noted that collections, bin sizes and bin colours were not standard across GM and therefore it would be difficult in the current contractual arrangements to meet Government demands to standardise at this point.

Members felt that these were progressive documents and showed that Europe was forward thinking in relation to the recycling agenda, however they had to work for Greater Manchester and therefore needed to be agile where required. GM had well established collection patterns and could share its good practice with other areas, however, should also not be quick to introduce changes that would not be for the good of its residents.

The deposit return scheme was generally welcomed by Members, however it was questioned as to whether there would be any financial benefit for Greater Manchester from such a scheme. Officers reported that the financial model had been designed to be cost neutral at no further cost to GM, however there were various options for dealing with the waste that had to be taken out as it was not a 100% catcher scheme. Further details were to be considered and would be included in Greater Manchester's response to the consultation.

## **RESOLVED/-**

1. That the approach to responding to the second round of consultations on England's Resource and Waste Strategy be approved.
2. That the principles set out in the Waste Prevention, Extended Producer Responsibility and Deposit Return Scheme consultations be noted and authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Waste in consultation with the Chair of the Waste and Recycling Committee to approve the responses to the consultations which are required to be submitted in June 2021
3. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Waste in consultation with the Chair of the Waste and Recycling Committee to approve the response to the Consistent Collections consultation should this be issued prior to the next Waste and Recycling Committee meeting.

## **WRC 21/21            DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

### **RESOLVED/-**

That the GM Waste and Recycling Committee would next meet on the 14 July, and that those Members appointed to the committee for the forthcoming municipal year would be notified in due course.

## **WRC 21/22   EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

### **RESOLVED/-**

That, under section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, member of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that this involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as set out in paragraphs 3 & 5, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

## **WRC 21/23   CONTRACTS UPDATE**

### **RESOLVED/-**

That the contracts update, and key risks set out in the report be noted.