

Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on 3 November 2009 at 3.30pm in the Executive Meeting Room, The Guildhall.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting).

Present

Councillors Caroline Scott (Chair)
Mike Blake (from 3.37pm)
Margaret Foster
Jim Patey (until 4.57pm)

Officers

Paul Fielding, Strategic Waste Manager
Vincent Venus, Waste Collection Manager
Jasmine Fletcher, Principal Climate Change & Sustainability Co-ordinator.

41 Declarations of Interest (AI 1).

There were no declarations of interests.

42 Apologies for Absence (AI 2).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Fuller and Richard Jensen.

43 Minutes of Last Meeting (AI 3).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 24 September 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 1 September 2009, agreed as a correct record at the meeting held on 24 September 2009, be amended to provide further clarification as to why Councillor Jensen had not sent a letter to Colas. Page 21, para 4 be amended to read:

“The Chair noted that on the 7 August 2009, Councillor Jensen had drafted a letter to Colas about the length of time taken to paint the columns. However, it had not been necessary for this letter to be sent, as the works had been carried out by noon that day, 7 August 2009”

44 Portsmouth City Council’s recycling performance (AI 4).

The Chair welcomed the Strategic Waste Manager and the Waste Collection Manager, who gave an overview of Portsmouth City Council’s (PCC’s) current recycling performance.

The Waste Collection Manager outlined a number of statistics, giving the most recent achievements of the refuse and recycling service:

- For the second year running, PCC had the lowest recycling contamination rate in Hampshire, at 5%. In 2006 this figure had been 12%.
- 1,250 responses had been received to a waste survey that had recently been sent to 5,000 residents. This had shown a 98% satisfaction rate in the refuse service and an 89% satisfaction rate in kerbside recycling.
- A city-wide audit had been carried out in July 2009, which showed an 84.4% recycling participation rate. This was felt to be impressive, as recycling was not a mandatory scheme. However, 15.6% of Portsmouth residents still did not recycle.
- The missed refuse collection rate was 11 per 100,000 collections. This was one of the best figures in the UK. The recycling missed collection rate was around 25 collections per week, which still only represented a fraction of one percent.
- The rectification rate (rectification of customer concerns) was around 20 per week. This was from a total of around 145,000 collections per week.
- The current recycling rate was around 42%, including bottom ash recycling from the incinerator. Incinerator Bottom Ash (IBA) recycling counted towards the Local Area Agreement's (LAA's) targets, but at the present time could not count towards the government's national statistics.

The panel discussed a planning application that had recently been granted to allow the Veolia owned incinerator in Portsmouth to incinerate commercial waste, as well as waste from other local authorities.

It was explained that the incinerator was not working at maximum capacity, therefore it made sense to market the unused capacity for commercial use. This would generate additional income for PCC and Veolia.

Allowing other local authorities to use the cities incinerator would allow for flexibility, in the event of a mechanical breakdown at either of the two other Veolia owned incinerators in Hampshire. The Veolia owned incinerators in Marchwood and Alton were currently going through the same process.

It was felt that the adoption of this practice countywide would be of mutual benefit to all local authorities in Hampshire, as it would prevent waste from being transported long distances to be incinerated.

In response to a question, the panel was informed that Hampshire County Council were working hard to ensure that as many different materials as possible could be recycled. However, the German recycling model described, relied upon different bins for different materials. This would be difficult to implement in parts of Portsmouth, due to space constraints.

One option being explored was allowing mixed recyclables in the same bin, possibly including textiles. Textiles could be placed in a separate bag, supplied, for example, by the Salvation Army.

The Strategic Waste Manager reminded the panel of the fourteen recommendations included in the previous Scrutiny report, completed in September 2005. He updated the panel on the progress made against each recommendation.

1. The city council seek to exceed the government's targets to become a lead authority for recycling

Not taking into account the recycled IBA, the current recycling rate was 25%. It was felt unlikely that this figure would rise, without policy changes. However, unlike some other authorities, this figure did not include garden waste recycling. Eastleigh, for example, had a recycling rate of 42%. However, 10% of this was attributed to garden waste.

PCC had adopted a home composting solution, as this was felt to be a more sustainable and cost efficient solution for garden waste.

2. The crucial role played by Waste Liason Officers (WLO's) be recognised and that the city council investigate how the funding for these positions could be provided in the future

The WLO's were now permanent and their vital work was acknowledged. The low recycling contamination rate explained previously, was due in part to the work of the WLO's.

3. Promotion of all the recycling facilities available in the city be increased

A double page spread had appeared in the 'Flagship' magazine, broadcasts had been made on local radio stations and the 'Green Grotto' had raised awareness and given advice on recycling to families over the Christmas period. The 'Green Grotto' had been featured in two national magazines, various local media and nominated for awards.

4. Staff be encouraged to make full use of the range of recycling facilities throughout council buildings

The panel was informed that the waste system had been changed. Individual waste bins had been removed and central waste/recycling points had been created throughout the Civic Offices. The recycling rate in the Civic Offices had subsequently increased from 60% to nearly 75%. It was acknowledged that not all council owned buildings recycled this efficiently, but the Panel was reassured that this situation was hoped to be addressed during the next 6 to 12 months.

5. Recycling facilities be provided at council run events in the city

Water bottles had been collected following the 2007 Great South Run, but it was recognised that improvements could be made. The difficulty was determining who was responsible for collection. This matter was being looked into and officers were confident that improved arrangements would be implemented before the next Great South Run.

The panel discussed the merits of placing the onus for waste and recycling collection on the event organisers. This would have benefits by clarifying who was responsible for tidying up, but could lead to event organisers taking events away from the city, due to the extra costs that would be incurred.

6. The city council seek to minimise the amount of household residual waste. Minimising waste was very hard to do, but the council had promoted a number of schemes, including 'love food hate waste' and 'the waste less challenge'.
7. The city council investigate the practicalities of making kerbside recycling mandatory and a programme of measures to encourage all householders to participate
Mandatory kerbside collection was possible and a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) could be issued to repeat offenders. It was stressed that an FPN would be issued as a last resort, to those who could recycle, but chose not to. In the recent waste and recycling survey, 75% of respondents supported mandatory recycling.

The panel discussed the location of bottle banks, which in some instances were not conveniently placed for residents to use. This resulted in some residents disposing of glass in their household waste. The Waste Collection Manager informed the Panel that a meeting of the Environment Panel was being held the following day, which would consider the proposal for mixed glass recycling banks. Currently separate bottle banks had to be sited together because the different glass colours had to be kept separate. This required a large site on which to place the banks.

This system had been adopted because glass that was separated by colour was more valuable. However, smaller, mixed colour bottle banks would occupy less space, allowing them to be sited in more locations. This would be more convenient for residents because the number of bottle bank sites would be increased and residents would be able to deposit all of their different coloured glass bottles in the same bottle bank.

It was predicted that the loss of revenue, due to the lower value of the mixed glass, would be offset by the increased quantity of glass recycled.

8. The city council demonstrate its commitment to raising recycling levels by offering a kerbside collection of recyclable materials to all Portsmouth residents, regardless of what type of property they live in.
The Household Waste Recycling Act had set a target that all properties have access to recycling facilities by 2010. Currently 99% of properties in the city have access to recycling facilities, but the panel was informed that achieving the target of all properties would be difficult. If required, it was hoped that government funding would be made available to help the city achieve 100%.

9. A glass kerbside collection service be introduced at the earliest opportunity.
This scheme would cost in the region of £400k per annum, with an initial start up cost of around £250k. Many houses in the city had no front garden, therefore the practicalities, and safety, of recycling boxes containing glass being left on pavements was questioned.
10. The potential for alternate weekly collections be explored
This had been deemed politically unacceptable, therefore had not been taken forward. However, it was important that the ability for alternate weekly collections be built into any future contract, because the government may force alternate weekly collections upon all local authorities in the future. If the council's contract with the waste collection contractor did not have this flexibility, amending the contract to accommodate alternate weekly collections would cause the council considerable expense. The panel was reminded that any non-legislative change to this policy would only be possible with the agreement of City Council Members.
11. An appropriate infrastructure to increase the diversion of green garden waste for recycling be introduced at the earliest opportunity
This had been investigated and the matter considered by the Environment Portfolio Holder. The introduction of a city wide composting scheme would cost around £150k per annum to run and it had been agreed that the current system would remain in place until the contract was renewed in 2011. The possibility of wards in the north of the city having garden waste collected by Havant Borough Council was also being explored. Havant Borough Council already had a garden waste collection scheme in operation and the collection lorries already drove through the north of the city, en-route to the composting facility in Fareham.
12. The council continue to address the extraction process of recyclables from the residual waste stream in line with new developments in technology
After incineration, approximately 30% of the material remains as a solid (IBA). Until 2008, this went into landfill, but it is now turned into aggregate and has many uses, such as in the construction of roads. Metals are also reclaimed from the incinerator and recycled.
13. A progress update on recycling in schools be given to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Children and Families every six months.
Schools had the opportunity to implement the same separate waste and recycling collections as the council, but not all schools had participated. Textile recycling via the Salvation Army had also been offered, but only one third of schools had taken up the scheme. The panel expressed surprise at this, because the Salvation Army recycling bins cost the school nothing, but would earn them £100 per tonne of textiles collected.
14. The city council seek partnerships to increase the opportunities for recycling in the city
The new waste collection contract was being explored, along with:

- commercial waste collection;
- collaborative work with Portsmouth University; and
- the 'Freecycle' initiative.

Conclusions of the Panel

The Chair thanked the officers for their time and the thorough overview that they had given on recycling.

The panel was pleased with the progress made against the recommendations of the 2005 scrutiny review 'Effectiveness of recycling and recycling initiatives' and

RESOLVED that: An in depth review into Portsmouth city council's recycling performance was not necessary at this time.

Councillor Jim Patey left the meeting at 4.57pm

45 Work Programme (AI 5)

The Chairman enquired as to the status of the panel's review on cycle lanes in the city. It was agreed that this would be reported at the next meeting.

46 Date of Next Meeting (AI 6)

The date of the next meeting is scheduled for 3pm on Friday 27 November 2009.

The meeting closed at 5.11pm.