

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF WASTE MANAGEMENT TASK & FINISH PANEL
HELD ON TUESDAY, 20 AUGUST 2019
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.10 PM**

Members Present:	L Burrows (Chairman), S Rackham (Vice-Chairman), C McCredie, R Morgan, M Sartin, J H Whitehouse and D Wixley
Other members present:	N Avey
Apologies for Absence:	S Neville and C C Pond
Officers Present	Q Durrani (Service Director (Contracts & Technical Services)), J Warwick (Service Manager (Contracts)) and V Messenger (Democratic Services Officer)

1. CHAIRMAN & VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had appointed Councillor L Burrows as Chairman and Councillor S Rackham as the Vice-Chairman of the Panel.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel noted its following Terms of Reference, which had been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 16 July 2019:

- (1) That the Panel consider the likely impact of any government decision following the recently concluded Resource and Waste Strategy Consultation;
- (2) That the Panel consider:
 - (a) the possibility of exploring the introduction of a third wheeled-bin to replace the current clear recycling sacks for the collection of dry recycling materials;
 - (b) the future collection of food and garden waste in separate containers and the option of charging for the collection of garden waste;
 - (c) the possibility of not collecting garden waste in certain months of the year when demand was low;
 - (d) the pressure on the waste collection contract due to the issues around the sale of recycling materials after processing;
 - (e) a review of street cleansing arrangements with a view to achieve improvements in cleansing standards;
 - (f) improvements in the provision of waste and recycling containers and cleansing operations on the high street, including the segregation of recycling materials; and

- (g) other relevant matters related to the review of the Council's waste and recycling service.

Aims and Objectives:

- (1) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to submit final recommendations for consideration by the Committee at its meeting on 28 January 2020;
- (2) To gather evidence and information in relation to the Terms of Reference through receipt of data, presentations and other means considered necessary; and
- (3) To have due regard to relevant legislation and the Overview and Scrutiny rules of the Constitution (Article 6).

3. WASTE MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The Service Director (Contracts and Technical Services), Q Durrani, and Service Manager (Contracts), J Warwick, were in attendance.

The establishment of a new Task and Finish Panel to support the forthcoming review of the Council's waste and recycling service, had been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 June 2019. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed the Panel's Terms of Reference, work programme and the committee membership on 16 July 2019.

(a) Resource and waste strategy consultation

Following public consultations of the Government's Resource and Waste strategy that had looked at how the industry worked and its waste management, the Panel was asked to consider the likely impact of any Government decision. The Council had responded to the consultations in May 2019, which had been published in the Council Bulletin. However, a change in leadership to the Prime Minister might delay the results of the consultations and the latest Government update was looking to implement recommendations by 2023.

It was agreed:

- (1) That the recommendation be noted there would be no further action on this until the Government published the results of the consultations;**
- (2) That Waste Management would circulate updates to the Panel; and**
- (3) That one such update had already been circulated.**

(b) Third wheelie bin option

The introduction of a third wheelie bin to replace the clear recycling sacks for the collection of dry recyclable materials raised several issues amongst the members. These included:

- That more sacks could be put out for collection than could be accommodated within the capacity of a wheelie bin;
- That flexibility was required as many houses might not have the room for an extra bin;
- That new properties usually only had storage spaces allocated for two bins therefore, it was not practical to increase it to three wheelie bins;
- That there was an increasing trend of youngsters setting fire to wheelie bins;
- That the Council could consider involving residents in a consultation rather than for this to be a 'fait accompli';
- That residents would actually have five bins – food, glass, recycling, garden waste and residual;
- That Epping Forest Re-Use regularly held campaigns and met with Essex Recycling officers; and
- That some wheelie bins had containers inside the bin to enable the separation of waste.

Q Durrani explained that data had suggested that local authorities (LAs) who used bins collected more recycling. Most of the top twenty LAs nationally all had a wheelie bin. Bins were convenient, easy to use and within the property. However, there was a convenient side, inconvenient side (sacks could split and the contents blown/scattered across the road), and cost side (continual cost of the sacks).

Waste Management would be looking at the evidence, workability and business case to give the Panel the cost implications and parameters on the option of a third wheelie bin. If members agreed on the business case, which would be provided at the next meeting, this would go to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, then on to Cabinet. He reminded the Panel that it was not just about the costs involved but also about recycling percentages. This was the start of the process to explore what the options were, as any implementation would require proper consultation, policies would be needed and costings.

The Panel agreed and noted:

- (1) The option to investigate further the introduction of a wheelie bin for dry recycling material; and**
 - (2) That a business case be developed.**
- (c) Separate collections of food and garden waste and the option of charging for the collection of garden waste**

Currently garden waste was collected all year round and was mixed with food waste, which was both costly as the larger 'freighter' refuse trucks were used on the collection rounds. Therefore, fuel costs, carbon emission levels and HGV driver costs were all higher.

Other LAs were already charging for garden waste collections, while in other areas following public consultation, charging had been proposed but not implemented. This Council had previously charged for this service but then reverted back to a free service on several occasions. However, as the Government had consulted on this recently but not published any results or further guidance, it would be prudent to wait.

Panel members raised the following points:

- “The collection of garden waste was not required all year round” was not considered to be accurate as many residents did work all year round in their gardens;
- As the weather was unpredictable and there was already enough fly-tipping within the District, there was general support to keep an all year garden waste service;
- Do not change and do not separate waste;
- Do not collect green waste in December, January or February;
- Collect green waste fortnightly during the winter months; and
- Why change, as waste could be composted.

Q Durrani said that there would be a kerbside caddy for food, but the majority of residents would not need a weekly garden waste collection. The current waste contract had been structured to pick up the green bin every week. Therefore, it would be useful to explore weekly collections of the kerbside caddy for food waste but with the option of one, two, or three weekly garden waste collections. The Council would not be paying for larger costs and pollution levels would be reduced if the freighters were not used. Although garden waste should be composted, the Council had not taken this view. Therefore, the Waste Management team would look at the evidence, what was right for the District and would explore having fewer collections during the winter or a chargeable service.

The Panel was mindful of charging as this would not be popular with residents. Other comments raised by members included the following:

- Food caddies held comparatively little food waste, when some families could fill a caddy in a day; and
- Composting should be encouraged and that even woollen clothing was compostable.

The Panel agreed and noted the recommendation:

- (1) That Waste Management investigate the separate collection of food and garden waste with costs;**
- (2) That the resource and service implications be ascertained; and**
- (3) That the charging of garden waste be postponed until the outcome of the Government’s Waste Strategy consultations was known.**

(d) Reducing collections of garden waste in certain months

It was noted that some LAs only collected garden waste between April and September (inclusive). However, the Council could reduce the cost of this service, if garden waste was separated from food waste, which would mean that residents would have to keep their food waste separate from their garden waste. The Council had previously operated a part year garden waste collection service but this had changed when food and garden waste were collected together throughout the year.

If garden waste was not required weekly year-round, members suggested that garden waste collections for three months of the year could be reduced to once a month during the winter.

The recommendation that the collection of garden waste in certain months of the year should be implemented, if the Council decided to separate food and garden waste was agreed and noted.

(e) Waste collection contract and sale of recycling materials after processing

There was pressure on the Council's waste collection contract with the loss of the China market for recycled materials, unless contamination was under five per cent. The Council had agreed to make additional payments to Biffa to help improve the quality of the recycled material and its sale thereafter. However, this had been compounded by the lack of infrastructure and manufacturing in the UK to use recycled materials. Consequently, this had led to a surplus of recycling material owing to the lack of market availability. A downward trend in this market would put further pressure on the waste contract.

Councillor M Sartin asked about a visit she had attended with Council officers some years ago to a company that recycled plastic bottles and produced another type of plastic. Q Durrani remembered the visit but explained that the problem had arisen because of the UK's previous over dependency on overseas markets to take most forms of recycled waste rather than develop its own plants to recycle materials. This was a national issue but would result in the UK getting better in the reprocessing market. There were options for kerbside collections to be sorted or for refuse trucks to have multiple compartments and recyclable waste to be sorted by crews as they were collected to give pristine quality material. Biffa was still able to obtain good quality recycling and although the pressure was on, the Council was in a better situation than other LAs.

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked about the potential contamination from unwashed items and suggested having more education campaigns for residents. Q Durrani replied that Biffa could refuse a load. Each freighter's load would be inspected but if the contamination was high enough, the whole load could be rejected and sent to landfill. This would result in additional costs being incurred by the Council for the waste to be reloaded back onto the freighter and transported to a landfill waste depot. He acknowledged more publicity could be carried out as keen recyclers would try and find out information themselves. The Council did have a contamination policy as Biffa used stickers to alert residents that their bin was contaminated and to contact the Council. It also used bin hangers to provide residents with information on disposing of their waste correctly. However, further publicity to residents on how to recycle and dispose of their waste would be included in this review.

Councillor C McCredie commented on a recycling bin for crisp packets that she had seen in the café at Chelmsford Police HQ. There was information on a crisp packet recycling scheme on the Walkers Crisps UK website.

Councillor R Morgan asked if income was received on all the different types of recyclable waste streams e.g. paper, plastic, glass and compost. Q Durrani replied, yes, except compost income that went to Essex County Council instead. The Council received a share of the recycling income from Biffa. In addition, residual waste was taken to an Essex-wide depot in Basildon, which had a recycling section where more

waste was recovered and made into a reusable biomass product. However, it was more productive and valuable for the Council if waste was recycled initially.

Councillor D Wixley asked if more publicity could be put out about polystyrene that this was not recyclable. He also reported that Marks and Spencer (retailer) recycled crisp packets as well as black plastic containers. He said that as the banks of the River Thames were being eroded, landfill waste deposited years ago was now being revealed. He also asked about how much capacity for landfill was left.

Councillor N Avey, Portfolio Holder (Contracts & Technical Services), said that at the last Waste Management Partnership Board meeting, Biffa had extended an invitation to the Panel members to tour its Edmonton Material Recycling Facility (MRF). He suggested this be taken up as it would give members an idea of what was involved in the processing of recycled waste. There was also a meeting room on site which might be available to accommodate a Panel meeting after the tour.

Councillor J H Whitehouse remarked that charity collection bags had to be disposed of in residual waste.

It was agreed:

- (1) That the recommendation be noted that the Panel would be informed of any changes to the recycling market, and of any financial implications to the waste collection contract;**
- (2) That further publicity campaigns to help residents achieve better recycling and disposal of their waste would be included in this review; and**
- (3) That the Panel accepted an invitation to tour the Biffa Edmonton MRF. D Marsh would arrange this for November 2019.**

(f) Review of street cleansing arrangements

Although Epping Forest District did not suffer from exceptionally high detritus compared to neighbouring authority areas, complaints received from the public concerned litter thrown by the occupants of vehicles particularly on through roads, and litter dropped by people including on walking routes to schools. Litter bin installations along these walking routes had helped significantly. Therefore, the Council would be creating litter pick routes on major through roads in the District but reduce full cleansing in residential roads to every other cleanse. This reduction in service would then create the capacity to allow the Council to reallocate resources to introduce weekly litter picks on certain roads identified as having the most litter. The Cleaner Essex Group would be launching a new campaign that would be starting this September and would focus on littering from vehicles.

The Panel commented on:

- Whether special bins at traffic lights would be successful as there was the concern these might be set alight;
- If fixed penalty notices (FPNs) were issued for littering offences;
- The number of Environment and Neighbourhood (EN) officers employed by the Council; and
- Whether the closure of some waste recycling facilities had led to more fly-tipping.

Q Durrani replied that the EN officers were trained and worked closely with the Waste Management team. They could issue enforcement notices and/or take fly-tippers to court. In addition, dash cam footage from officers and the public could be used as evidence. Littering was monitored as part of a key performance indicator. Regarding the number of EN officers, he would let the Panel know. As the waste recycling facilities were run by Essex County Council, it was difficult to prove if the closure of sites had led to an increase in fly-tipping and it was therefore unlikely that a facility would be re-opened as the authority was trying to reduce waste. A lot of the fly-tipping was coming from London but any commercial waste should be disposed of correctly.

The Panel agreed with the recommendation and noted:

- (1) That a business case would be developed on the proposed changes to the street cleansing arrangements to enable improvements in cleansing standards to be finalised;**
 - (2) That officers would explore the option for enforcement and improvements in signage in greater detail; and**
 - (2) That Q Durrani would apprise the Panel of the number of EN officers employed by the Council.**
- (g) Improvements in the provision of waste and recycling containers, including the segregation of recycling materials, and cleansing operations on the high street**

Biffa had recently run a limited recycling operation in the District's high streets by creating separate compartments in its vehicles for the street cleansing crews to sort recyclable materials. Further incentives to encourage the public to dispose of their waste correctly would be to use litter bins that had a 50/50 waste/recycling split or even a 70/40 waste/recycling split. This would mean that the current 'themed' litter bins would over time be replaced with recycling litter bins. Therefore, it was recommended that the financial and resource implications to implement these changes were assessed.

The recommendation that a business case be developed was agreed and noted.

(h) Other relevant matters related to the waste and recycling service review

The potential to charge residents for a replacement bin was raised at the last meeting of the Waste Management Partnership Board. Although the Council could introduce a charge for wheelie bins or replacement bins, this was likely to be unpopular with residents but many other LAs had already taken this route. The Council spent thousands of pounds on replacement bins each year so there was a potential business case to look at ways to make savings. Bins could be damaged by residents or the contractor through wear and tear, through damage by the refuse truck lifting system, lids or hinges could break, resident misuse/neglect (e.g. used for hot ashes), or bins could be used for storage purposes. Biffa would try and repair bins first. It was currently a free service, which included the cost of buying and delivering new/replacement bins. Potential savings could include the first bin was free but replacements were chargeable, or replaced every 5/10 years.

Members of the Panel pointed out that bins did get stolen and had also been vandalised or set on fire. It would not be fair on a resident to have to pay for a replacement bin in these cases.

The recommendation was agreed and noted:

- (1) That no further action would be taken at the moment until the outcome of the Government's consultation on waste and recycling was known; and**
- (2) That the Government might legislate on this, or could impose a tax or minimum charge.**

(i) Deposit refund scheme

The Government had consulted on a deposit refund scheme (DRS). The DRS placed the onus on consumers to get a refund back on their purchased containers once they were empty. The collected containers would then be recycled. The introduction of a DRS might mean the Council could lose some of its current income because it would not have the capacity to compete against commercial companies running such schemes, as the equipment was costly to purchase or supplied by a contractor.

- (1) The recommendation not to pursue the introduction of a DRS further was agreed and noted; and**
- (2) That no further action would be taken at this stage until guidance had been published by the Government.**

(j) Litter-picking

Most litter-picking events were organised for volunteers on a local basis through the local councils. The Council and Biffa supported these events by collecting the waste afterwards and the Waste Management team would provide the necessary equipment and supplies. As these volunteer litter-picks were co-ordinated through local councils, there were no health and safety implications for the Council. The Panel had been asked to review the current guidelines by the Waste Management Partnership Board.

The Panel queried the health and safety implications aspect. Q Durrani explained that if the Council or Biffa were involved in litter-picking, public liability insurance would be required to provide necessary cover should an accident occur. Therefore, it was recommended that the guidance to help local councils organise these volunteer events, e.g. to produce a risk assessment, to obtain the equipment etc, was reviewed.

Panel members commented that their local councils had organised such events over the years and asked that the guidance be reviewed by officers to enable local councils to use as a good practice guide and help in a positive way.

It was agreed that the Waste Management team would review and circulate the guidance to all local councils.

4. WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

The work programme was noted.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor S Rackham suggested members could undertake their own relevant internet research.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETING

It was noted that future meetings of the Panel would be held at 7.00pm on:

- 11 November 2019; and
- 16 December 2019.

However, as a Harlow and Gilston Garden Town meeting was also being held on 11 November, members asked for an alternative date in November for the next meeting.