

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 8 March 2022 at 6.00 pm in Telford Room, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

Present: Councillors M Boylan, T L B Janke and T J Nelson.

In Attendance: D Germany (Service Delivery Manager: Waste & Neighbourhood Services Performance), K Robinson (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)), D Sargeant (Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services)

Apologies: Councillors G H Cook, G L Offland and G C W Reynolds

ENVSC42 Declarations of Interest

Due to the absence of the Chair, prior to the beginning of this item Members elected a temporary Chair for the meeting.

Councillor Boylan was proposed as the interim Chair. Upon being put to a vote it was:

RESOLVED that – Councillor Mark Boylan act as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

ENVSC43 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that – the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

ENVSC44 Waste Update & Recycling Improvement Report

The Service Delivery Manager: Waste & Neighbourhood Services Performance presented the report of the Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services.

The presentation was an update on household waste and recycling in the Borough. The overall picture was one of improvement, with the Borough's recycling rate improving against a backdrop of a national decline; Telford and Wrekin had a recycling rate of 48.2%, 4.4% higher than the England average. It was thought that this could, in part, be explained by the authority's decision to maintain all collections throughout the pandemic when many others suspended services or diverted resources. In addition to this, the Borough was among the first to reopen Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) after their initial Covid-19 enforced closure.

Despite the positive picture presented, the Council continually strived to improve, a fact written into Veolia's contract, with the waste contractor obligated to provide year-on-year improvements in terms of carbon reduction.

The contract with Veolia had begun in April 2014 and there had been significant capital investment in the time since. Examples included investing in easy-use recycling containers, a new vehicle fleet with improved IT, and a new waste transfer station. These investments had allowed the Council to improve in terms of its environmental impact, with bins improving recycling performance, new vehicle IT allowing smarter routing, and the waste transfer station allowing bulking of waste to reduce the number of waste shipments out of the Borough.

Members heard a number of statistics relating to the performance of the Council's household waste collection service.

- Any missed bins in collection rounds were collected the same day – in 2020 – 2021, just 0.06% were not collected on the stated collection day.
- New container requests were fulfilled within 5 working days in 99.96% of cases in 2020 – 2021
- In the three yearly satisfaction survey, undertaken in 2020, 92% of respondents were satisfied with waste services.

The Veolia contract included benefit requirements of £25,000 per year, £15,000 of this had gone to 'Envirogrant' community projects such as Telford Repair Café and Friends Of groups. The remainder had gone to other groups and initiatives, such as Job Box. A total of £200,000 had been allocated to 175 projects.

There was also added value in terms of communications and engagement activities. Veolia had run 33 school education workshops, for example, as well as an online programme, and providing 900 activity sheets through community hubs and breakfast schemes.

A number of actions that had been delivered were noted for Members:

- Increased recycling;
- Diversion of more waste from landfill;
- Efficient collection rounds, utilising routing and IT;
- Investment in energy efficient plant and vehicles;
- A new weighbridge at Hortonwood HRC; and
- More sustainable procurement.

Planned actions were also listed:

- Continued recycling rate improvement;
- Encouraging reuse;
- Food waste campaigns; and
- New recycling vehicles.

Following the presentation from officers there was a discussion, with Members posing a number of questions:

There was a 10% difference between the England statistics and the Council's, how was Telford performing so far above the average?

There was a combination of reasons for this; some local authorities did not push recycling with different types of collection systems with some not providing as much of a recycling service, including some authorities not yet offering food collection, and other authorities charging for green collections. All of these had an impact on recycling performance. Telford & Wrekin had aimed to make recycling as easy as possible.

How were recycling and residual waste compared? Was it weight based?

All waste was measured and compared based on tonnage. Food was very heavy, if people could be encouraged to recycle it then that was considered a big win for recycling tonnage.

Did the Council know what was going into residual waste that could be recycled?

Broad analysis was undertaken and food and other recyclates remained in the residual waste. There would always be some residual waste, which would also include coat hangers, plant pots, and packaging, for example.

In terms of benchmarking, which authorities was the Council comparing itself against? Where performed particularly well?

All councils were required to report to DEFRA quarterly and there was a league table – though there was a lag in reporting and the release of final information. There were differences between local authority areas e.g some were more green than others and some had different collection systems. For this reason, councils were put into groups by APSE with other comparable local authorities.

Residents could be motivated with positive encouragement, not just negative, what could the Council do?

The Council had offered a prize pot in the past whereby operatives nominated households and they were then put into a prize pot. This was done by spot-checking.

How much food waste, once composted, was sold in the local area?

Methane created from food waste in the Borough was sold back to the grid and the remainder was sold to farms as high-grade fertiliser. The Council's food waste was taken to a Severn Trent facility at Kinver. It was agreed that the data would be requested and then shared with Members.

Members noted the importance of engagement with residents, particularly young people, and were keen to offer some form of reward to those residents who recycled well as a form of encouragement.

The Committee also discussed the need to facilitate recycling, noting the difficulty of using the Borough's two HRCs for people without access to a vehicle. It was suggested that some form of decentralisation might aid this.

Following the discussion it was **RESOLVED** that –

- i) **the Environment Committee acknowledge performance to date to increase recycling and reduce carbon impact as outlined in this report and summarised in Appendix 1**
- ii) **the Environment Committee consider the proposals set out in Appendix 2 to continue to promote and engage residents to recycle as much as possible and offer any interventions that could be taken into account going forward.**
- iii) **the Environment Committee consider the proposals set out in Appendix 2 to continue reduce carbon impact through operational activities and offer any interventions that could be taken into account going forward.**

ENVSC45 Chair's Update

None.

The meeting ended at 7.17 pm

Chairman:

Date: Date Not Specified