

		AGENDA ITEM 7
		PSEG/13/15
Committee:	Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	23 July 2015	
JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, AND VISIT TO TOVI ECO PARK, BASILDON		
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On 25 June 2015 the Committee's activity day comprised a visit to the new Waste Facility at Tovi Eco Park, Basildon, and a series of briefings to update its membership on matters relating to the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex. Councillors Keith Bobbin, Graham Butland, Tony Hedley, David Kendall, Chris Pond, Stephen Robinson, Kay Twitchen, Simon Walsh and Andy Wood attended on the day.

The purpose of the visit was to provide an opportunity for Committee Members to learn about the current position on the disposal and collection of household waste in Essex, and various influences upon the Waste Strategy in the longer term. The facility visited at Tovi Eco Park (also known as Courtauld Road) is a Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facility for residual waste and, although not fully commissioned as yet, it provided an insight into the key role it will perform in Essex.

Peter Kelsbie, Director for Commissioning: Waste and Environment, and Jason Searles, Head of Commissioning Sustainable Essex Integration and Waste were in attendance to brief the Committee.

In summary the briefings covered the following matters:

- **Overview of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) for Essex**

For many years the accepted method for the disposal of residual waste has been into open landfill sites. However, changes in both the UK and EU legislation mean that landfill is no longer a preferred or viable method.

The themes running through the JMWMS include:

- Reduce the amount of waste produced and re-use more;
- High levels of recycling (aspiration of 60% by 2020);
- Favouring composting technologies for source segregated biowaste;
- MBT for residual waste.

Local and national campaigns have supported Essex to become one of the highest performing counties for recycling. Over half of all waste is separated for recycling by households for kerbside collections or via recycling centre activity. However, attention was also drawn to the importance of waste minimisation where the county has a much poorer record in comparison with other areas of the country.

The Committee sought information on what work was taking place to understand waste recycling and minimisation in terms of the actions of Essex residents. While campaigns are successful in the short run in raising public awareness, an underlying problem is how to change people behaviour in the longer term. Furthermore Essex is a large two tier county and the makeup of household waste will be affected by the type of housing, economic growth, and social make up in different parts of its area. There are eleven Waste Collection Authorities that are party to the Waste Strategy (Colchester has not adopted the Essex Strategy), each one operating a different service. In practice this means that the variation in kerbside collections and recycling facilities do make it difficult to run a standard co-ordinated campaign across Essex as a whole to encourage greater resident participation. Research is being undertaken to contribute to a better understanding of behaviour countywide, and in doing so will assist in identifying solutions to encourage greater participation in waste minimisation.

Nonetheless Essex County Council is the fifth largest Waste Disposal Authority in the country and in response to councillors' questions it was confirmed that there are difficulties in managing and co-ordinating the overall system, because of the large number of contracts (around 60) that the Waste Collection Authorities have in place. However, some Districts are moving towards combined contracts for some recyclables in order to achieve economies of scale.

- **Residual Waste**

Centralised treatment of residual waste

The Essex Waste Partnership undertook a major procurement, supported by DEFRA and £100m of PFI funding, to deliver the new residual waste treatment facility at Tovi Eco Park. The facility is capable of removing valuable recyclable materials from household 'black bag' waste and then rendering the remains biologically stable. These remains can be landfilled without fear of generating harmful greenhouse gases, but can be more cheaply and productively used by energy facilities to generate heat and electricity.

Recyclables extracted at the plant will belong to the Contractor, and the Solid Recovered Fuel (SRF) produced from the residual waste will belong to the Essex Waste Partnership. The plant has been designed in a way that enables flexibility in its operation as it is recognised that over its lifespan there will be variation in the recyclables collected as markets change; the composition of the waste processed will also change; and ultimately the technologies used are still evolving.

The Committee was provided with an overview of the treatment facility both by way of a powerpoint presentation, and being on site Members were able to take advantage of viewing opportunities that exist to see some of the processes in operation.

The facility is currently in its commissioning stage, which includes an “acceptance test”. Waste deliveries commenced on 26 November 2014, and commissioning is expected to last up to 18 months duration (with a longstop date of January 2017). During that period there are no guarantees on performance, but there is a reduced commissioning gate-fee. Plant efficiency tuning has required the manufacture and installation of additional kit (at the Operator’s expense). At present the facility is processing all waste from Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford, Brentwood and Chelmsford (about 45% of Essex’s residual waste), and eventually all waste from across Essex and Southend will be delivered to the facility.

Solid Recovered Fuel (SRF)

The following extracts are taken from the Strategy:

- *“Essex authorities will explore the option of producing SRF from the MBT process and recovering energy from it.”*
- *“Markets for SRF are being explored with current energy users, although there is an option for Essex to build its own energy facility if required.”*
- *“The partnership of Essex authorities will promote the most financially advantageous approach to managing the outputs”.*

Strong public support was given for the use of SRF as a fuel in an energy recovery process in preference to disposal to landfill was recorded in the lead up to the adoption of the JMWMS. Work undertaken by the Essex Waste Partnership identified that 88% of public respondents would *“prefer it if part of the material from the MBT process was used to produce a fuel for energy rather than being sent to a landfill site.”*

The treatment facility will generate round 200,000 tonnes per annum of a waste-derived SRF. In the short term, arrangements during the MBT plant commissioning period and initial operation are in place to off-take the material to facilities on the near continent. As part of the Waste Strategy Programme various options for the productive use of the SRF produced are being analysed and an Outline Business Case will be presented to the Cabinet for approval in late summer 2015. Options under consideration include:

- Landfilling the SRF;
- Procuring a contract for the provision of a service for disposal of SRF by way of merchant facilities considering:
 - 5 year, short-term cyclical contracts
 - 10 year, medium term arrangements, with another re-procurement during the MBT’s contract life
 - 25 year contract - to align with the MBT’s contract life
- Procuring a contract for the development of a new, purpose-built facility for the treatment of the SRF.

Ultimately the choice of options/ contracts will be influenced by the consistency of the quality and quantity of the SRF produced at the Plant, which will become clearer over the commissioning period.

At present SRF is still classified as waste and there are costs attached to its disposal, albeit those costs are significantly less than landfilling the material. However, in Europe there is movement towards SRF having zero costs attached in the future.

During discussion various examples of the way that SRF may be used were explained, including its use as a heating source eg in Sweden for the local community, albeit the differences in the infrastructure in the UK may make such use more difficult to achieve.

- **Long Term Treatment of Bio Waste**

In January 2015 the Cabinet approved the award of a contract to Material Change Limited for the long term treatment of bio waste. It is based on a two site solution:

- Anaerobic Digestion (AD) facility – Halstead
- Combined Dry AD facility and In-Vessel Composting (IVC) facility at Courtauld Road, Basildon adjacent to the Tovi Eco Park.

Final due diligence is underway on the contract, and its sign-off is expected in November 2015.

It is intended that a planning application will be submitted for the Courtauld Road facility in early 2016, with its construction starting in July 2016, and its commissioning in December 2016.

Recycling Centres – Creating a Long Term Vision

The contract for the operation of the Essex County Council's recycling centres is eighteen months into an eight year contract. The contract is integrated with the operation of five waste transfer stations and haulage activity. The contract has delivered around £500,000 per annum savings compared to previous arrangements, and risk and accountability have been transferred to the contractor.

It was confirmed that despite emerging service pressures, satisfaction levels and service affinity remain relatively high. However there are challenges facing the service, including:

- Increasing tonnage throughput
- Challenging recyclate market conditions
- Recent spike in on-site incidents and accidents
- Increasing pressure from illicit commercial waste inputs
- On site congestion appears to be worsening
- Impact on neighbours
- Deteriorating infrastructure
- Increased user expectations

The Committee already has a proposal in its work programme for a task and finish group to be established to undertake a scrutiny review of the recycling centres for household waste service. As part of that review it would be appropriate to consider how the service and infrastructure should evolve to ensure it can meet:

- Future tonnage throughput
- Increased legislative demands
- User expectations
- Partnership ambition
- A challenging funding environment

Action required by the Committee at this meeting:

The Committee is asked to note this record of its visit to the Tovi Eco Park on 25 June. Consideration of the inclusion of a scrutiny review on the future of the RCHW Service is included in a report on the Committee's work programme elsewhere in this agenda.
