

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
ENVIRONMENT & HIGHWAYS POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD ON 15 NOVEMBER 2012**

Present:

Councillor S Walsh (Chairman)	Councillor G McEwen
Councillor B Aspinell	Councillor G Mitchinson
Councillor R Bass	Councillor C Pond
Councillor R Callender	Councillor J Roberts
Councillor W Dick (Substitute for A Hedley)	Councillor S Robinson
Councillor I Grundy	Councillor M Skeels
Councillor D Kendall	Councillor J Schofield

Councillors K Bentley, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Waste & Recycling was also present for Minute 4 of the meeting.

1. Apologies and Substitution Notices

The Committee Officer reported apologies for absence from Councillors D Robinson, A Hedley and E Johnson, along with notice that Councillor W Dick would be substituting for Councillor A Hedley.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 30 August 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Declarations of Interest

With reference to Minute 4, Councillors W Dick and I Grundy both declared an interest due to being a Member of and Substitute Member of, respectively, Development & Regulation Committee; and Councillor G Mitchinson due to being a Member of the Planning Committee at Harlow District Council.

4. Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex

The Committee noted report EDEH/25/12. Councillor K Bentley, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Waste and Recycling was present at the meeting to update the Committee on the progress of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex, together with Peter Kelsbie, Assistant Director for Major Projects & Infrastructure and Phil Butler, Project Director Waste Strategy who gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee.

Background

The Committee was provided with the latest municipal waste statistics showing an increase in the food waste sector. There was now some form of green waste scheme in every District. Joint working had resulted in improved performance. It was expected that there would be small incremental increases this year.

The reasons behind the strategy were both financial and environmental, with landfill capacity decreasing and legislation actively discouraging landfill through taxation. New technologies were being deployed going forward with bio-treatment of residual waste and high recycling rates.

The Strategy had been put together for 2007 through to 2035 and was well on its way to being implemented.

Technologies

The presentation outlined the main waste treatment options including Anaerobic Digestion (AD) and Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) with its associated Solid Recovered Fuel (SRF)

Planned Future Infrastructure

The planned future infrastructure was highlighted. It was explained that there were complexities resulting from the fact that there are 12 individual waste collection authority (WCA) systems across Essex, which the infrastructure has to accommodate.

Implementation Work Streams

The Committee was updated on the progress of each work stream:

- Residual Waste Treatment (MBT) – that the PFI credits had been secured and the contract had been let. The Courtauld Road site had full planning permission but the Section 106 Agreement was still to be finalised.
- Bio-waste Treatment – the procurement process had been initiated.
- Waste Transfer Stations – as there is only one MBT plant planned for the County, it would not be practical for all waste collection vehicles to go to the one site. Therefore waste transfer stations would be established, and the planned sites are at various stages of acquisition and delivery.
- Integrated Waste Handling Contract – the proposed contract aimed to bring the operation of the recycling centres, transfer stations, and waste haulage together for economies of scale into a single management contract. The procurement process had been initiated.

Progress – Residual Waste Treatment (PFI)

The timelines for the MBT plant at Courtauld Road were explained with the plant due to be operational in June 2015.

SRF would be marketed at an appropriate point when the timescales around its availability were clearer. Through the soft market testing already undertaken, there were a number of companies expressing an interest in its acquisition and coming forward with ideas for use. The SRF would not be burnt at Courtauld Road, and the remaining parcel of land at the site was being offered as part of a biowaste procurement option.

Biowaste Progress

It was explained that in some Districts food and garden waste was collected together, while in others it was food only. Collection frequencies also differ. This was a constraint as countywide campaigns could not be promoted because of

the different systems operated by the WCAs, and therefore messages have to be targeted at specific local areas.

It was explained that Colchester Borough Council had not taken part in the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) and had therefore did not benefit from the funding that had been available through the Agreement. Nevertheless that Council was currently trialling a food only collection service, and deliberating whether it could be taken forward.

The County Council's initial biowaste procurement had been unsuccessful being too big for the smaller dedicated bio-waste contractors but too small for the larger waste sector contractors. The procurement approach had been simplified and it was hoped that there would be a preferred bidder by August 2013.

Waste Transfer Logistics & Transfer Stations Progress

As part of the presentation an explanation was provided for the chosen waste transfer station locations across the County, including the catchment areas, acquisition and planning permission status, construction start and end dates. It was explained that the facilities were designed with limited storage capability as they would be logistical hubs rather than providing storage buffer for collected waste. The facilities are being designed such that all waste handling activities only take place within the buildings, to minimise odour and noise impacts and the overall layouts are being designed to fit in with their surroundings and landscape.

It was recognised that local concerns had been raised about the impact of the stations on the local environment and, in particular, the routes that the waste vehicles would use. It was confirmed that lorry movements and routes could be controlled through the contractual process, and the specification of preferred routes.

The County Council was working with WCAs. Full analysis on the relationship between scale and size of the sites, and projected tonnage, size of area and facility, and optimal transportation had taken place. It was acknowledged that in practice some compromise had been necessary. The County Council had no capacity to compulsory purchase land, and therefore had to use land that was commercially available. It was anticipated that one outcome of the Strategy would be a decrease in haulage, and savings for the County Council where tipping away payments beyond 5 miles would no longer be necessary. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the WCAs were keen on this system due to savings around vehicle maintenance and movements.

Members expressed a wish that they be engaged in discussion on planning local lorry routes, particularly the routes from houses to transfer stations as well as the main routes to the MBT site. It was explained that the planning from collection rounds to the transfer stations was a matter for the WCAs and that major trunk routes would be used to haul from the transfer stations to the MBT plant.

With regard to the type of waste dealt with at the transfer stations, it was reported that they were being designed for all residual and biowaste streams, which were segmented to bulk. However, individual waste collections had to be taken into

consideration and the County Council had been working closely with the WCAs to design appropriate facilities.

Discussion

During the discussion the following points were made by Committee Members:

- A local Member enquired about the benefits of this process for the Basildon area where the Courtauld Road site is situated. In response the Cabinet Member confirmed that there was a £100,000 community fund.
- In response to concerns raised regarding road maintenance around the site, it was reported that the Highways Department had been involved in the planning application process. Any further developments such as the siting of the biowaste facility, of which Coutauld Road was one option, would also be subject to consultation around highways requirements.
- A question was raised regarding how the landfill costs compared to the projected operational costs of the new system. The final business case for PFI model compared the doing nothing case compared to doing something showed that over the life of the contract it was expected that a £265million saving would be achieved if a suitable outlet for SRF was found.
- Concerns were raised regarding the monitoring of food waste systems, the impact of the provision of free composting bags, and whether savings were invested. It was confirmed that the systems were monitored through the IAA. With only one exception the levels of recycling had all increased. The County Council regularly met with its counterparts, and at an operational level there was an officer working group that undertakes monitoring. If a decline is identified then action is taken to rectify it. There would be advantages if there was greater consistency in the existing waste services across Essex, and further savings could be made.
- Concerns were raised regarding the capacity of the Courtauld Road site and what would happen if the projected levels of waste were not met. In response it was made clear that no waste would be imported from outside of Essex. Longer term capacity had been analysed and took into account the County's growing population. If excess capacity became an issue it was confirmed that the planning application only allowed for waste from within the Essex and Southend administrative areas to be treated at the site, and therefore the fall back position would be to consider taking commercial waste from within the area close to the site. Further concerns were raised regarding the capacity of the waste transfer stations and in particular the Harlow site is on the border of Hertfordshire. In response it was made clear that this facility had been designed specifically for Harlow and Epping Forest waste, and had not been designed to import waste from adjoining waste collection areas. The designs had been based on the projections for housing growth in conjunction with local authorities, and there was headroom for capacity for the duration of the contract.

- A Member sought clarification on whether or not the use of solar panels had been considered taking into account the size of the plant at Courtauld Road. In response it was reported that all contractors had investigated this option but that costs had outweighed the benefits. Nevertheless a limited number of solar panels would be installed at the outset, and if they became more economically viable in the future then further consideration would be given to extending their installation.
- A Member sought advice on the disposal of ash trees within the green waste collection due to the current outbreak of Ash Dieback Disease. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Government had issued guidance to composters to advise them to burn the ash trees. However, in reality it may be difficult to identify small amounts. A note would be circulated to Councillors advising on what the County Council was doing in response to the outbreak.

It was Agreed that:

- 1. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Waste and Recycling would provide a briefing for councillors on the operational side of the Waste Transfer Stations including information on the waste lorry route planning.**
- 2. The Cabinet Member issue a briefing note for councillors outlining what the County Council was doing in response to the Ash Dieback Disease.**

5. Passenger Transport Concessionary Fares

The Committee considered report EDEH/26/12 on the Concessionary Travel Fares. At the full Council meeting on 16 October 2012 a motion was put forward seeking an examination of the feasibility of extending the concessionary travel scheme to include 18-24 year olds in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance or undertaking apprenticeships; noting that the 'BITE' card for 14-18 year olds is already in place and that any changes to concessionary fares must be contained within the existing budget for passenger transport.

The Chairman proposed that a Task and Finish Group be established to consider this issue. Members acknowledged that any review would need careful scoping to frame to focus on the issues raised in the motion rather than the broader issues of concessionary travel as a whole.

The Committee Agreed that:

A Task and Finish Group be established to consider the issues raised by the Motion from Full Council regarding the feasibility of extending the concessionary travel scheme.

6. North Essex Parking Partnership Call In

The Committee noted report EDEH/27/12 on the call in of a decision taken by the North Essex Parking Partnership on CCTV car – options appraisal at its meeting on 4 October 2012. The Committee noted that the Call In had now been withdrawn.

7. Forward Look

The Committee noted report EDEH/28/12 concerning its Forward Look. The Governance Officer updated the Committee on the current Task and Finish Group activities.

The Committee was advised that the launch of the Control of Major Accident Hazard sites (COMAH) report was now likely to take place in February 2013. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Waste and Recycling would be bringing an item on the Economic Growth Strategy to the December meeting of the Committee.

Members noted that there were some outstanding items of information requested at the Highways Briefing held in September, which were being followed up with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation.

The following issues were noted as future items in the Forward Look:

- Parking Partnerships
- Review of the roll-out of part-night street lighting

8. Dates of Future Meetings

The Committee noted that the next activity day was scheduled for Thursday 20 December 2012 at 10am.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 12.05pm.

Chairman