



**JOINT WASTE AND RECYCLING COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Friday 3 July 2020 at 10.00 am**  
**Remote Meeting**

Minutes of the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee meeting held in the Remote Meeting on Friday 3 July 2020 at 10:00am.

Joint Waste and Recycling Committee Members present: Councillors P. Barnett (HBC), C. Dowling (ESCC), K. Field (RDC), K. Forward (HBC), R. Galley (WDC), S. Prochak (RDC) and R. Standley (WDC).

Other Members present: Councillor R. Cade (WDC) and P.C. Courtel (RDC).

Advisory Officers present:

**East Sussex County Council:** Assistant Director Operations and Contract Management and Waste Team Manager.  
**Hastings Borough Council:** Assistant Director Environment and Place.  
**Rother District Council:** Executive Director (Lead Director), Executive Director (Secretary), Assistant Director Resources, Head of Service Housing and Community, Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer.  
**Wealden District Council:** Director of Environment and Community Services, Head of Customer and Digital Services and Waste Manager.  
**Central Client Team:** Joint Waste Partnership Manager, Deputy Contract Manager and Joint Waste Admin Officer.  
**Biffa:** Managing Director, Business Director, Commercial Director, Regional Manager and Senior Business Manager.

Others present: 9 members of the public.

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Publication Date: 9 July 2020

The Decisions made under PART II will come into force on 17 July 2020 unless they have been subject to the call-in procedure.

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JWRC20/1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Dowling be elected Chairman of the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

JWRC20/2. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Barnett be elected Vice-Chairman of the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

JWRC20/3. **MINUTES**

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2019 at a later date as a correct record of the proceedings.

JWRC20/4. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Keith Bird – Senior Operations Project Manager (Biffa), Deborah Kenneally – Neighbourhood Services Manager (RDC), Cameron Morley – Waste and Cleansing Manager (HBC) and Carl Valentine – Head of Transport and Operational Services (ESCC).

JWRC20/5. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

**PART II – EXECUTIVE DECISIONS** – subject to call-in procedure under Item 10 of the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee Constitution by no later than 4:00pm on 16 July 2020.

JWRC20/6. **BIFFA UPDATE**

The Senior Business Manager led Members through Biffa's presentation which provided an update on the Waste Collection, Recycling, Street and Beach Cleaning and Associated Services Contract. During the presentation the following points were noted:

- Health and Safety: This was a primary focus for Biffa; week commencing 24 February 2020, Biffa re-invigorated its health and safety programme by launching Safer Together which aimed to improve all standards of safety. The following techniques were applied: increased CCTV monitoring; crew and gate checks; promotion of reporting misses and hazards; toolbox talks; accident investigations completed within six days; and safety improvement team meetings. During the first year of the contract 766 near misses and hazards were reported, as well as 10 accidents. Out of 54,240 staff working days the accident rate equated to 0.02%, this was extremely low.
- HR Update: As of June 2020, there was 24 (90%) full-time vacant positions. Recruitment was actively on-going and 11 new employees were scheduled to start in July. Expectations were that 100% full complement of staff would be achieved. Average staff turn-over from January 2020 to date was 0.8%. In February 2020, overall 33% of staff had completed an employee engagement score. This was lower than anticipated, however not totally unexpected as culture change took time to embed. Engagement

plans were on-going including promotion of Biffa Beat App, incentive bonuses, loader to driver scheme and investment opportunities e.g. individual development planning, LGV and CPC management training etc.

- An updated Organisation Chart was presented which included Simon Crook, Business Director and Fabrice Bouchon, Regional Manager.
- Overall collection performance had improved by 30% however there was a slight decrease in performance regarding Rother's garden waste collection. This was attributed to less knowledgeable staff and was currently being addressed; monitoring would be ongoing:

LA	Missed Collections		Per 100,000	
	Jul-19	May-20	Jul-19	May-20
Hastings	340	241	123	109
Rother	468	474	182	183
Wealden	751	381	202	100

- Street cleansing performance had improved in Wealden. Results of Rother's NI195 surveys were still awaited.
- High Speed Road Maintenance Programme had been established and was being successfully executed across the Partnership.
- As a result of COVID-19, the following issues had arisen namely absence levels increased beyond the agreed Business Continuity Plan (BCP) thresholds however services continued; in March absence levels peaked at 27% therefore certain services were suspended; garden waste services recommenced on 23 April; on 4 May absence levels reduced which triggered re-instatement of all previously suspended services; and 13% absence levels were being managed/monitored. COVID secure measures were implemented at each operational site/depot and negotiations commenced with the Partnership regarding reconciliation of service suspension. Remedial actions included a full review of the BCP, absence levels and local authority respective thresholds, as well as implications of seasonality and client preferences.
- Route Optimisation:  
 Hastings – data validation was required to optimise resources and all service implications would be discussed with the local supervising officer before implementation.  
 Rother – data validation had commenced regarding existing collection schedules and Biffa intended to remove evening crews with minimal disruption.  
 Wealden – successfully removed two of the three additional supporting crews deployed by the previous contractor.
- The following social values and commitments had been completed or were planned: 30 community litter picks between January and May 2020; supporting Great British Spring Clean by donating 125 litter pickers, 75 bag hoops and 200 pair of gloves; and Biffa Awards. Apprenticeships and bulky reuse collections were currently suspended.
- ICT: Continued to self-audit, invest and improve/upgrade ICT 'Whitespace' system.
- Across the Partnership an annual resident satisfaction survey had been completed; in total 1,324 (10%) responses had been received.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions and the following was noted:

- Assurance was given that multiple missed bin collections would be addressed and continually monitored.
- It was clarified that the last litter collection serve at beach/seafront locations across the Partnership was 8pm at peak times of the year. Over the last few months litter collection had been a significant challenge for Biffa. Collection rounds would be reviewed, where appropriate and monitoring would be on-going.
- Staffing: Assurance was given that Biffa was actively recruiting to fill all vacant positions and training on-going to develop extensive local knowledge.
- COVID-19 infections: Only a few staff had been affected; all health and safety measures had been implemented to ensure the workforce was fully protected.
- High Speed Routes: Service performance had improved particularly along the A22, A26 and A259; it was important to implement a regular schedule to maintain/uphold standards.
- Biffa was thanked and congratulated on their continued efforts to ensure that the waste and cleansing services were successfully delivered during these unprecedented times.

Biffa thanked the Partnership for their support over the last few months and re-iterated their commitment to maintaining and improving service performance across the Partnership.

**RESOLVED:** That the presentation be noted.

JWRC20/7.

#### **SERVICE PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

Consideration was given to the report of the Lead Director which provided analysis and commentary on service performance achieved for the period Autumn 2019 to February 2020.

From the end of September 2019 to end of February 2020, 6,667 performance points and £3,990 financial deductions were applied. Contract performance was well within acceptable levels with no likelihood of formal warning or termination for the foreseeable period.

Members were advised that only acceptable items could be processed for recycling. The most common form of contamination stemmed from residents depositing residual waste in the wrong receptacles, mostly at bring sites which could only be addressed by CCTV and enforcement action. Contamination also occurred when residual or garden waste was inadvertently mixed with dry mixed recycling (DMR) by the collection staff. Biffa had reduced the number of incidents to less than five per month, however the contamination impact from one single load was high. Should more than 10% of contamination be found, the load would be rejected at the materials recovery facility. It was noted that the financial impact of DMR contamination was incurred by East Sussex County Council who were keen to maintain good quality DMR.

With regard to missed assisted collections, whilst the number was relatively small the impact was significant for individuals, particularly repeated misses.

Since the last meeting, street cleansing standards had improved, particularly across the rural areas of Rother and Wealden.

It was noted that a Joint Waste Administrative Officer had been appointed in February 2020.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

JWRC20/8.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

The Joint Waste and Recycling Committee considered the report of the Lead Director which provided an update on how the COVID-19 emergency had impacted waste services and the Joint Waste Contract (JWC) during the period March to June 2020.

The Partnership Manager paid tribute to the excellent collaborative working between all partners in the waste stream to ensure that public waste services were maintained and provided. Weekly conferences were held to ensure that services were actively managed. Under Government guidance, staff were considered “essential workers” and supported by the Sussex Resilience Forum in all aspects during the pandemic lockdown e.g. testing etc.

As the pandemic developed a COVID-19 Business Continuity Plan (BCP) was developed, a copy of which was appended to the report at Appendix 2. The 30%+ level of workplace absence was not realised and therefore the impact on the contract was not as severe as initially forecast. However, Biffa staff absence exceeded 20% at each depot during 23-27 March 2020 and therefore triggered the first level of service suspensions as per the BCP. From 30 March 2020, Biffa deployed resources to maintain services on a “skeleton” basis. The suspension of garden and bulky waste collections released resources to allow other activities to be sustained e.g. litter and dog bin emptying. Biffa and the Partnership were reconsidering the BCP in terms of service priorities and expectations which would enable a more common approach regarding service suspension should a second wave of the pandemic escalate.

Despite staffing issues, performance levels were upheld across all services except for two collection cycles of garden waste. A comprehensive service performance record was maintained and highlighted at Appendix 1 to the report. It was noted that fly-tipping incidences had increased since the beginning of May. Monitoring would be ongoing by the Partnership and Waste Strategy and Resource Group.

Measurement of performance indicators continued however financial deductions had been suspended until 1 July 2020. It was noted that Biffa had sustained an extensive range of waste and street services in comparison with other local authorities. The long-term operational and

financial consequences of the pandemic were unknown however, there was no indication that Biffa Municipal Ltd faced significant financial stress, because of the pandemic. The JWC protected the Partnership from direct cost liabilities e.g. agency cover, unrecoverable furlough costs, provision of personal protection equipment (PPE) and hygiene procedures etc. Work was on-going to finalise a contract Variation and financial reconciliation to ensure that the Partnership was well placed to handle a similar situation in the future with agreed principles in place.

In March, the Government issued Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 02/20 which provided guidance on how local authorities paid their suppliers/contractors during and after the pandemic. The JWC terms enabled Biffa to claim “relief” and on 30 March they claimed for the full extent of PPN 02/20 to be applied. The application of the relief mechanism was agreed from April to June and comprehensive records were maintained throughout this period.

The JWC remained at a business continuity status until Biffa staff absence reduced and was maintained at less than 20% for week commencing 27 April to 1 May. Daily absence continued at an average of 17% throughout May and June. It was noted that Biffa had the opportunity to seek public sector support through Job Retention Scheme, as well as PPN Supplier Relief.

Biffa had successfully managed to acquire and sustain good levels of personal protective equipment and cleansing products at each depot. Daily operational practices included staggered start times, social distancing and management of potential symptomatic staff. They would continue to comply with Government guidance and support the national effort to control spreading the virus. The Partnership would continue to support Biffa’s management decisions and policies as the longer-term implications became apparent. Health and safety monitoring was being maintained and NI195 street cleansing inspections resumed with minimal impact on the annual schedule.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

JWRC20/9.

## **MATTERS ARISING IN CONTRACT YEAR 2**

Members considered the report of the Lead Director which described key matters arising in the second year of the Joint Waste Contract (JWC) with Biffa Municipal Ltd.

The annual expenditure forecast for Administering Authority (AA) costs in 2020/21 was £220,690 which included NI195 monitoring and ICT system developments. Expenditure remained within budget during 2019/20 and enough provision had been made by the Partnership for 2020/21.

Significant effort had been made to reduce the time customers waited for new or replacement containers. Stock management and control had improved with the service operating consistently since January

2020. For the period 29 June 2019 to 31 March 2020, the total cost of containers ordered by Biffa and recharged to the AA was £182,747.35.

Since October 2019, a series of operational changes had been implemented at the Amberstone and Bellbrook depots (Wealden) which had increased productivity and allowed collection rounds to operate more efficiently, with minimal customer impact. Biffa intend to submit further changes during Year 2 of the contract. Both Hastings and Rother operations were being analysed; work had started and would be progressed over the summer 2020 period.

The East Sussex Waste Collection Partnership was responsible for ensuring that Biffa staff were appropriately supervised, and vehicles and equipment regularly checked. In January 2020, the Partnership Manager completed a client safety audit which focused on the safe operation of vehicles. Results concluded that Biffa had successfully embedded good standards of health and safety awareness and procedures in their operations. Two minor recommendations were made, both of which had been implemented. All health and safety related issues were managed and monitored by Biffa and the Partnership and it was proposed that procedures be jointly reviewed and refreshed during 2020/21.

An update position of each individual Partner's local service preparations was provided as follows:

**Hastings Borough Council:** Service delivery had been impacted by a number of issues, namely emptying of on-street containers, repeated missed or messy collections and crew behavioural issues. In most cases service failures had been addressed, however lack of a consistent Operations Manager at the St Leonards depot meant that some issues were still outstanding. Focus would be placed on operational refinements and increased management to improve service overall.

**Rother District Council:** As a result of Government restrictions, from late March, both collection and street cleansing services were impacted. Bulky and garden waste collections were suspended and reinstated on 4 May 2020. During the lockdown period, collection services and bring site standards improved. However, volumes of recycling and clothing waste increased at bring sites. It was hoped that the Salvation Army would resume clothing collections in July. Street cleansing continued as scheduled across the district. Since the easing of lockdown normal operations had resumed. Agency staff were employed to assist with the high volumes of garden waste. The volumes of litter had increased as visitors returned to the district. Garden Waste subscriptions had increased by approximately 300 for 2020/21.

**Wealden District Council:** Collection performance continued to improve, however missed assisted collections required improvement. Long-term sickness at Wealden's depots required further management. Despite a short increase in missed garden waste collections, Biffa coped well with higher than normal volumes of all waste generated

during lockdown. A backlog for container deliveries had arisen over the last 10 weeks; more garden waste bins would be purchased, and additional delivery resources deployed. Progress had improved regarding street cleansing. Further work was scheduled throughout the remainder of the year regarding litter picking. Fly-tip clearance remained good despite challenges with increased incidents at local recycling bring sites. Bulky and clinical waste collection performance remained consistent.

The JWP Risk Register was maintained as a current document by the JWP Manager and was available to Members on request. The Joint Waste and Recycling Committee noted that one risk was considered 'very high' (the financial reconciliation of payments made against services received during the COVID-19 pandemic). There were currently four 'high risks', as follows:

- Biffa cease (or reduce) operations with minimal notice.
- Loss/reduction of training staff.
- Extensive use of Agency staff (this had subsequently been de-escalated as reliance on agency staff since middle of June had decreased significantly).
- Health and Safety of client officers and Biffa supervisory staff.

All risks would be monitored.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

JWRC20/10. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

It was confirmed that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Friday 23 October 2020 at 10:00am in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes.

**CHAIRMAN**

The meeting closed at 11:26am.