
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel was held on 6 November 2019.

PRESENT: Councillors Arundale, Branson, Coupe, Furness, Garvey, Saunders, M Storey, S Walker and G Wilson (As Substitute for Hubbard)

PRESENT AS OBSERVERS: J Cain, BBC Local Democracy Reporter

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillor Thompson, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

OFFICERS: G Field, S Lightwing, P Shaw

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Hubbard and M Storey.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point in the meeting.

1 **MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL - 2 OCTOBER 2019**

The minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel held on 2 October 2019 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

In relation to the proposed new school at Middlehaven, a Member queried whether consideration had been given to transport links to the area. The Democratic Services Officer agreed to follow this up with the relevant officer and provide a response.

2 **RECYCLING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT/WASTE DISPOSAL FACILITY**

The Director of Environment and Commercial Services and the Operations Manager Recycling and Education gave an overview of the local and national picture in relation to Recycling and Waste Management. The national outlook had changed quite dramatically with Government proposals for the environment agenda, although this could be subject to change following the Parliamentary Election in December 2019.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Resource and Waste Strategy was guided by two main objectives: to maximise the value of resources and minimise waste and its impact on the environment. The strategy was aimed at helping consumers make actions that were more considered and minimise waste, purchasing and packaging. Another national objective was to tackle organised waste crime across the country in terms of large scale fly-tipping, which cost hundreds of thousands of pounds to remove.

DEFRA would undertake a consultation to explore whether every household should have a weekly food waste collection by 2023. Some Local Authorities and private sector companies were already being consulted on this issue and it was proposed that food waste collection would become compulsory. DEFRA was also undertaking a review of Household Waste Recycling Centres across England to ensure they remained fit for purpose. Some areas had introduced charges for disposal of certain items. The use of heat energy from Waste Plants was also being encouraged.

Through this Strategy, Central Government was aiming to minimise the level of waste produced upstream which was eventually collected by Local Authorities downstream. The idea was to stop as much waste as possible being produced at source by businesses packaging and delivering food.

As a Council, Middlesbrough disposed of 5% of waste in landfill, which was an incredibly small

amount. The only waste that went to landfill was waste that could not be disposed of in any other way. Other waste disposal methods were more environmentally friendly and the cost was much less than using landfill.

The current Tees Valley contract with SUEZ for the Waste Disposal Facility based at Haverton Hill was due to end in 2020. However, the Tees Valley Councils and SUEZ had agreed an extension until 2025. The Tees Valley Councils were currently working with Local Partnerships (a Government Agency) on post 2025 waste disposal facility options. Over the next few years, the Councils would go to market with the size of replacement Plant that was needed, based on calculations of how much recycling would be needed and how much waste could be taken out of the system. A recent confidential report to the Executive contained all the detail; however this information could not be shared with the Panel currently due to it being commercially sensitive.

The project group set up to work on the new waste plant estimated it would take approximately 3 years to plan and build a new Plant. A Project Plan was in place and the value of the contract was significant. The new Plant would be in operation for the next 20 to 25 years.

The Government's national target for recycling in 2020 was 50%. The current England recycling rate in 2017/2018 was 43.2% and Middlesbrough's rate for the same year was 33.5%. Approximately 5% of Middlesbrough's waste went to landfill, 33.5% was recycled and 61% was processed in the energy to waste plant.

The Panel viewed a slide showing the percentage of waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting in 2018/2019 by the north east councils. County Durham was highest with approximately 40%, Stockton on Tees the lowest, at approximately 25%, and Middlesbrough about in the middle at 33%. Members queried whether there was less recycling in more deprived areas and it was agreed that the Council needed to work with communities that found it difficult to recycle to encourage them to do more.

Middlesbrough's recycling rate had increased when the 140 litre residual waste bins were introduced. Smaller bins had encouraged people to recycle more. It was highlighted that larger 360 litre bins were available for larger families. In response to a query about fortnightly collections, the Director agreed that if the Council ever decided to go down that route it was likely to produce a further boost to recycling rates. Only 17% of Local Authorities now provided a weekly collection service, with the overwhelming majority collecting fortnightly and some collecting monthly. Other Authorities had food waste and other recycling collections so that very little residual waste was left in the bins.

Charging for the collection of green waste had also been introduced by some local authorities. It was noted that this could encourage people to put their green waste in the residual bins to avoid a charge. It was also highlighted that those people who did not have any green waste could feel that a charge was justified, rather than the cost being included in the overall waste collection charges.

Talking to people more about recycling and the benefits and advantages it had, and what could and couldn't be recycled also helped to increase rates. It was highlighted that educational stickers on the bins had been a useful tool in the past.

One of the objectives in the national strategy was to limit what items could be recycled so that everyone across the country would recycle in the same way. It was agreed that the huge variety of plastics were confusing and people were not sure what could and could not be recycled. Plasticised wrapping paper and polystyrene were highlighted as items that were not recyclable. A number of roadshows were planned across Middlesbrough during the lead up to Christmas to encourage people to minimise waste and promote the services available. There would be an article in the Love Middlesbrough magazine highlighting items such as wrapping paper and explaining what could and could not be recycled.

In relation to food waste collections, there were several digestion plants in Teesside but the biggest cost was collecting the food waste and transporting it. The Council wanted to be as

environmentally friendly as possible and was looking at hydrogen and electric vehicles. The current refuse collection trucks ran on diesel and were expensive to run. Energy from Waste Plants not only generated electricity but also heat which could be re-routed into heating networks.

A query was raised in relation to Middlesbrough's recycling waste and where it was processed. The Director confirmed that all Middlesbrough's waste was recycled in the UK and he had no concerns that it was sent elsewhere.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

3 **INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY REVIEW**

A briefing note providing further information about Broadband had been circulated to Panel Members in connection to the Panel's Infrastructure Delivery Review. Details had been provided by Openreach in relation to the company's current coverage of superfast Broadband in Middlesbrough and plans for the future.

AGREED that:

1. Further information in relation to Rail Operators would be obtained.
2. A draft Final Report on Infrastructure Delivery would be produced for the next meeting.

4 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - UPDATE**

A verbal update was provided on the agenda items considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 3 October 2019.

5 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING - WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2019**

Following discussion with Members it was **AGREED** that the December meeting would be cancelled.

The date of the next meeting was 8 January 2020.