

WEST OF ENGLAND PARTNERSHIP

8th DECEMBER 2006

Report by Steve Evans, Director of Community Services, South Gloucestershire Council

WEST OF ENGLAND WASTE MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING STRATEGY

Summary

1. Each Council comprising the West of England has resolved to enter into a partnering arrangement with the others to develop a Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy and Joint Waste Development Plan. The Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the Joint Waste Development Plan are two separate but related exercises that are being developed in parallel with an interrelated timetable. This report updates the Partnership on the work undertaken by Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils, and the decisions that are being taken formally by the authorities.

Background

2. The West of England local authorities are working together to plan new ways of managing residual waste. This is the waste left over after all possible recycling and composting has taken place.
3. The project has been motivated by European Union regulations to reduce the use of unsustainable landfill sites and, in particular, to drastically reduce the amount of biodegradable waste sent to landfill. Under the Waste Emissions and Trading Act 2003, the Government will impose fines on all councils that send more than their permitted allowance to landfill. These fines will start to make a real impact on council finances in the near future unless alternatives to landfill are provided. There is therefore an urgent need to find workable and cost-effective alternatives to landfill.
4. The authorities believe that working in Partnership offers economic, environmental and social advantages such as:
 - Maximising economies of scale;
 - Minimising environmental impacts;
 - Minimising transport requirements; and
 - Providing best value for the taxpayer.

5. Waste and planning teams from each authority are working together to resolve these issues. Waste experts are looking at a range of technology options which, present viable alternatives to landfill. At the same time, planners are preparing a document which will describe in detail how locations for new facilities will be found and where these may be located. It will be a long-term plan for where waste is managed in the West of England.
6. The public will be consulted at each stage until a viable solution is found which best meets the needs of residents and users in the West of England. The project team is aiming to balance the dilemmas of creating long-term sustainable solutions to waste without it costing the earth.
7. A West of England Waste Management and Planning Strategy Project Board is in place consisting of Executive Members responsible for Waste and Planning from each of the authorities. ,The Board is supported by appropriate Directors and Managers

Progress

8. All four Cabinets considered reports this week to 'sign-off' a number of key documents in order that the project can proceed in accordance with the programmes set out in the Project initiation Documents (PIDs) for the Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the Joint Waste Development Plan. An oral update on decisions taken by respective Cabinets will be given at the meeting.
9. The key documents to the report were as follows :
 - Draft Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy document
 - Issues and Options document
 - Second Stage Consultation Plan
 - Summary Budget Forecasts
10. The report refers in detail to these documents, included as appendices, and sought Cabinet approval for consultation to take place between January and March 2007. A brief explanation of each document is given in **Appendix 1**.
11. In addition each authority has already confirmed its intention to prepare a Joint Waste Development Plan Document and to revise its Local Development Scheme with the exception of Bristol City Council, which will consider the revision of the Local Development Scheme at its Cabinet meeting on 11 January 2007.
12. In order to comply with the requirements of the Development Plan process the partnership is obliged to consult widely on Issues and Options for future waste management provision.

13. Each Council will have considered the budget implications in its report this week. In recommending the cost apportionment the Project Board recommended that the costs of the project be shared equally for the Strategy and Development Plan process, and apportioned on the basis of residual waste arising in each authority during the procurement process. These apportionments are reflected in the Summary Budget Forecasts.
14. Work is underway to determine the level of long-term financial commitment which will be required to deliver the project in its entirety including the need for additional external specialist expertise and staff resources. Each council will need to take further decisions at each stage of the preparation of the Joint Waste Development Plan.

Consultation

15. A key component in the development of the Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the Joint Waste Development Plan is a process of public and statutory consultation with stakeholders and interested organisations and individuals on the Issues and Options document. Assuming approval has been given by each of the Cabinets, consultation will take place between January and March 2007.
16. Consultation on the Joint Waste Development Plan Document has to be carried out in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and in accordance with each Council's Statement of Community Involvement (where prepared).
17. Following the West of England 'Rubbish or Resource?' waste awareness campaign during July and August 2006, the West of England Strategic Consultation Forum has contributed to the planning of a range of consultation and communications methods for the 2nd stage consultation which focuses principally on the Issues and Options document. Their inputs and views have influenced the content and balance of the activities. It is intended that these activities and supporting consultation events are facilitated by Hyder Consultants who led the 1st stage waste awareness campaign.

Risks

18. A risk register has been prepared for the project by Capita Symonds, and a list of the key risks identified are given below.
 - i. Officer resource levels from each authority
 - ii. Decision makers in some authority areas are not fully engaged with the project
 - iii. Finance available for the additional resource levels, site purchase and construction
 - iv. Consultations with various internal and external bodies and making sure all procedures are followed
 - v. Conflict of timescales between waste management and waste planning
 - vi. Formal sign off procedures to allow progress to continue as programmed.
 - vii. Change in political balance of authorities

- viii. Attractiveness of project to the market. All four authorities must act as one
- ix. Site identification, purchase and planning application
- x. Withdrawal from strategy of one or more authority
- xi. Influential pressure groups affecting choice of site and/or technology

Decisions made by Cabinets/Executives in December 2006

- 19. Each of the 4 Unitary Authorities will have considered the anticipated costs of preparing the planning and waste strategy documents which have already been budgeted for, and noted the anticipated costs of the procurement stage, and recognised that these will need to be refined and built into their medium term financial plans.
- 20. The Draft Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy should have been approved. The Issues and Options document should have been approved as the basis for public consultation, and the Consultation and Communications Plan also should have been agreed.
- 21. Each authority should also have agreed to delegate powers to appropriate officers in consultation with relevant Executive Members to sign off the final drafts of the consultation documents and to resolve issues arising from decisions made by any authority in order to progress the project without undue delays.
- 22. Each authority should have endorsed the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal process.

Recommendation

That the Partnership notes the progress with the Waste Management and Planning Strategy and endorses the decisions, which have been made.

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Summary of the documents to be agreed by each West of England Unitary Authority in December 2006.

Draft Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy document and the Technical Options Appraisal Report

A strategy needs to be developed in response to the significant challenges facing the management of municipal waste in the UK; including local, national and international obligations in terms of environmental targets and policies.

The Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy acknowledges that there needs to be major changes to our waste management practices and that maintaining the 'status quo' is not an option. The Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy sets out the objectives and proposals for waste treatment and disposal and will create a framework for managing municipal residual waste across the sub-region for the next 20 plus years.

Targets for reducing the amount of biodegradable municipal waste being sent for disposal in landfill have been set down by the European Union. The Audit Commission has stated that there is now a "significant risk that local authorities in England will fail to reduce tonnages of biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill by enough to meet the European Union targets for 2010 and 2013. To meet the European Union targets the United Kingdom will require the construction of waste treatment and recovery plants".

The Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy considers waste treatment technologies that may be suitable for implementation in the region and subjects a number of options to an appraisal process to produce a preferred option. This process has been undertaken in association with the Strategic Consultation Forum and was facilitated by Jacobs Babtie through a series of participative workshops.

During this process the performance of each option was modelled and assessed, and subjected to quantitative and qualitative criteria to assess the environmental, economic and social implications of each option. The results of this options appraisal (Technical Options Appraisal Report) are included in the Issues and Options document and the Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy and will be subject to consultation with the public between January and March 2007 before going on to form the basis of the Outline Business Case for the procurement of future residual waste management infrastructure.

Developing a Waste Management and Planning Issues and Options Document

The purpose of the Waste Management and planning Issues and Options Document is to generate discussion about waste management and waste planning in the West of England by seeking the views of stakeholders and the public on the waste issues facing the sub-region. These include, for example, how waste should be managed, which new technologies should be used and where the new technologies that will be required should be located.

The Issues and Options document includes sections on the amount of waste that needs to be managed over the twenty year period to 2026, technology options, spatial / planning implications and sections on shaping the planning and waste management strategies. Key issues are summarised at the end of each of these sections and the views of stakeholders and the public are invited on a long list of questions.

The Issues and Options report will also need to be accompanied by a robust, credible evidence base. This is intended to ensure that the Joint Waste Development Plan is soundly based in terms of its content and the process by which it is produced. The evidence base will be relevant to the preparation of the Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

The response from consultation on the Issues and Options document will inform the next stages of the Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the Joint Waste Development Plan. The next stage in the planning process is likely to be a consultation centred round sites selection.

Consultation Plan

The second stage consultation is the first step in the actual production of the Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the Joint Waste Development Plan. This will focus on the 'Issues and Options' document. Key issues include: How will waste be managed and where should the required new facilities be located?

The preparation of the Consultation Plan has involved a wide range of stakeholders and experts in the fields of communication and consultation, including members of the Strategic Consultation Forum. The appended Consultation Plan provides detail of the proposed methodology for consultation including an action plan on consultation, communication and marketing of the process.

Summary Budget Forecasts

The indicative summary budget forecasts shown in Appendix D reflect all the anticipated costs that have been identified to date for the Joint Residual Municipal Waste Management Strategy and Joint Waste Development Plan projects. In respect of the Joint Procurement exercise, some broad cost estimates have also been included to give an indication of the scale of costs that may potentially arise.

The Project Board has recommended that costs of the project be shared equally amongst the Unitary Authorities during the Strategy and Development Plan process, and apportioned on the basis of residual waste arisings in each authority during the procurement process based on annual returns submitted under WasteDataFlow.