

CUMBRIA SCRUTINY NETWORK

WASTE MANANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

Notes of the meeting held on 17th January 2007 At the Copeland Centre, Whitehaven

Present: Cllr Mrs Anne Bradshaw (Chair) Copeland Borough Council
Cllr Trevor Allison Carlisle City Council
Cllr Jill Cranwell South Lakeland District Council
Cllr Jeff Gardner Allerdale Borough Council
Cllr Elaine Pears Barrow Borough Council
Cllr Cam Ross Cumbria County Council

Apologies were received from Cllr Gordon Savage, Eden District Council

Also present: Dr Dave Taylor, Scrutiny Officer, Carlisle City Council
Jane Murray, Scrutiny Officer, Allerdale Borough Council
Vic Millbourne, Scrutiny Officer, Cumbria County Council

Representing Cumbria Strategic Waste Management Partnership (formal session only):
Cllr Allan Holliday, Copeland Borough Council
Graham Harrison, Head of Waste Management, Cumbria County Council
Nigel Christian, Waste Management Team, Cumbria County Council
Janice Carroll, Waste Management, Copeland Borough Council
Helen Younger, Communications, Cumbria County Council
Paul Fletcher, ERM Consulting
Hilary Livesy, ERM Consulting

Informal Session

Members were agreed that they hoped that this would be the last scrutiny for up to 12 months. They felt the key remaining issues were:

Communications – meaningful , easy to understand, which measures its effectiveness.

Waste Strategy – the progress, the relationship with the partner (who will provide policy leadership?) and consultation.

Waste Statistics – what practical, positive lessons have been learned from the work carried out to date on the recording of statistics. Is there consistency and a level-playing field?

LATs fines – some progress in the partnership, but Lats fines predictions look as though there is less progress.

Commercial Waste – Lack of communication with small business. Co-mingled commercial waste (with domestic waste) needs to be sorted out.

Accountability – that there has been little progress in demonstrating transparency.

Formal Session

Letter to Chief Executives Group:

Cllr Allan Holliday raised the issue of a letter which had been sent on behalf of the Cumbria Scrutiny Network Chairs Group from Cllr Roberts (who had Chaired the last meeting of the Chairs Group) to the Chief Executives' Group.

The Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership had met that morning and strongly objected to the tone of the letter.

Cllr Bradshaw echoed the reservations about the tone of the letter and assured the Partnership representatives that she had not seen a copy of the letter nor had either of the two supporting officers.

Presentation from ERM consultants:

As part of an established process to challenge and assist the development of the strategy, their role was to

- Help deliver sustainable development
- Improve strategy by mitigating the negative
- Ensure effective monitoring
- Support and promote the development of the strategy
- Ensure compliance with legislation
- Raise the profile of the strategy
- Support the consultation process
- Develop the evidence base for the strategy
- Focus on significant issues
- Reinforce the links with strategies, policies and planning.

The timetable for production of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Waste Strategy was envisaged as followed:

Production of scoping report	August 06
Consultation on Scoping report	Sept 06
Appraisal	Feb/March
Consultation	Feb/March
Finalising report	April

The strategy would be assessed for its environmental, social and economic impact and would be subject to constant review.

Members noted that the first consultation phase – consultation on the process used to develop the strategy – had only 2 responses and were concerned that there should be a good response to the second phase – consultation on the SEA and the strategy itself – in particular from the Lake District National Park Authority.

Members noted that the CSWP had agreed unanimously to adopt the preferred option recommended at their meeting that morning.

Partnership Officers assured Members that the consultation document would be a glossy, easy-to-read document which would be well publicised and circulated through, for example, libraries and ‘Your Cumbria’.

With the benefit of hindsight, it was conceded that, it may have been preferable to have consulted on the choice of technology first, however Members had wanted to choose a company that they could work with. It was acknowledged that the consultation exercise on the strategy would require to be handled well. Consultation comments would be taken back to both the Partnership and the consultants.

It was **AGREED** that a copy of the presentation given would be forwarded to all Members.

Strategic Partner

In response to questioning, partnership officers felt that a delay in appointing a strategic partner had been required in order to protect the County Council. There had been a need to ensure that the preferred bidder could work well with the Council and shared their objectives. A reserve bidder was in place, should this prove necessary.

There would be a need for the preferred bidder to work with Cumbria County Council to get the best possible deal and keep the price for waste down. There was the threat that the cost of ‘waste’ could double for the County Council. There would be a need for the strategic partner to forge partnerships.

There had been a positive effect to the delay – after years of waste growth, waste was now falling. This meant that it was possible that only two treatment plants would be required rather than the three originally envisaged.

Serious negotiations were starting this month with the preferred bidder.

Commercial Waste

Members noted that some progress was being made in identifying commercial waste which might be co-mingled with domestic waste. Local Authorities had a duty to collect commercial waste when they were asked to do so and were responsible for collecting around 40,000 tonnes.

Commercial waste overall in Cumbria was at least twice as large as domestic waste. Domestic waste accounted for around 320,000 tonnes and commercial waste was approximately double that and still going to landfill. Local authorities do not at present collect much of this commercial waste – though they do have a duty to do so if asked. Links were beginning to be made with the commercial waste sector and the Partnership had been successful in securing £90,000 of pump priming money through the local area agreement to employ someone to forge the links. Envirolink were also working on behalf of the Partnership to make the links and to look at commercial recycling. There were currently no commercial LATs fines, but a government announcement was expected in March.

Members felt that links with the commercial sector were vital and were reassured that small businesses were being targeted to make them aware of the new permit scheme in operation.

Household sites

A brief resume of the situation involving ongoing fraud investigations by the police into a company operating household sites was given to members. Members were advised that the sites would be reopened in the next couple of days under interim management arrangements.

Performance Monitoring

Members were advised that consultants had been employed to look at the waste statistics gathered for the performance monitoring indicator BVPI84. On the face of it, Cumbria and Cheshire were performing badly and Lancashire – sandwiched in between – was performing well. The consultants would look at the data and compare it with better performing authorities, including Beacon Councils, and give a definitive answer as to why the performance was worse than other areas.

Officers felt that statistics were very reliable. Intuitively, they felt that there may be a number of contributing factors, for example tourism waste, the inclusion of street sweepings, leaves detritus.

There had been a 20 % drop in volume since the introduction of permits at household centres. The Flusco site was now running at a 60% recycling rate. The County Council was working towards the Flusco model for all sites.

Fifty per cent recycling can be achieved and there is a need to learn from best practice. 60% kerbside recycling might well be achievable.

Members also asked about verification of the 're-use' targets and were advised that this was something that the waste team at the County Council would be picking up on.

Partnership

Members were advised that owing to Allerdale Borough Council's co-operation in quickly releasing secondee Barbara Jones to work with the Partnership, very little momentum had been lost.

LATs fines

Members were advised that the work going on to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill was beginning to have an effect. A good many people recognised that landfill is an issue and understand why there is a need to reduce waste. The Waste Performance and Efficiency grants were being used widely, where they could have the most impact.

Communications

Members were assured that surveys were periodically carried out across all districts to measure the effectiveness of communication effort. In addition, quarterly monitoring of waste data helped to check behavioural change. This was used rather than individual pre and post monitoring of campaigns (such as the recent bus campaigns). The statistics would also be used to measure the effectiveness of the recycling rangers.

The Golf campaign included in the £392,000 of funding secured from Defra for behavioural change had been instrumental in securing the funding and was to target wealthy achievers. It was expected that it would have a good deal of 'free' media publicity owing to the high profile nature of the campaign.

Helpline – it was already in operation for the 'permits' and was intended as another vehicle for making information available.

Members drew attention to the fact that the website was not as up-to-date as it might be and that some of the links weren't working.

It was **AGREED** that Helen Younger agreed would look into this and to look at whether the 'Review' newsletter could be added to the site or whether the information was already there in a different format.

There had been around 4,500 hits on the web site which would fall slightly short of the 10,000 hits by the June that had been anticipated, but was still a pleasing result.

Evaluation

On being asked how the Partnership evaluated its own progress, officers pointed to the scrutiny work, which had achieved success. In addition there was both internal and external audit and regular reports to Government Office North West. The Environment Agency also had a paternal role to play.

Recycling credits

There had been no progress to date on recycling credits for 2008/09. This would have to be in place by then – interim arrangements were currently in place – and officers had an interest in ensuring progress was achieved.

Annual Report

Barbara Jones would be producing an Annual Report by June in easy-to-understand language.

It was **AGREED** that a copy would be provided to all Members of the committee.

Accountability

It was acknowledged that a user-friendly version of the CSWP minutes on the web site had not yet been achieved.

It was **AGREED** that the minutes would appear on the web site by the end of February.

CONCLUSIONS

Members agreed that they had received their answers at this scrutiny meeting and where there had been no action, this had been admitted and timescales put in place. They felt that good progress had been made. They reaffirmed that they would look at the Partnership again in up to 12 months.

It was **AGREED** that a letter (rather than a report) would be sent to the Cumbria Strategic Partnership on this occasion which would flag up the areas they would want to keep an eye on.

Members acknowledged with elections looming, it was a fluid political landscape and the Membership of the working group may have changed in a year's time. They acknowledged that they had worked well together and thanked Cllr Bradshaw for her Chairmanship expertise.

The meeting closed at 4.30pm