

**DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Looking After the Environment** held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 20 March 2006** at **10.00 a.m.**

**COUNCILLOR CARROLL** in the Chair

**Members:**

Councillors Armstrong, Carr, Chapman, Cox, Freeman, Gray, Holroyd, Lethbridge, Trippett and Young.

**Co-opted:**

D Easton

**Other Members:**

Councillors Bowman, Coates, Iveson, Magee, Meir, Myers, O'Donnell, Pye, Stelling, Tennant, Vasey and Williams.

Apologies were received from Councillor Ord

**A1 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 12 December 2005 and 5 and 31 January 2006 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**A2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**A3 Items from Co-opted Members**

There were no items from Co-opted Members.

**A4 Performance Update – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2005/06**

The Sub-Committee a considered report of the Head of Corporate Policy providing a performance update for Best Value Performance Indicators for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2005/06 (for report see file of minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted and that further progress reports be submitted in due course.

## **A5 Waste Management Issues**

The Sub Committee received a presentation from John Wade about the progress on the review of the Waste Management Strategy.

The review of the waste management strategy for County Durham is due to be completed by 31 March 2006. The review is being funded by Defra and the work is managed by ERM, who are Defra appointed consultants.

The strategy covers four main options:

- Minimise more
- Recycle and compost more
- Add more capacity for the treatment of residual waste
- Investigate alternative thermal treatment with energy recovery (incineration with energy from waste is being investigated as part of the option requested by the Sub Committee)

Each option is being assessed against a range of objectives and criteria including air and water quality, landscape, biodiversity transport etc. This will enable a comparison matrix to be produced. A health impact assessment is also being carried out as a separate study. An integral part of the review will be a consultation exercise (via telephone interview) with key health stakeholders.

There will always be a need for landfill capacity to deal with residual waste and it is recognised that landfill capacity is a major concern. In March 2007 two landfill sites will close and it will be difficult to obtain a permit for the remaining phase of the Coxhoe site as a result of the Environment Agency Groundwater Protection Policy.

The options in terms of new technology were outlined. These included:

- Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) – this involves pre-treating the waste prior to composting or incineration
- Anaerobic/Aerobic Digester
- Gasification/Pyrolysis – Premier Waste have trialled the technology and had difficulties using a mixed waste stream
- Incineration with energy recovery - the facility at Billingham is currently at capacity at the preset time
- Autoclaving – form of sterilisation (heat treatment) of waste prior to composting. High energy inputs are required.

It was explained that the amount of household waste per head of population was forecast to be around 545kg for 2005/06. The BVPI target for 2005/06 was 560 kg. Although there are various initiatives to minimise waste, it is difficult to achieve at local level given that the majority of waste is discarded packaging.

In relation to trade waste it was explained that there was limited capacity at HWRC's to handle trade and commercial waste. Some capacity was available at waste transfer stations. There is concern that providing reasonably priced facilities, it will attract waste from outside of the County. The procurement process will be an opportunity to address the issue of trade/commercial waste.

The Sub Committee was informed that householders now have a duty of care to ensure that a registered company deals with their waste. Registered waste companies will have documentation confirming their waste carrier licence details.

In relation to the use of disposal nappies, John explained that a number of promotions have been carried out to promote the use of re-usable nappies.

In response to questions about the output of the digester it was explained that the material is inert and can be used on landfill restoration. In addition Premier Waste will be using the material on four sites to grow coppicing. The material improves soil structure and can be used to support tree growth.

Members expressed their concern about the importation of waste from outside of the County, bearing in mind the limited landfill capacity that is available. Members were also concerned about the delay in providing alternative facilities to landfill, particularly given the time that will be needed to obtain the necessary permissions for new waste treatment facilities.

John Wade explained that this issue would be addressed through the procurement process. Any successful contractor will need to satisfy the Authority that they can meet the diversion targets.

Members questioned why an extension to the existing contract was needed. John Wade informed the Sub Committee, that advice from consultants was that it was unlikely that the timetable would be met. This was as a result of having to meet timetables under the Environmental Protection Act and the need to adhere to EU procurement processes. Every effort will be made to complete the procurement process as quickly as possible.

**Resolved:**

That the presentation be noted.

**A6 Meeting with Cabinet Members for Environment Issues**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny explaining the areas covered in a discussion between members of the Sub Committee and relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders (for copy see file of minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**A7 Review of 'Waste – Not Wanted' Fly Tipping Scrutiny Project**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Fly Tipping Scrutiny Working Group reviewing progress in implementing the recommendations made by the Working Group (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the progress made in the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations be noted and that a further review be undertaken in 6 months time.

## **A8 Review of 'Recycling for the Future' – Household Waste Recycling Centre Project**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Household Waste Recycling Centre Scrutiny Working Group reviewing progress in implementing the recommendations made by the Working Group (for copy see file of Minutes).

### **Resolved:**

That the progress report be noted and the project be concluded.

## **A9 Forward Plan**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny on the Forward Plan (for copy see file of minutes).

### **Resolved**

That the report be noted.

## **A10 Work Programme**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny on the current work programme for the Sub-Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

### **Resolved**

That the current work programme be noted.