

Waste Group update – March 2020

The Waste Group met virtually on 18 March with substantive items of discussion on fly-tipping, potential impacts of COVID 19, the national Resources and Waste strategy, and climate change.

Duncan Jones from Hertfordshire CC presented a paper on potential national lobbying points for helping to address fly-tipping. Duncan explained that the paper included proposals for a number of changes/interventions relating to fly-tipping which have been developed from experience within the Herts fly-tipping group. It was explained that the proposals were receiving wide interest and had been presented to the national fly-tipping forum chaired by Defra. The Waste Group fully endorsed the proposals.

There was much discussion on emerging issues from COVID 19. It was noted that Defra has convened a local authority advisory group to meet by conference call three times per week to understand how the virus is affecting refuse and recycling services. Ian Fielding and Steve Read are invited on behalf of ADEPT. The discussion has already highlighted an emerging consensus in prioritising food/black bag and recycling collections over bulky and garden waste collection. Defra is asking to be made aware of any potential legislative or bureaucratic barriers to maintaining services during the crisis and the potential to relax planning constraints on waste deliveries – e.g. as with ministerial guidance on food deliveries. Members of the Waste group were asked to identify any issues to be fed into Defra.

It was noted that staff levels within local authorities are already being affected, and the expectation was that up to 30% of staff could be absent. Comments were also made that recent changes to Government advice on disposal of waste from homes where people were self-isolating was helpful – i.e. store for 72 hours then place in domestic waste.

The group discussed the varied approaches to measurement of carbon impacts relating to waste services, and how authorities are accounting for waste within their approaches to carbon neutrality. The various models were noted with no consensus on which to use, but the group concluded that a simple model that is 'fit for purpose' would be helpful – perhaps like the Zero Waste Scotland model? This would negate the need to reinvent the wheel and employ consultants each time an authority wants to understand its carbon metrics.

Robert Vaughan from Defra summed up progress with the Resources and Waste Strategy. He described that Defra is engaging stakeholders on Extended Producer Responsibility through a series of Sounding Boards chaired by Steve Lee (Ian Fielding and Steve Read attended on behalf of ADEPT). WRAP have also facilitated workshops on Consistency which was noted as being a thorough attempt to understand how to implement the RWS, with a real desire to understand what support, tools, advice and assistance local authorities might need to deliver.

Robert explained the programme for further engagement and that Defra expects to consult on a core set of materials later this year for implementation in 2023 - including pots, tubs and trays plus aluminium and other food and drink packaging, plus film. It is understood

that more work is needed in two tier areas over issues such as recycling credits. Overall there was thanks and support to Defra from the group for an effective engagement programme.