

At a meeting of the West London Waste Authority held on Friday 1 December 2023 at 10.00 am at the The Auditorium - Harrow Council Hub, Kenmore Avenue, Harrow, HA3 8LU.

Present:

Councillor Deirdre Costigan, Councillor Stephen Greek, Councillor Guy Lambert, Councillor Eddie Lavery and Councillor Julia Neden Watts

Present virtually: Councillor Krupa Sheth

81. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

82. Declarations of interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members.

83. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2023

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2023 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

84. 2024/25 Budget

Members received a report which set out the 2024/25 budget proposal.

Sapna Dhanani, Finance Manager, outlined the content of the report in detail and Peter Tilston, Projects Director, provided information in relation to the Projects Programme. Tom Beagan, Head of Service Delivery, advised that the largest cost related to waste transport.

Members had a lengthy discussion on the draft budget and asked questions and made comments which were duly responded to including the following:

- In terms of PPP income, it was questioned whether there were specific activities taking place. Members were advised that work was underway under Citizen Perception to baseline resident understanding in terms of waste and resources within the wider climate change agenda and that this was being addressed by the Joint Communication Board. The aim was to reduce waste and to also ensure that residents were using services correctly and, in response, a Member commented that he would be interested to see how high level understanding would translate into action on a practical level.
- A Member questioned whether sufficient was being done to minimise risk given the cost of insurance and the operational challenges of an incident at a larger site. The Head of Service Delivery emphasised that, from an operational perspective, mitigating fire risk was key. A Fire Prevention Group was being established across boroughs and a focus on the materials arriving at sites was required to ensure that flammable materials could be prevented from entering the system. Victoria

Lawson, Technical Adviser, added that Environment Directors were acutely aware of the issue and the risks associated with certain materials.

- In relation to the concerns expressed about insurance costs and why they had previously been met from reserves, the Managing Director sought to reassure Members that there would be greater transparency in future reports. The Projects Director explained that the costs were only going in one direction this year and these costs were not being met from reserves. Members requested that the final version of the budget include further detail on the previous treatment of insurance.
- A Member expressed concern at the increase in costs this year and expected next year and requested reassurance that officers were doing their best to keep this under control. The officers explained that costs had come in higher during the current year due to inflationary pressure. The service cost of the Mixed Recycling Facility (MRF) now included Brent as well as Ealing and that within 'supplies and services' there were also fees which related to the insurance. The additional work was the waste disposal authority taking on more work in order offer efficiency to boroughs and should be regarded as good growth. The Treasurer added that whilst details of growth were set out within the report Members could be also provided with the percentage increase. Growth was needed and some was due to an increase in tonnage and to reflect inflation. He explained that the draft budget also detailed savings and that during the budget setting process all costs were challenged but that it might be necessary to draw out, within the report, the rigour that went into the process.
- Disposal of a variety of batteries continued to be a concern and the Technical Adviser stated that there was to be a wider communications around the different types. The Head of Service Delivery indicated that further work could be done with contractors in order to have evidence that fires are being caused by batteries.
- The Chair stated that Councils were considering all their spend in detail given the current financial situation and budget setting process and that the boroughs might question whether the Authority was being overly cautious in terms of reserves. She sought reassurance that the Authority was putting in the same effort as the six individual constituent boroughs to save money. The Finance Manager advised that there had been discussions with budget holders and that the reserves of £26m were being held due to the Emissions Trading Scheme 2028 and its potential impact. This would bring additional workload to the Authority.
- Clarification was sought on the business as usual savings and it was commented that RAG ratings would be helpful.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the 2024/25 budget for consultation be noted;
- (2) it be noted that the budget for work would be met from PPP income;
- (3) it be noted that the Pay As You Throw (PAYT) rates, as set out in section 15 of the officer report, and the PAYT levy would be made up of two components totalling of £57.4 million;
- (4) the Fixed Cost Levy (FCL) of £15.2 million, as set out in section 16 of the officer report, be noted;
- (5) the recommended trade and construction prices, set out in section 17 of the officer report, be noted and the Treasurer be authorised to change these in year should the need arise be noted;

- (6) the new proposed capital budgets, as set out in section 18 of the officer report, be noted;
- (7) the spend of £450,000 on containers for the Social Value and Reuse programme be approved;
- (8) the target level of reserves of £16.1 million to act as a buffer for managing risks and avoiding supplementary levies, as set out in section 19 of the officer report, be noted;
- (9) the Medium and Long Term Financial Plan, as set out in section 20 of the officer report, be noted.

85. Health and Safety: Annual Review of performance in 2023 and the plans for 2024

Members received a report which reviewed the Authority's Health & Safety arrangements for the calendar year 2023 and presented the Authority's Health & Safety Plan for 2024.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Annual Health & Safety Performance Review 2023 and Action Plan for 2024, as set out at Appendix 1 to the officer report, be noted;
- (2) the Authority's Health & Safety Policy (updated in September 2022) remain unchanged.

86. Operations Update: Victoria Road

Members received a report which summarised an analysis of operational issues at Victoria Road transfer station, the potential impacts on Boroughs and steps being taken to resolve the issues.

Emma Beal, Managing Director, reported that in terms the Victoria Road site, there had been an issue with the cranes. A Member advised that it was not just delays on site, it was also drivers having to wait to get on site and she questioned whether there was more boroughs could do to mitigate this. The Head of Service Delivery advised that it was proving to be more difficult than expected to obtain data in relation to delays from the system and that he would continue to look at this. He was hopeful that ANPR might help as well as the Digital Twin which would assist in holding the contractor to account.

The Managing Director advised that in cab tracking data would assist in terms of automating processes and the production of reports. Members questioned whether it was reluctance or lack of understanding of the requirements that might be leading to the lack of data being provided and were advised that it was likely to be due to a variety of reasons. The Technical Adviser undertook to raise this issue with Environment Directors and Members noted that it might also be useful to raise with Finance Directors to establish who held the data.

In response to a Member's request that the completion date for the new cranes be moved forward in order to minimise disruption, the Head of Service Delivery advised that SUEZ were taking the situation seriously but that there was nothing the Authority could do about the completion date.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

87. Victoria Lawson, Technical Adviser

Members were informed that Victoria Lawson had been appointed as the Chief Executive of the London Borough of Islington and would therefore no longer be the Authority's Technical Adviser.

Members congratulated Victoria on her appointment and expressed their thanks for her work and contribution to the Authority.

The meeting finished at 11.34 am.

The minute taker at this meeting was Alison Atherton.