



## PART A REPORT

**Report to:** South London Waste Partnership (SLWP) Joint Committee

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**Author(s):** John Haynes, SLWP Communications Advisor

**Report title:** **Communications and engagement update**

### Summary

This paper provides an update to Members of the South London Waste Partnership Joint Committee on communications and stakeholder engagement activities relating to the Partnership's residual waste treatment services; Household Reuse and Recycling Centre (HRRC) services; food and green waste treatment services; and marketing of recyclates.

This report focuses on activity that has taken place between April and May 2023.

### Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this report and comment on any aspects of communications and engagement activities relating to the residual waste treatment services; Household Reuse and Recycling Centre (HRRC) services; food and green waste treatment services; and marketing of recyclates.
- Approve the two-year SLWP Communications Plan (2023/24 - 2024/25) – Appendix A.
- Approve delegation of authority to agree any required minor amendments to the SLWP Communications Plan (2023/24 - 2024/25) to the Chair of the SLWP Joint Committee and Chair of SLWP Strategic Management Group.

### 1. SLWP COMMUNICATIONS PLAN (2023/24 – 2024/25)

- 1.1 A two-year communications plan covering the period April 2023 - March 2025 has been drafted by the SLWP Communications Advisor, in consultation with the partner boroughs.
- 1.2 In the past, SLWP communications plans have covered three-year periods and have always immediately followed (and been informed by)

the triennial SLWP resident survey. A two-year plan is appropriate given the significant changes coming into effect for the Partnership in April 2025 (with new individual borough arrangements for waste collections and street cleansing).

- 1.3 A copy of the SLWP Communications Plan (2023/24 - 2024/25) can be found at Appendix A. Members of the Committee are asked to review and approve the priority areas set out in the plan.

## **2. THE SOUTH LONDON WASTE PARTNERSHIP WEBSITE**

- 2.1 The new South London Waste Partnership website ([www.slwp.org.uk](http://www.slwp.org.uk)) went live on Wednesday 10 May 2023. The launch and transition from the old to the new site went smoothly, with no significant technical issues.
- 2.2 The new SLWP website:
  - Meets the latest accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1 AA)
  - Features advanced translation tools, enabling the site to be translated at the click of button into more than 100 languages, including 65 'text-to-speech' voices
  - Has been built on a responsive design, so works equally well on desktop, mobile and held-held devices
  - Is hosted on a secure, fully-managed (24/7) and scalable hosting platform
  - Has an updated design and refreshed content, to reflect the current responsibilities and priorities of the Partnership.

## **3. HOUSEHOLD REUSE AND RECYCLING CENTRES (HRRCS)**

- 3.1 This contract is operated by Veolia on behalf of the Partnership boroughs.
- 3.2 Site user satisfaction - Site user satisfaction surveys continue to be conducted at the six HRRC sites on a rolling basis.
- 3.3 A summary of the findings from these surveys is reported to this Committee in the Contract Management Reports, and uploaded to the SLWP website.

## **4. BEDDINGTON ENERGY RECOVERY FACILITY (ERF)**

- 4.1 The Residual Waste Treatment Contract was awarded to Viridor in 2012. In order to fulfil the contract, Viridor has constructed a £205m state-of-the-art Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) in Beddington, Sutton. Household waste from the four Partner boroughs that either cannot be

recycled or has not been sorted for recycling is treated at the facility and used to generate electricity.

- 4.2 The SLWP Communications Advisor continues to work closely with Viridor to:
- Ensure Viridor are meeting their contractual requirements with regards to communications and stakeholder engagement around the operation of the Beddington ERF
  - Ensure local people understand why it is we need an ERF and provide reassurance around the safety of modern, well-run facilities such as this
  - Ensure the Partnership understands the views of local people with regards to waste treatment and ERF technologies in particular.
- 4.3 Permit variation application – The SLWP continues to make regular contact with the Environment Agency (EA) to seek clarification on the timescale for their determination of Viridor’s application to vary the Environmental Permit for the Beddington ERF. To date, no clear timescale has been provided, as the EA continues to review the feedback received from the consultation and liaise with Viridor on clarifications and further evidence to support their application.
- 4.4 A further period of consultation will take place if the EA is ‘minded to issue’ the variation. If approved by the EA, Viridor will be allowed to treat 10% more waste at the Beddington ERF. The SLWP boroughs have made their objection to the application clear and submitted a joint written representation to the EA during the initial consultation period.
- 4.5 Emissions – the environmental performance of the Beddington ERF is reported to this Committee in the Contract Management Report. Viridor uploads Emissions Monitoring Reports to the Beddington ERF Virtual Visitor Centre ([www.beddingtonerf.info](http://www.beddingtonerf.info)) twice per month.
- 4.6 The SLWP Communications Advisor continues to work with Viridor to ensure local residents have access to timely and accurate information about the environmental performance of the facility via the Virtual Visitor Centre.
- 4.7 Site visits – Viridor is hosting an open day for local residents to visit and tour the Beddington ERF on Tuesday 20 June. Details are available on the SLWP website ([www.slwp.org.uk/visit](http://www.slwp.org.uk/visit)) and the boroughs have been provided with content to promote the event via their social media and other communications channels.

## **5. Collections and street cleansing**

- 5.1 Communication and engagement activities relating to recycling & waste collections and street cleansing are not formally under the remit of this Joint Committee. Nevertheless, this short summary of recent

activity is provided to Members in order to provide a more complete picture of SLWP communication and engagement efforts.

5.2 Garden waste collection service promotion – The spring 2023 garden waste collection service promotional campaign is now complete and was delivered successfully:

- A hyper-targeted direct mail campaign saw promotional service information sent to 13,580 properties across the SLWP region. Initial analysis of the data shows that 1,223 of those properties signed up to the subscription service during the campaign period – a conversion rate of 9.0% (against our target of 5%)
- The direct mail campaign was supported by a targeted digital advertising campaign that ran across META (Facebook and Instagram) and Google. A new video-based asset was created for 2023, and this was A/B tested against the static digital creatives used in previous years. The new video asset performed particularly well.
- This year, for the first time, trackers were installed on the Sutton and Kingston Council websites that allowed us to accurately measure the conversion rate from the digital adverts – i.e. what proportion of people who saw the digital adverts went on to subscribe to the service. The following results were achieved:

Kingston

- META – 120 sign-ups / 1.56% conversion rate / £20.55 cost per acquisition
- Google – 115 sign ups / 13.1% conversion rate / £10.69 cost per acquisition

Sutton

- META – 117 sign ups / 1.47% conversion rate / £21.08 cost per acquisition
- Google – 121 sign ups / 10.8% conversion rate / £10.26 cost per acquisition

It is reasonable to assume that similar results were achieved from the digital campaign in Croydon and Merton, given that the assets and implementation were the same.

- This data will be carefully analysed and used to modify and optimise the effectiveness of the spring 2024 campaign.

5.3 Plastic waste and carbon awareness campaign – Working with Veolia, the SLWP plans to run a large-scale campaign in the summer/autumn 2023 raising awareness amongst residents of the direct link between plastic waste and carbon emissions.

5.4 The headline message of the campaign will be **'What's your plastic solution?'** and the call to action: *Change your relationship with plastic to reduce your carbon footprint.*

- 5.5 The photography-led campaign will then use ‘normative messaging’ to highlight four simple steps that residents can take to reduce their plastic waste and in turn drive down their personal carbon footprint:
- 'I use my local refill shop' (*reduce*)
  - 'I reuse my plastic water bottle' (*reuse*)
  - 'I recycle all my plastic pots, tubs and trays' (*recycle – in home*)
  - 'I recycle my crisp packets and other flexible plastics' (*recycle – out of home*)
- 5.6 Residents will be encouraged to engage with the campaign by sharing their hints and tips on social media using the hashtag *#PlasticSolution*.
- 5.7 Finally residents will be directed (via URL and QR code) to a dedicated Plastic Solution campaign page on the new SLWP website where they can find out more about how plastic waste impacts on your personal carbon footprint (and simple steps you can take to reduce it).
- 5.8 More details of the campaign will be provided at the next Committee meeting.
- 5.9 Contamination and Excess waste education programme – As part of our efforts to encourage households to reduce the amount of waste they produce and recycle as much as possible, a robust and well-established contamination and excess waste escalation process has been in place with Veolia for many years.
- 5.10 Through the process, households that repeatedly produce excess waste (i.e. rubbish that does not fit in the wheelie bin) or contaminate their recycling (i.e. put the wrong items in the recycling bins) receive information tags on their bins and advice letters through the door. In the majority of cases, this is sufficient to resolve the issue.
- 5.11 Households that continue to contaminate their recycling or produce excess waste despite receiving the tags and letters are added to a list of addresses to receive a face-to-face visit from a recycling advisor. In the past this ‘door-knocking’ exercise was carried out on a quarterly basis by an external provider. That was put on hold during the Covid pandemic, and since then the external providers who operate in this sector have not been able to offer the service at a reasonable price.
- 5.12 The SLWP boroughs have been clear that reintroducing the door-knocking is a priority. As a result, Veolia agreed that they would utilise in-house resources from their education and outreach team to conduct the visits. This new arrangement commenced in May 2023, with 117 properties across the SLWP region visited.

- 5.13 Recycling advisors spoke to residents about the issues and offered advice and support on how to use the recycling and waste collection service properly. They also audited the bins to ensure the property had all the containers they need. A 'sorry we missed you' postcard and service information booklet was put through the door of any properties where nobody answered the door. Door-knocking will continue on a regular basis going forward with the boroughs provided with update reports.
- 5.14 Facility tours – A number of councillors from Kingston Council visited the Veolia Southwark Material Recycling Facility (MRF) during April and May. This facility is where mixed recycling from communal properties is taken to be sorted by machines and by hand.
- 5.15 Veolia is hosting an open day for local residents to visit and tour the Southwark MRF on Thursday 29 June. Details are available on the SLWP website ([www.slwp.org.uk/visit](http://www.slwp.org.uk/visit)) and the boroughs have been provided with content to promote the event via their social media and other communications channels.

## **6. Legal impacts and implications**

- 6.1 None

## **7. Communications**

- 7.1 This report has been drafted by the Partnership's Communications Advisor, who works closely with the four SLWP boroughs and the partnership's commercial partners to ensure communications and engagements activities support the themes agreed in the SLWP Communications Strategy 2020-2022.

## **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 The Committee is asked to:
- Note the contents of this report and comment on any aspects of communications and engagement activities relating to the residual waste treatment services; Household Reuse and Recycling Centre (HRRC) services; food and green waste treatment services; and marketing of recyclates.
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