

JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
18 SEPTEMBER 2025
(10.00 - 11.56 am)

Present: Councillor Karen Rowland, Reading Borough Council (Chair)
Councillor Helen Purnell, Bracknell Forest Council (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Mary Temperton, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Liz Terry (Reading Borough Council)
Councillor Katrin Harding (Wokingham Borough Council)

Apologies for absence were received from:
Councillors Alder

In attendance: Oliver Burt, re3 Strategic Waste Manager and Project Director
Monika Bulmer, re3 Marketing and Communications Officer
Sarah Innes, re3 Monitoring and Performance Officer
Steve McDonald, re3 Financial Officer
Damian James, Bracknell Forest Council
Claire Pike, Bracknell Forest Council
Richard Bisset, Wokingham Borough Council
Pam Rowe-Jones, Wokingham Borough Council
Chris Wheeler, Reading Borough Council

12. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

13. Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board

The minutes of the Joint Waste Disposal Board held on 24 June 2025 were approved as a correct record.

14. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

15. re3 Progress Report

Sarah Innes, re3 Monitoring and Performance Officer presented the re3 Progress report.

Members' attention was drawn to the proposals on DIY charging, to refine the structure of the scheme with the contractor. The proposal was to implement the new charging structure from 1 December 2025, and the government mandated free allowance would remain in effect. The scheme aimed to direct cost for large disposal of DIY waste to the household rather than council tax payers in general.

Members also noted the proposal to ban certain individuals who had behaved inappropriately at recycling centres from the centres in future. This followed two incidents, one of physical abuse, at one of the sites. Legal advice had been sought from Reading Borough Council's Legal team, and guidance on how to ban an individual from sites was awaited. Officers planned to bring a future report to the next meeting on other incidents where a ban might be considered.

In response to members' questions, the following points were noted:

- Members were keen to publicise the fact that DIY charging was on a cost recovery basis.
- Members welcomed the suggestion that households could deposit their four-weekly allowance of DIY waste in one go but recognised that work would be needed to enable this through the system.
- Members requested publicity to include meaningful and practical reference to volume, rather than referring to waste in litres. It was noted that this was in place on the website but could be further publicised.
- The list of chargeable DIY waste would be kept under review, but carpet and rugs were not included in other Council's chargeable DIY waste lists. re3 could seek its own legal advice on this and consider the matter further.
- The contractor was looking to add audio to the CCTV system in place, and the data protection implications of this were being explored.
- Members queried how residents who behaved violently at recycling sites could be banned from the sites, and it was understood that bans were implemented infrequently at Councils with this policy in place. Legal advice would be sought in the instance that a resident did not comply with a ban.

Having discussed the matter, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The contents of this report be noted
- 2 Officers be instructed to implement the proposed charging structure, as described at 6.10, from 1st December 2025.
- 3 Officers be instructed to bring a report to the next meeting on options to ban users from the Recycling Centres in justifiable circumstances.
- 4 Temporary bans be agreed to be issued, upon receipt of legal advice, in cases of physical abuse, as described at 6.22.

16. **re3 Communications Report**

Monika Bulmer, re3 Communications and Marketing Officer presented the re3 Communications report.

The 're3wear' campaign had launched for the reuse of school uniforms in partnership with First Days charity and had been well received on social media. The campaign would run year-round.

The behavioural change communication campaign was on track to launch in Autumn 2025 with the aim to increase food waste recycling. Suppliers had been secured, and officers were looking to target all households in Reading and some targeted areas of Wokingham.

The new chatbot widget on the website was working well, and 7,700 chats had been opened since the launch in July 2025.

Officers were working to collate feedback on the DIY charges and provide clear information and guidance to residents using existing communication channels.

The National Civic Amenity Site conference had been held in Reading in July and had been a success. Re3 had co-hosted the event and conducted two tours of the recycling site at Smallmead.

The annual environment report had included a strong result in customer satisfaction and had focussed on the range of reuse schemes available to residents.

Monika also updated on plans for communication work during Recycling Week, following the WRAP campaign. Public tours of the MERF were scheduled and were fully booked. An online tour was planned to further engage with residents and all members were invited to attend online.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- The chatbot was not intended to necessarily reduce customer contact to the re3 office, but to direct residents to the answers to their queries on the website where possible.
- Members commented that any communications work needed to be sensitive to the different approaches taken across three Councils.
- It was discussed that the communications assets, from the campaign, would be shared with Bracknell Forest (who decided against joining this specific campaign).
- Communications around glass kerbside recycling would take priority in Bracknell Forest over food waste recycling.
- Residents were not able to browse the recycled school uniforms at the recycling sites, and any donations would be sent to First Days for quality control.
- Bracknell Town Council had made contact following a successful Summer of Fun event at which Reread books had been given out to children, to arrange an ongoing collection point at their office.
- Officers planned to look into the analytics behind the chat bot once it had been operating for a number of months, to get further detail on the enquiries residents had.

Members noted the report.

17. **re3 Flexible Plastics Report**

Sarah Innes, re3 Monitoring and Performance Officer presented the re3 Flexible Plastics report.

The FlexCollect project had been seeking to understand the outcome of the trial, and the consortium's final report had been published with positive conclusions drawn. Members were reminded that funding for the FlexCollect trial across re3 council areas would conclude in March 2026, and officers proposed that flexible plastics in the areas covered by the trial be funded for a further year.

Officers also proposed to commission technical drawings of the MRF and changes required in order to expand the flexible plastics collection to a greater area.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- The MRF was set up for the level of current engagement in flexible plastic collection trial and residents could not opt-in to the scheme at this time.
- FCC anticipated that a technical report on the necessary changes to expand the flexible plastics scheme would be available by the end of the year and would be shared with Board members as soon as possible.
- Members recognised the challenges and risks associated with the emissions trading scheme, with lots of uncertainties at the moment.
- It was noted that Wokingham residents were not part of the flexible plastics collection trial.

- Members reiterated the importance of a responsible waste stream for recyclables.
- Members requested further details around a contract to secure recycling capacity to maximise on the expertise gained through the trial.
- It was commented that the budget setting process across the three councils may not allow for the capital approval process ahead of the 1 April 2027 when the legislation was due to begin.

Having discussed the matter, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The contents of the report be noted
- 2 The continuation of the flexible plastic service to the trial area in 2026/27 as described at 6.20 be approved
- 3 The indicative costs associated with continued use of bags and comingled collection during a full roll-out from 2027/28 be noted, and the Contractor's costs of £21k for technical drawings of the MRF be approved so the table of costs can be finalised with capital costs, as described at 6.29.

18. **Joint Waste Disposal Board Reports, Information and Internal Governance Report**

Oliver Burt, re3 Project Director presented the report on Information and Internal Governance.

re3 officers were proposing to publish some public data sets including bottle bank maps, booking information and details on recycling contamination.

Oliver also explained the need for collaboration around report writing prior to being presented at the Board, to ensure that the three Councils could each fulfil their governance requirements whilst preventing delayed information reaching the Board meetings.

Members were also asked whether or not the agenda setting meetings could be held at the end of each Board meeting.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Members welcomed an open and transparent approach to data publication, with the caveat that data needed to be explained to be impactful and fully understood by residents.
- Members were mindful that not all Board reports would be as significant as others, and it was not anticipated that all Board reports would need to be taken through all internal committees before being presented at the Board.
- It was suggested that the minutes of Board meetings could go back to a relevant Committee in each Council to provide a feedback loop.
- Members were keen to keep the separate agenda setting meetings to allow for reflection following Board meetings.

Having discussed the matter it was **RESOLVED** that

- 1 The contents of this report be noted

- 2 The plan to publish key sources of information as described at 6.5 and 6.7 (and as illustrated at Appendix 1) be approved
- 3 The Assistant Directors at the respective councils be requested to liaise over a schedule for earlier reporting, seeking to establish mutually suitable conditions, for reporting and scrutiny across the partnership, as proposed at 6.15.

19. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

RESOLVED that pursuant to Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2012 and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of items 10, 11 and 12 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

(3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

20. **re3 Financial Management Report**

Steve McDonald, re3 Finance Officer presented the financial management report.

Having discussed the report, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The Forecast financial position for the re3 partnership be noted as detailed at 5.1 to 5.8 of this report
- 2 The proposed re3 FY26/27 Budget at 5.9 to 5.21 be noted

21. **re3 Strategy and Consultation Report**

Monika Bulmer, re3 communications and marketing officer presented the re3 strategy report.

Having discussed the report, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The contents of this report be noted
- 2 A final draft of the re3 strategy be endorsed, as described at 6.3 and 6.4.
- 3 The suggested consultation questions and consultation programme, as described at 6.12 to 6.16 have been reviewed and that members establish a Task and Finish Group comprising Members and relevant Officers to address and resolve any outstanding issues, including feedback proposed during the meeting.

22. **re3 Contract Transition Report**

Oliver Burt presented the re3 Contract Transition report.

Having discussed the matter, members **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The contents of this report be noted.

- 2 The arrangements for allocating internal resources and the commissioning of Local Partnerships to support the partnership in planning and the preparation of business cases be approved.
- 3 The proposal for an agreed and coherent project vision to be developed, as described at 6.21 to 6.25, be approved.

23. **Date of the Next Board Meeting**

Board members agreed the following dates for meetings in 2026/27, at locations to be confirmed:

5 February 2026, 10am
2 April 2026, 10am
11 June 2026, 10am
17 September 2026, 10am
28 January 2027, 10am

CHAIRMAN