

Report from Councillor Tony Austin – Waste Partnership meeting

I attended the above Zoom Meeting on 29th. July, at which County Cllr. Shaun Turner was elected chair. Several excellent slide presentations were made at the meeting and the detailed information can be accessed by the following link https://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/downloads/download/8007/committee_report

Meeting agreed to join another 200 authorities as co-signatures of a letter to the Minister asking for fly-tipping penalties to be increased to a more realistic level.

Carole Taylor, Pendle Council officer and chair of LARAC (a local government waste association) gave a very extensive report on 3 current consultations between local authorities and Government (see details in 2nd. attachment at the link above) relating to the report stage of the Environment Bill. One related to EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility on Packaging), ensuring packaging producers pay full actual costs of packaging including waste. Another related to the DRS (Deposit Return Scheme) for money back, probably through machines for empty soft drink containers after 2024. A third related to consistent collection standards throughout collection authorities across England and Wales. Separate food waste collections would probably not be compulsory until 2025.

One of the most useful proposals is the introduction of mandatory recycling labels on plastics. We will all then be able to tell directly whether any empty plastic container is recyclable or not from the labelling, rather than relying on our knowledge of the numeric product codes on them.

L.C.C. outlined funding that had been made to borough councils for specific projects that should make the processing of waste more efficient. In 2020, L.C.C. gave total grant funding of £168,285 to boroughs and in 2021, £121,400. In 2020, RVBC's share was £15,600 for replacement of some purple bags by residual and recycling bins thereby increasing the recycling rate overall. In 2021, RVBC was awarded £13,000 to reduce the risk of environmental contamination at the Waste Transfer Station.

The County are now looking for a borough that will pilot collection of batteries separately for recycling, because batteries put in residual waste can be a fire hazard as well as being valuable in themselves. Pendle already do this, but Lancashire would like to standardise a process. Why not Ribble Valley to do a pilot project?

The meeting received a presentation on the Reuse 360 project, which was set up by Lancashire (originally in a Garstang shop) to help homeless families, when going into new accommodation and needing recycled quality furniture, household textiles and even refurbished bicycles. The textiles were laundered first by Wymott Prison, whilst Kirkham Prison refurbished bicycles. The project provided a web-site created with free of charge items, but restricted only to approved users. At the meeting date, there were only 78 of these, but the scheme was expected to grow fairly quickly. I have myself previously made efforts to set up quality furniture recycling within Ribble Valley but was hampered logistically by the absence of daily transport between the Household Recycling Centres and the charity shops.

Finally, it was emphasised at the meeting that we were all supposed to be aiming at a target of 65% recycling by 2035. This would be a very tall order as recycling rates

(currently around 36% in Ribble Valley) had not grown much since 2015 and had not been helped by lockdown.