

Harrow Agenda 21
Minutes of the Waste & Recycling Group Meeting
Committee Room 6, Harrow Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2UZ
Wednesday 29th September 2010, 7.00 PM

Present:

Mick Oliver	MO	Chair
Charlotte Neville	CN	Minute Taker
Linda Robinson	LR	Secretary, Harrow Agenda 21
Daniel McKeon	DM	
Beverly McKeon	BM	Pinner Wood School
Mick Campbell	MC	South Harrow & Roxeth Residents' Association
Andrew Baker	AB	
Phiroza Gan	PG	
Pamela Swain	PS	Harrow Friends of the Earth
Akil Dhalla	AD	
Evelyn Donald	ED	

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Keith Tarring and Eileen Kinnear.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

2.1 Minutes of the previous meeting on 26th May 2010 were considered and approved.

3. Harrow Waste Management Report

3.1 AB reported that recycling levels were slightly below targets, and that unsorted waste from flats was generally sent to a dirty MRF (Material Reclamation Facility).

3.2 AB informed the meeting that he expected to know his budget for 2011-2 by 20th October.

3.3 MC thanked AB for organising access to Harrow's depot for the group's video.

3.4 AB, in response to an inquiry from BM, suggested that schools without composting facilities should ask the companies handling their gardening to take green waste and have it recycled.

4. Projects and Campaigns

4.1 "What happens to waste?"

4.1.1MO informed the meeting that the West London Waste Plan will be finalised by 2012, and expressed his concern that waste management sites were being chosen before the ideal

processes for local waste requirements had been decided. AB said that sites usually had to be found before the planning process could reach advanced stages.

4.1.2 AB informed the meeting that the latest West London Waste Plan document was expected to become available in October or November 2010.

4.1.3 ED expressed concerns about exporting waste abroad, asking what was being exported, and where to. AB explained that the Environment Agency is responsible for keeping track of levels, and that there is a demand for cardboard etc. in China. Cardboard is exported as processed bales, at the cost of the purchasers, after undergoing quality control checks by the Environment Agency. Efforts are made to ensure that recycled waste goes to reputable companies. 4.1.4 AB informed the meeting that a proportion of Harrow waste is now being sent to a MRF run by Greenstar in Enfield – no other member had been made aware of this. AB said that prices are routinely reviewed towards the end of the year. AB agreed to inform the Waste Group of any future changes.

4.1.5 MC told the group that he hopes to complete MRF film before Christmas – unlikely to contain footage from the Enfield MRF.

4.1.6 ED enquired about the MRF processes. AB explained that most have a range of equipment for sorting waste, dealing with 300,000 – 500,000 tons per year (Harrow usually contributes 20,000).

4.1.7 PS expressed concerns about a lack of publicity and openness concerning where our waste goes. The group discussed confusion about identifying and recycling different types of plastic, and MO promised to circulate details of the identification codes used on plastics.

4.1.7 Group discussed role of PRF (Plastic Reclamation Facility). PS said that more people should see the sites, as DM has done.

4.1.8 AB informed the meeting that the West London Waste Authority has paid for a survey to be conducted, in October, into the use of recycling bins by 120 households across six boroughs. AB agreed to share the analysis, when it is completed.

4.1.9 AD suggested presenting analysis to supermarkets, the source of most household waste. AB said that most supermarkets have their own agreements with the government concerning packaging, and that most packaging recycling is “invisible”.

4.1.10 MO thanked BM, DM and MC for their roles in filming.

* AB leaves meeting 4.2 Food Waste Competition

4.2.1 MO informed the meeting that the competition for the best recipe using leftover food has had to be discontinued.

4.2.2 MO told the meeting about a programme related to food recycling, which had been aired on the BBC and reviewed in In Contact.

4.2.3 PS told group about food wastage in the restaurant where she works.

4.2.4 DM raised question of what constituted “leftovers”. LR suggested that the type of food used by the chefs on the BBC programme was essentially different to what most people had at home, which was what the competition had been aimed at.

4.2.5 ED asked if Waitrose had been contacted about the voucher which had been intended as a competition prize, and MO confirmed that they had.

4.3 Under One Sky festival

4.3.1 BM thanked MO for his support, and reported that the bins at Under One Sky had looked decent. BM suggested that more should be made available next year – perhaps six – especially considering more people are expected to arrive (there was an England football match on the day of the 2010 festival). BM also reported difficulties concerning the bins arriving late.

4.3.2 MO thanked MC, DM and BM for their work at Under One Sky.

4.4 Waste Implications of Hard Water

4.4.1 MO passed round a Persil washing powder box, and drew attention to the different quantities required for hard and soft water areas, i.e. Harrow, which means more soap must be used per wash. This was derived from palm oil from palm oil plantations which are often planted on land which was originally tropical rain forest. MO preferred actions to soften water at source and reported that he had written to the Office for Water Regulation (OFWAT) and Harrow MPs, had received a discouraging reply from OFWAT (stating that OFWAT was an economic regulator and so not directly responsible for water softening) and was still awaiting replies from the MPs.

4.4.2 DM highlighted the scale and distances over which chemicals used in cleaning agents can be dangerous.

4.4.3 MC suggested contacting Defra.

4.4.4 PG suggested installing water softening facilities in new buildings. MO added that Three Valleys used to provide softened water for Royston, but highlighted that there was now no financial incentive action for them to do so, making it unlikely.

4.4.5 ED raised concern about what would be used to soften the water, stressing that using more chemicals would be counter-productive.

4.4.6 MO agreed to investigate further by looking for information on the WWF website.

4.5 Group Visit to West London Composting (August 5)

4.5.1 MO informed the meeting that he had been part of a visit to West London Composting facilities, representing the Waste Group, and that he can recommend Damien’s report in In Contact.

4.5.2 Group members discussed issues getting copies of In Contact – Harrow libraries do not have them.

5. Teabags and Plywood Pyramids

5.1 Teabags

5.1.1 MO reported to the meeting that, in July, he had read an article stating that teabags are not suitable for composting – passed the cutting around. MO expressed his opinion that this was speculation, and shared the experiment he has undertaken, testing to see if teabags do in fact decompose when left with other compostable waste. After 2 months the teabags had split, so that the contents were in a position to be composted, but that the bags were still visible. DM stated that teabags in Nower Hill's Time Capsule experiment had composted inside 1 year.

5.2 Plywood Pyramids

5.2.1 MO informed the group about planks of plywood he had found, and used to construct pyramid props for a church drama. MO added that with the dumped plywood and hinges he found had a value when new of £42 – highlighting that waste is a resource.

5.2.2 PG asked what people should do with potentially useful but miscellaneous waste.

5.2.3 The group discussed examples of creative recycling.

5.2.4 MC suggested that the public needs more information about industries' recycling.

6. Scrapbooks

6.1 MO discussed scrapbooks of cuttings relating to waste and recycling, and told the meeting that he would organise an example.

7. Any other business

7.1 MO congratulated DM on receiving the Jack Petchey Award.

7.2 DM gave an update on the time capsule project, expressing a hope to contribute photos for In Contact and the Education Group's newsletter.

8. Dates and Venues for Meetings in 2011

8.1 MO confirmed with those present that meetings for 2011 will be held on the last Wednesday of every "odd" month (January, March...) and would ask Linda Bradford to arrange meeting rooms at the Civic Centre.

9. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

9.1 Next meeting confirmed for 24th November, in Committee Room 6 at the Harrow Civic Centre, from 7PM.