



BRYN COMPOST LIAISON GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY, 13TH FEBRUARY 2013 AT 2:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor D. V. Poole Chairman

Councillors:

H.W. David, W. David, S. Morgan and Mrs J.A. Pritchard.

Together with:

Residents: Mr G. Reynolds, Mrs C. Woods, Mr. M. Davies, Mr T. Matthews, Mr. W. Griffiths, Mr R. Matthews, Mrs G. Davies, Mrs A. Gray,

Gelliargwellt Farm: Mr R. Thomas

Public Health Wales: Mr H. Brunt and Ms T. Deacon

Environment Agency: Mr A. Carter, Mr I. Jones and Mr J. Harrison

Environmental Health: Ms C. Edwards, Mr G. Mumford and Ms. A. Brown

Officers: Mrs E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Angel, Mrs A. Blackman, D. Bolter, G.J. Hughes and M.P. James. Residents Mr. J. Cuthbert (AM) and Mrs P. Lapsa. Public Health Wales: Mrs M. Bowley and Dr G. Richardson.

1. MINUTES 17TH OCTOBER 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Bryn Compost Liaison Group held on the 17th October 2012 be approved as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Members noted the statement from the Environment Agency and sought clarification as to why the investigation had taken so long and what and when any enforcement action would be taken against the operator.

Mr Harrison confirmed that the investigation had not just focused on the one incident but encompassed all operations from the event in July 2012 through to October 2012. Evidence had been gathered from this period and the findings developed into a report, which had been presented to the Environment Agency's Legal Team and Area Manager. The investigation had progressed in line with the EA's approved timeframe and the decision on the action to be taken would be made available as soon as possible.

3. UPDATES FROM PUBLIC HEALTH WALES

Ms Tracey Deacon updated Members on the briefing paper as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report. The quality outcomes framework data on disease prevalence for the Caerphilly borough as a whole and the GP practices in Gelligaer, Nelson and Ystrad Mynach were analysed for Asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and Depression.

Members noted that the prevalence for asthma had been increasing across Wales for some time and that this was a national trend. Within the locality the prevalence was highest in Ystrad Mynach, the practice furthest away from the site. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease was noted to be lower in the three highlighted practices than the average for Caerphilly. Members were advised that the analysis presented on depression was collated from 2006/07 data. During this period the prevalence for depression was highest in the Gelligaer practice and had been consistently higher than in the rest of the borough for several years. It was noted that the data for Gelligaer in 2011/12 had not been presented as the practice changed its clinical data system, which affected the quality of the coding for depression.

In conclusion Members were advised that Bryn Compost was not likely to have any significant effect on the general physical health of the public. GP records supported this, in that the rates of respiratory conditions and chronic obstructive airways disease were not elevated.

A concern was expressed that the data presented was based on the overall population rather than concentrating on the individual. Ms Deacon advised that the report presented the G.P. practice trends and therefore looked at the community as a whole, however individual medical data would have fed into the results shown.

Mr Brunt acknowledged the concerns raised, however Public Health Wales responsibility was to look at population health and the health of the community as a whole. Members were advised that if an individual became ill and visited the GP, a data stream was generated by the method of contact and if there were sufficient numbers this information can then be analysed, trends identified and comparisons with other areas made.

Public Health Wales advised residents experiencing any health issues to contact their GP. A Resident confirmed that he would be seeking independent legal advice with regard to his own health concerns as a result of Bryn Compost.

Residents expressed concerns with regard to the long-term health effects of living with Bryn Compost and were also concerned about the health and well being of the children in the area. It was felt that not enough was being done to support the communities affected, no restrictions had been placed on the plant in spite of the continuing breaches of permit and continual odour problems. Mr Brunt reassured Members that there was no direct impact to public health as a result of the odour problems at Bryn Compost but acknowledged that this did not mean that residents' quality of life had not been adversely affected.

Mr Harrison also reassured Members that the negative impact on resident's quality of life was not in dispute however the EA were working hard to address the issues.

Members felt that given the number of breaches against the permit, from significant through to major and the unacceptable impact on the quality of life, the EA had not acted early or strongly enough and should suspend operations at the site until the management problems had been completely addressed.

Mr Huw Brunt updated Members on Legionella, potting soils and compost facilities and referred to the report as detailed in Appendix 1.

Legionella is a gram-negative bacterium that may cause a range of diseases known collectively as Legionellosis. Illness occurs after inhalation of contaminated aerosols and the principal reservoir of these microorganisms is water. It was noted that illnesses related to exposure are acquired through direct inhalation of viable cells from the environment and cannot be passed from person to person.

Legionella links with potting compost use were detailed for Members information and it was noted that species associated with the handling of commercial potting mix was *L. longbeachae*. Members noted that in the four cases reported between 2008 and 2010 in Scotland, patients had been exposed to commercially manufactured potting soils in greenhouse conditions prior to disease onset. Members were reassured that only a very small number of cases had been reported and had been restricted to high volume compost users, inhaling compost in a contained or restricted area. Links between Legionella and composting facilities had been looked at and the likelihood of bacteria travelling was highly unlikely and there were no studies or evidence to suggest a concern to the public health of those residing next to industrial composting facilities. Mr Brunt hoped that this report fully addressed the concerns raised at the last meeting.

Clarification was sought with regard to the quality of the end product leaving Bryn Compost. It was noted that the site operated to a BSI Pass 100, quality assurance protocol requirement and this was subject to regular quality assurance checks.

A concern was raised in relation to dust generated by the site and the impact this had on both air quality and respiratory problems, a resident noted that this was a particular issue during the turning of the windrows.

Ms Edwards commented that the heavy, damp and dense material in the windrows was unlikely to generate dust problems off site. It was also noted that the past twelve months had been very wet, with persistent heavy rainfall. Another resident complained about dust from the quarry activities. The group was reminded of the results obtained from the analysis conducted over a several month period when the MMF was positioned at the rear of Greenhill School. Members were advised the air quality in Gelligaer was not an issue. HB provided reassurances that any dust particles that could be seen would not have an adverse health impact.

Members fully discussed the dust levels generated at the quarry and clarification was given as to the nature and composition of dust particles, Ms Edwards reiterated that further monitoring would take place, following requests from residents, as soon as weather conditions improved.

4. UPDATES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WALES

Members were introduced to Mr Ian Jones who would be taking over from Mr John Harrison for the next two months, during the transition of the Environment Agency to the Natural Resources Wales. Mr Harrison confirmed that the support and regulation of the site would continue as normal during this period.

Members were advised that the recent flooding incidents had caused an unprecedented number of calls being made to the Environment Agency and Mr Harrison apologised if residents had experienced any difficulties in getting through. It was noted that the new organisation would look at ways of improving call centre services.

Mr Alex Carter circulated the monthly odour complaints analysis and provided a verbal update on the complaints received since the last meeting. Members noted the reduction in the number of complaints received in December 2012 and January 2013 and were advised that the EA continued to work with the operator in order to sustain this downward trend. It was noted that the usual graph illustrating substantiated and unsubstantiated complaints had not been included with the papers, Mr Harrison apologised for the omission and **agreed to circulate the missing graph to Members at the next meeting.**

Mr Robert Thomas representing Bryn Compost also circulated complaints data for Members information. Mr Thomas confirmed that the data had been compiled over the last 7 months and incorporated the wind direction and activities on the site in order to establish where and when the odour issues were generated.

Members expressed their reservations with regard to validity of the information circulated by Bryn Compost and it was agreed that the **Environment Agency would review and validate the data provided and report back to the next Liaison Group meeting.**

Members expressed their frustration and disappointment in what they perceived to be a lack of action on the part of the Environment Agency. Mr Harrison confirmed that they had worked continuously with the operator and excellent progress had been made, up until the incidents that occurred in July and October 2012. Clarification was sought with regard to the restrictions placed on the operator and the reduction in the materials received into the site was noted. **Members referred to a previous request for information on the quantity of material entering and leaving the site and Mr Harrison agreed to present this information at the next meeting.**

Clarification was also sought in relation to the 'bulking-up' process when waste material was transferred to other facilities. It was noted that this operation was carried out within the hall and therefore no odour was related to the transfer process.

Clarification was sought as to the conditions under which a permit could be suspended. Members were advised that the EA did possess the power to suspend operations and the circumstances under which this would be applied were detailed. It was noted that the operator continued to cooperate fully with the EA and was working hard to ensure the sustainability of the improvements now being noted. Residents felt that despite the implementation of the Odour Management Plan there were still breaches, still significant odour issues and still operational and managerial failings at the site and as such operations should be suspended until all the issues had been addressed.

Members expressed concern with the lack of communication from the EA over the last six months and would like to see a return to the previous standard. **Mr Harrison confirmed that as soon as information on the outcome of the investigation became available it would be shared with the Members of the Group and newsletters and updates on the activity at the site would be brought forward.**

Clarification was sought in relation to the current Odour Management Plan. Members were advised that the document had been finalised in 2011 and underpinned operations at the site to ensure compliance with the license. It was noted that the Odour Management Plan was a detailed, substantial document providing comprehensive management processes for the facilities operations. **Mr Harrison confirmed that copies would be made available on request.**

Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee:

A Member referred to the failure of the EA to respond appropriately to a noise complaint made by a resident. Mr Harrison requested that the details of the incident be forwarded to him in writing and gave assurances that the matter would be fully investigated.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 4:15pm