



BRYN COMPOST LIAISON GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 13TH JANUARY 2015 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. V. Poole - Chair

Councillors:

H.W. David, W. David, G.J. Hughes, J.A. Pritchard, S. Morgan

Together with:

Residents: Mrs A. Gray, Mrs G. Davies, Mr G. Reynolds, Mrs C. Woods

Gelliargwellt Farm: Mr P. Colley, Mr R. Thomas, Mrs J. Morgan

Natural Resources Wales: Mr J. Goldsworthy, Mr. J. Harrison, Mrs E. Roe

Environmental Health: Ms C. Edwards

Officers: R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chair opened the meeting and wished the Group a Happy New Year.

It was announced that Mr John Harrison would shortly be retiring from Natural Resources Wales after 41 years of service, and therefore this would be his last Liaison Group meeting. Members asked for their appreciation for Mr Harrison's hard work and efforts to be placed on record, and wished him a long and happy retirement.

Mr Harrison thanked Members and stated that it had been a pleasure to work with the Group over the years, and introduced his replacement at NRW, Mr Jon Goldsworthy. It was explained that Natural Resources Wales was currently undergoing a restructure, with Mr Harrison's remit being shared amongst several officers, but that Mrs Emily Roe would retain responsibility for matters within the Caerphilly borough.

The Chair also welcomed Mrs Jennifer Morgan to the meeting, who was in attendance to observe proceedings as a new employee of Bryn Quarry Ltd.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Angel, D. Bolter and M. James, together with local resident representatives Mr J. Cuthbert, Mr M. Davies, Mr W. Griffiths, Mrs P. Lapsa, Mr T. Matthews and Mr J. Szura, and Public Health Wales representatives Dr G. Richardson, Mr H. Brunt and Mrs T. Deacon. An apology for absence was also received from Mr G. Mumford (District Environmental Health Officer).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

4. MINUTES – 25TH SEPTEMBER 2014

The minutes of the Bryn Compost Liaison Group meeting held on 25th September 2014 were received and noted.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Reference was made to the Composting Best Practice Document and NRW explained that guidance was currently being developed on this matter but was not yet ready for general circulation. This document is being prepared by the Environment Agency and NRW advised that it would be made available to the Group once the completed version had been published.

A request had been received at the last Liaison Group for NRW routine inspections to be included in the dataset of odour complaints, and it was noted that this was now being included as part of the dataset reports from NRW.

At the previous meeting of the Liaison Group, a query was raised in relation to odour breaches at the Bryn Compost site. It was agreed at that meeting that information regarding the number of breaches and type of breach recorded against the Bryn Compost site for the current year be forwarded to Members. It was confirmed and noted that this action had now been completed.

6. UPDATES FROM NATURAL RESOURCES WALES (NRW)

The Group were referred to the overview of odour complaint data for Bryn Compost between 1st September and 31st December 2014, with the data reviewed in a daily format and each month displayed on a separate graph. Each set of data detailed the number of calls received by NRW, together with the type of odour detected if NRW officers attended the site in response to the complaint received.

In regard to the September dataset, Mrs Emily Roe of NRW explained that NRW had received advance notification from the site in regards to slurry spreading activities on 9th, 22nd and 23rd September 2014. A number of odour complaints were received on these dates, which were attributed by NRW to these farming activities. In addition, a routine inspection was carried out by NRW on 17th September 2014 which detected farming odours.

A number of odour complaints were received by NRW on 25th September 2014, and officers telephoned Bryn Compost who confirmed that no farming activity was taking place that day. NRW officers attended the site in response to the complaints received but were unable to detect an odour. In response to Members' comments regarding a lack of detectable odour, it was explained that the wind was variable that day and that the odour could have travelled

from farming activities within neighbouring farms. The Group were also advised that odour detection was sometimes a matter of timing and that the odour could have dissipated on this occasion before NRW staff arrived at the site.

Regarding the October dataset, it was explained that a number of calls were received on 2nd October 2014. NRW officers attended site and detected a mixture of farming odours and composting odours. Bryn Compost staff were already aware of the issue and explained that they had switched on the composting aerator that morning when the wind direction was blowing away from Gelligaer. Staff detected a change in wind direction towards Gelligaer and switched off the aerator, and NRW officers explained that the site were therefore not in breach as they had acted in accordance with wind conditions.

November 2014 saw a low level of odour complaints with a routine inspection carried out by NRW towards the end of the month.

With regards to the December dataset, a low level of odour complaints were again received, with routine inspections on 3rd December 2014 and 16th December 2014 detecting farming odours, which were in line with advance notification of farming activities received from the site.

Members' attention was directed to an odour complaint on 4th December detailed on the graph. Mrs Roe explained that NRW had received notification from the site that they were moving compost from inside the in-vessel composting facility down to the outside quarried area. Communications between NRW, Bryn Compost and the complainant determined that whilst the compost odour was detectable, it was not a strong odour. As Bryn Compost were preparing the facility to accept compost waste in over the Christmas period, the complainant was content for the continued movement of the compost down to the quarry, as this would then result in no movement (which could create odours) over the Christmas holidays.

A Member raised a query regarding a complaint made on Monday 1st December 2014. This complaint stated that odours had been detected over the last weekend of November in the Nelson area. Mrs Roe explained that as this call had been received in December, it had been logged against December's dataset, and reiterated the importance of residents logging odour complaints as soon as they detect them in order for them to be attended in a timely manner.

Members' attention was also directed to the two other graphs contained within the agenda papers, which displayed the number of odour complaints over a two year period, and Mrs Roe explained that this graph showed a downward trend in complaints over this period. The other graph displayed the number of complaints over the same period, split into the location of each odour complaint.

The Chair invited questions and a Member asked if they could raise a general question regarding Bryn Compost, which was agreed by the Chair. It was advised that a local resident had found a number of pieces of chipboard, laminated wood and MDF in the area surrounding the Bryn Compost site and farm, and had concerns that these types of wood were being used for animal bedding. NRW officers confirmed that farms were not permitted to use these types of waste wood as animal bedding, and stated that they would arrange to collect these samples from the local resident and investigate the matter accordingly.

A Member referred to the Urdd National Eisteddfod 2015 event which would be held in the grounds of Llancaiach Fawr manor, and queried the progress made on the management plans for the event. Ms Ceri Edwards, Environmental Health Manager, assured Members that the Council's Event Safety Advisory Group were looking at all aspects of the event, including the likelihood of composting odours and slurry spreading activities being detectable during that week. Ms Edwards referenced Environmental Health's good working relationship with the Bryn Compost site and farm, and explained that the site prepared their work schedules in advance. Ms Edwards indicated that she would contact Mr Price in order to explore the possibility that the schedule could be tailored to accommodate the event. **It was agreed that Environmental Health liaise with Bryn Compost to arrange for the possibility of odour releases around the Eisteddfod week to be minimised.**

At the previous meeting of the Liaison Group, it had been agreed that the frequency of meetings would be reviewed, and detailed discussion took place regarding this matter. Members raised a number of concerns regarding the proposal to decrease the meeting frequency. They referred to the latest dataset of odour complaints, and stated that whilst the amount of complaints had reduced, NRW were still receiving calls regarding odours detected around the Bryn Compost site.

Mrs Roe asked Members to note the marked decrease in calls received as a result of composting odours, making reference to the two year dataset of complaints received. It was explained that the cause of the odours were usually attributed to farming activities, not composting activities, and asked Members to bear this in mind. Mrs Roe also reiterated that the spike in odour complaints received in September 2014 was due to farming activities.

A Member raised a concern that residents were becoming complacent regarding detecting and reporting odours within the area. Mrs Roe stated that she did not believe this to be the case, and referred Members to the dataset showing a peak in complaints on 2nd October 2014. It was explained that NRW were still receiving a high level of calls when farming activities occurred and therefore residents were continuing to recognise and acknowledge odours within the area.

Concerns were also raised that it could take up to two hours for NRW officers to attend site in response to odour complaints, by which time the odour could have dissipated. Mrs Roe advised Members that she could be at site in as little as ten minutes if she was on standby. Ms Edwards added that Environmental Health staff were in the area regularly, including during the evening, and could report back on odour issues in the area. In addition, some Public Protection staff also lived in the area and provided feedback on odours within the area. Ms Edwards also stated that a significant improvement in the reduction of composting odours had been detected over the last 12 months.

Members queried the earlier explanation given in that NRW officers had telephoned Bryn Compost to establish the cause of an odour complaint on 25th September 2014. Mrs Roe explained that there were a number of trigger points involved in the process and prior to the number of complaints meeting this point, the site would be contacted by telephone for an explanation of the odour. It was confirmed that visits were generally undertaken following such calls to verify that farming odours, if given as an explanation, were not masking composting odours.

Members gave a number of further reasons for their reluctance to agree to the reduction of the meeting frequency from every three months to every four months. They explained that they had worked hard to establish the Group, and that its role would be undermined if they were to reduce the frequency of meetings whilst odour complaints were still being received. It was explained that Members had developed a good working relationship with NRW and were mindful that this could be affected if the frequency of meetings were to be reduced.

Members of the Group acknowledged the marked improvement in communications between all parties and the significant improvements to the data received regarding odour complaints. These comments were supported by the Chair, who acknowledged the responsibility of the Group in contributing towards a good quality of life for local residents, and welcomed the views of the Group on this matter.

It was agreed that the Liaison Group would meet in three months' time, with a decision to be made on the meeting frequency at that time.

The meeting closed at 2.44 p.m.