Summary of issues raised and questions asked at Area Committees

QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS - CRAVEN

PFI provides capital up front – proposals for the operations are rather open-ended. How can value for money be factored into the proposals for the local tax payer, in the long term, when the PFI provider is likely to be making substantial profits for a significant period of time?

There had been no mention of contractors' waste within the proposals. A large amount of building waste is generated in North Yorkshire, which currently goes to landfill. There is a huge potential for recycling and re-using that material. Have those possibilities been explored?

In respect of the Anaerobic Digestion phase this would still produce a residue, so why waste time going through that process rather than sending that material directly for incineration?

Would there be any flexibility for change written into the 25 year contract to take account of future progress made on re-use, recycling, etc. during that period of time, ensuring that any new developments on the treatment of waste are taken account of?

What work had been carried out to ensure that the consultation event had been widely publicised in the Craven District, as the lack of attendance suggested that the majority of people in the District were unaware of the event?

A lot of work had been carried out in recent years to make the A59 safer. The proposals would result in a greater number of HGVs having to travel along the road. What efforts were being made, and proposals being put in place, to alleviate potential traffic problems on the A59?

The volume of waste is starting to decrease and under the coalition Government's plans was likely to decrease further. With expected improvements in respect of less packaging, re-use and recycling over the next 25 years how can it be guaranteed that the incineration method chosen would continue to receive the amounts of waste required to ensure that it remains cost effective?

Even where people were aware of the consultation meeting, many were unable to attend due to work commitments, because of the 10am start.

What risk is there, and, who is taking that potential risk, of advances in waste disposal leaving insufficient waste for the incineration process being proposed?

Part of the presentation outlined that there are a number of significant environmental impacts. Could more specific details of these impacts be provided?

Had anyone given consideration to the operation of the Cambridgeshire waste management system, provided by AmeyCespa, which did not use any thermal treatment, as requested at a previous presentation and was that information available?

Why was the meeting not moved to a more appropriate time to allow people who work to attend and express their views?

As the contractor has been identified, the detailed application will be determined by the Planning Committee and traffic issues would be included in the planning consultation, what would the Full Council Meeting be deciding in December?

As a member of Skipton Town Council, as far as I am aware, no notice has been provided to the Council of this consultation meeting.

What experience does the contractor have of running incinerators?

What would be the penalties if the Council decided that the project should not go ahead?

What guarantees could be given against the risk of contamination from the emissions to the surrounding area?

At the beginning of the process was any presumption made by either the Executive or Full Council as to what the technology used should be?

In respect of the Anaerobic Digestion phase what percentage of waste would be incinerated or thermally treated?

Is there a national energy strategy that this process can be linked to or are all Local Authorities developing individual projects to suit their own needs?

It would be beneficial to have comparable information from a similar facility, already operating in Hampshire, to provide guidance on what could be expected.

How many transfer stations were to be provided, where would these be located and would the planning applications for these be dealt with before the application for the main proposal?

Currently there is over 80000 tonnes of waste brought into Craven for disposal from the Bradford Metropolitan Borough, would this cease by 2014 at the latest?

Are Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council looking for a similar solution in respect of their waste disposal?

There are a number of concerns raised in relation to the potential effect emissions could have on health. Reassurance was felt that there is a stringent process that has to be met before the Licence is granted to carry this out.

QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS - HAMBLETON

What is the number of vehicle movements?

If the plant is shut down due to technical failure what is the capacity on site for storing waste and how long will it take before that storage reaches capacity?

What are the location details for the dispersion of noxious gases?

What is the prevailing wind direction?

Will the public be given access to documentation on dispersion modelling.

Timing of the meeting was criticised (midweek during the day) curtailed the number of people able to attend.

Have alternatives to thermal energy been considered?

Height of chimney stack (74M) excessive especially in what is a low lying tourist area next to A1.

If all recyclables were properly extracted, the volume of waste that remained to be incinerated would be negligible.

What percentage of ash will go to aggregate/landfill?

Do the statistics quoted for recycling include roadside collections?

What is the current cost of landfill, as compared to cost of landfill over next 25 years?

How many incinerators nationally were in the pipeline?

Will waste be imported from outside North Yorkshire to meet the targets?

Why is the NY recycling target 50%, when the target for other local authorities is 70%?

On 1/9/10 AmeyCespa took over the Cambridgeshire waste site (top performing waste treatment plant) that uses MBT to produce usable compost on farm land. At Cambridge no thermal treatment is used – NY should use Cambridge as example of best practice.

The location is environmentally sensitive and not suitable for thermal treatment because of local meteorological conditions and temperature inversions in the Vale of York.

What contingency plans does NYCC have for dealing with legal actions that will arise if decision to build plant is approved?

Cambridgeshire is comparable to North Yorkshire and should be used as an example of best practice as the treatment plant is both cost effective and realistic.

NY Times described PFI financing as a form of grant funding, is this correct?

If base rates increase as forecast to 8% or more, what will be the impact?

Who will the site belong to at the end of 25 years?

What happens if technology changes during the course of the contract?

What happens if during the course of the contract, the legal aspects of waste treatment change - who is responsible for covering the cost?

Why can't the compost the plant produces be used on farm land?

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS - HARROGATE

The Allerton Park site could be used for greater recycling than that proposed at present. This would also save AmeyCespa money compared to the present arrangement. The County Council should not hand over waste to AmeyCespa on their terms which would be highly profitable for them. The PFI would increase both bankers' bonuses and the expense incurred by North Yorkshire residents. It was desirable for AmeyCespa to handle all the waste themselves without reference to other incinerators which were located on our boundaries which might be prepared to take the waste. The financial model was flawed as highlighted by comments from four MPs. The banks would be queuing to provide PFI investments given the relatively low risk and high reward involved. Payback would be in eight years and then 17 years of profit to follow. This would be the largest contract every entered into by North Yorkshire County Council and the level of expertise was queried which existed within the Authority to handle this. There was no need to rush into a contract in 2011 funds could be better invested.

In the spring of 2011 the results of a major new waste survey were due; would this have any impact upon the current proposals for Allerton Park? Ferrybridge Power Station will be converted into a multi fuel waste facility.

How has the County Council arrived at its present position particularly with regard to the 60:40 split? The financial aspects were often quoted as a secondary consideration however it was money and savings which came over most strongly in the presentations therefore why the 60:40 split?

The contract would not be viable, research suggested that there were flaws given the reliance of forecasts of waste volumes and recycling over 25 years. North Yorkshire County Council's "guesses" under estimated changes in custom and practice for example kerb side recycling. There was an over estimate regarding the growth in waste. If the facility was therefore over sized savings would never materialise in practice. The projected savings anticipated between 2020 and 2035 might actually become losses. Net present value would be minimal and therefore the County Council should perhaps re-evaluate the proposals. Pause signing the contract and review current waste trends with the view to developing a ten year contract instead.

What percentage of waste arriving at Allerton would be incinerated and what was the definition of recycling, would that include waste going to household waste and recycling centres or that extracted at the Allerton plant?

This was not very environmental friendly. Some operators used non incineration methods for example Dunarbon who had recently been taken over by AmeyCespa why couldn't use be made of that technology?

The Cambridgeshire situation was not that dissimilar to North Yorkshire and they had a fabulous environmental plant.

What modelling had been done regarding traffic flows as a result of the development of the Allerton site?

The Flincher Waste Management Policy rejected incineration as a way forward and were pursing greener alternatives. They expected to divert 10% of their waste away from landfill by 2020.

Were arrangements not too far progressed to withdraw from the project?

Preference would be to see an alternative solution which excluded incineration.

Someone who had had involvement with PFI's previously was amazed at the length of the contract proposed and expressed concerns about North Yorkshire County Council's ability to manage such a large contract. Concern was expressed regarding the Great Ouseburn presentation which had been made by AmeyCespa at which no County Council Officers were present. Concern was expressed that the model proposed only looked at disposal arrangements undertaken by North Yorkshire County Council and it was felt that the model needed to look at both sides of the equation in terms of collection and disposal. It was also hoped that in view of the proposed duration of the contract that open book accounting would apply.

How would the scheme make energy from waste work given there was no market currently for heat capture?

Most effective energy from waste plants do utilise heat capture.

At the Parish Council meeting with the County Council some five to six weeks ago it had been agreed that a Professor would be given time to discuss his concerns in detail and there was disappointment that this had not been followed up to date. It was added that financial experts had noted that the proposed model was flawed. It was spoken of the difference between the capacity for 320,000 tonnes of waste to be accepted at the plant per annum when North Yorkshire is only expected to deliver 200,000. The short fall was anticipated to be met from industrial and commercial waste. On a recent feature on Radio York Bill Jarvis of AmeyCespa had spoken of the potential for landfill material to go through the plant. Reference was made to the Sheffield incinerator which had insufficient waste through put and were now applying gate fees of zero. Finally comment was passed about the democratic process which was felt was flawed and commented upon concerns previously raised by a County Councillor concerning Planning and Regulatory Committee.

So many meetings would not have been necessary if factual information had been readily available. Where would the commercial waste be burnt and would money arising from the production of electricity go to the County Council? Would outgoing steam from be fed back in to the boilers? What would be the noise levels arising from the use of fans to drive air over the roof fins? Would the chimney stack be high enough to distribute the emissions, would it be over 1,000 feet high? Had the Councillors been briefed on all of these aspects?

This was another example of new information coming out and not something that had previously been clear.

The life of the incinerator would be 25 to 30 years and would ownership at the end of this period reverted to the County Council? Would it be the County Council's role to decommission or dispose of the facility? What tonnages of heavy metals would be arising, dioxins etc? Concerns were expressed about fly ash and its impact upon infant mortality.

A recent survey of air quality in the region had found standards to be in breach of the desirable air quality targets. Would the incinerator help overcome this issue? Was the Allerton site originally due to be returned to a Greenfield site from 2015?

Would the scheme remain within budget and costs not escalate? Would any excess profits generated be reinvested to benefit North Yorkshire County Council projects?

Do the proposals take account of changes in packaging of goods? If there are no risks to human health why was such a tall chimney required? Before the decision is taken in December could a crane be put in place on site to simulate the height and visual impact of the chimney on the site?

Would the district continue to push for improvements in recycling rates rather than simply send waste direct to the Allerton facility? Why is such a tall chimney required?

County Councillors should feedback the concerns expressed at the meeting. The project would proceed to planning stage and registered concern about the planning process and the appropriateness of voting on your own project. An open vote which was not whipped should be taken on this issue. It was sad that a Councillor had had to leave the Conservative Group as a result of this issue. District and Parish Councillors' views should be heard within the process. Expressed concern that figures were not available regarding traffic movements and also wished to know the volumes concerned for transfer stations.

Had the County Council acquired unbiased consultants' views ahead of tenders being sought? If the waste were shipped elsewhere how many years could we cope? Could planning be refused on the basis of the proposed height of the chimney and if so could the height be reduced? Could the public know which Councillors had voted for and against the proposal? When would Harrogate Borough Council have better recycling facilities?

A County Councillor had brought valuable independent advice to the meetings. North Yorkshire County Council was England's largest rural County and nano particles were more concentrated in sheep by 30 times and even more so in cattle by 50 times. There had been no mention of these statistics today. Was this American research familiar and would account be taken of it? What cancellation costs would be incurred if the contract was not awarded? A number of local people were frustrated as they had had protest signs removed from their private property by the County Council.

Individual approaches to Councillors had not been made on this issue. He expressed reservations about the County Council acting as Judge and Jury at the planning stage.

Earlier comments regarding Planning and Regulatory Committee were repeated and noted that concerns had been expressed to the County Council's Standards Committee.

Concern was expressed about some of the figures quoted in the proposals, which strained credibility. Why burn non-domestic waste? This was probably permissible until capacity was reached, but what if it was burnt purely to keep the incinerator busy? Would it be right to subsidise operations in this way - effectively with rate payers money? If the contract was not signed including an incineration element, could the County Council insist upon a non incineration option, or would the Authority really have to go back to square one and start again with tenders?

The capacity requirements should stay the same?

A balance had to be appropriately struck for a risk and reward scenario and this needed to be understood particularly at a time when services where being cut.

A very informative session had been provided and for the future would be interested to see the likely impact on the A59 in terms of transport implications.

A concern was expressed that County Councillors may be whipped to agree the solution.

An article in the Yorkshire Post had stated that the Esk Valley was a magnet for pollutants. Would this be affected by the Allerton Plant? How was the County Council encouraging Districts and public to recycle and compost more? If waste was exported outside of North Yorkshire couldn't costs be negotiated every three to five years? He also noted that a Councillor's questions had not been fully answered.

The Waste PFI Working Party was looking at the whole of the procurement process to ensure that arrangements were rigorous and robust.

A County Councillor recorded his thanks for the open and frank discussion throughout the session.

What would happen following County Council in December and Planning in February?

A County Councillor asked if the plant would incinerate any toxic waste?

Thanks for a useful meeting and highlighted the relevant pages on the County Council's website which covered many of the issues raised today. Finally he noted what very difficult decisions lay ahead.

A County Councillor stated that it had been a very good meeting and looked forward to reading a transcription of all the public questions and statements made.

A County Councillor noted his appreciation for the opportunity to hear residents concerns on the issue.

Issues around the hazards to health had not been fully answered. Some effects might not manifest themselves until decades later for example chronic obstructive lung diseases these were caused by dust and irritant gases. Many Councillors would be dead before the effects of their decision might be felt. Concerns regarding fly ash were reiterated particularly regarding the dispersal of those at less then 2.5 microns which was very fine dust. It was explained that inorganic elements can attach to these and once ingested they will remain in the lungs some being carcinogenic. Direct evidence about the impact of this isn't available at the present time as it takes such a long time to develop.

It had been a very informative and useful meeting.

A Councillor advised that Harrogate Borough Council had that evening adopted a scheme to improve recycling rates by 2013.

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS - RICHMONDSHIRE

In terms of recycling would the proposals lead to all household waste being indiscriminatingly placed in one bin or would recyclables still be separated?

How long was the proposed contract for?

The figures provided did not appear to correlate with the experience of other incinerators operating in other parts of the Country. Where did the figures provided come from, and how had they been calculated? The financial viability of the scheme appeared to rely on 100,000 tonnes of commercial waste being available in the county at any given time, even taking into account potential inflation. What would happen if that was not available? There was likely to be further increases in recycling in the future which would further reduce the amount of waste available for the incinerator. Who would fund the project if it was not being used at the levels indicated and would recycling rates fall to ensure that the incinerator was being used to its maximum capacity?

There is a need for a change to be made, but there was an objection to incineration being the method used to change it. There are real concerns that other, safer methods of dealing with waste are not being considered. The solution being proposed was not based on environmental protection, as was purported, but was based on financial matters, as incineration gave more emissions and more CO2. There had not been an incinerator built in the USA for the last 15 years, for these reasons, and the developer was leading the Council by the nose in claiming to be the expert in these matters. In terms of the financial benefit, the figures quoted appeared to be changing by the week.

Only 4 County Councillors attended a conference last week that provided information on alternative plans for household waste. Why is the Council rushing head long into outdated technology with a 25-30 year contract?

Why has the Council abandoned usual commercial practice by not looking at alternative solutions?

Why has the Council not waited for the publication of the forthcoming DEFRA initiatives before making its decision?

The 'do minimum' figures provided do not add up.

Why are the Council not considering less risky alternatives?

What alternative solutions have been presented to the Council?

NYCC and AmeyCespa are spending a large amount of money selling the current proposal – what funding is being given to allow the case for

alternative solutions to be sold to the public?

Have NYCC built the cost of de-commissioning the waste park, at the end of the contract, into the figures provided?

What will be the optimum level of recycling?

Why is the Council not working towards a 70% recycling rate?

Why are recycle and re-use not being promoted more?

A climate change representative has been looking closely at the development of Anaerobic Digestion, and noted that a new generation of this process is close to being announced. Could the project be altered at this stage to take account of factors such as higher Anaerobic Digestion or is the proposal a 'fait accompli'?

Would the demand for commercial waste to assist the project compromise other projects in the area?

The real problem of transporting waste to a centralised facility, and the capital costs involved, could be addressed through the development of a number of smaller Anaerobic Digestion units throughout the area, with investment opportunities available for this through One North East. Has consideration been given to this?

Has any consideration been given to cross-border waste disposal and links into other regions?

What levels of particulates will be contained within the effluent?

Did the contract contain any financial penalties should the level of waste required to meet the optimum output fail to be met?

As the site chosen for the proposed facility was surrounded by trees and raised banks, what would be visible from a distance of around 1 mile away?

An attendee was unhappy with the timing of the Meeting and would have liked this to have been held at a time when more people could attend, as requested.

The presentation had mentioned that 17 different options had been considered, so why have County Council Members only being allowed to look at one of them?

In respect of the bottom ash from the Incinerator, how could this be considered to be a safe option? The Environment Agency have expressed concerns around the Zinc levels in this residue, and the USA have deemed them to be totally unsuitable for any purpose. What would happen if this material was found to be unsafe, having been used for highway maintenance, and then had to be dug up to widen the road, for example? A new EU directive was due to be published shortly on the re-use of bottom ash but the decision on the facility may come before this information is available.

Why did the recycling figures provided by the County Council's Treasurer not match those provided in relation to the consultation exercise?

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS - RYEDALE

What are the implications if the PFI didn't go forward, in particular re contracts with landfill sites?

Why was North Yorkshire County Council planning a facility that was twice as big as it needed to be? Why propose such a large plant and using a contractor who only operated one incinerator in the whole of Europe? Why speculate when the costs will not be known until two years time? There was a need to step back and look at recycling rather than build an oversized facility.

Describe the elements of risk within the contract?

What are the personal health risks?

To what extent had NYCC looked at increased recycling beyond 50%? There were many people in need of work and this could provide a good job creation opportunity compared to incinerating waste.

Why hadn't the meeting been held in the evenings to enable more people to attend? The presentation stated that North Yorkshire generates more waste than the national average.

What is the height of the chimney on the new facility and would this be visible from Ryedale?

If most materials were to be recycled and only the residue burnt, what percentage would be burnt?

County Councillors probably wouldn't ask many questions, explaining that Members had in fact seen many similar presentations of this information already.

If the contract was not awarded, then the existing landfill facilities at Allerton and Harewood Winn would continue to be used. Given Harewood Winn, which was deemed to be state of the art 'landform' when it was built 20 years ago; why couldn't another Harewood be created now? This would probably be much cheaper than the PFI option? Appropriateness of pursuing the PFI route? AmeyCespa's incinerator in Andorra; if waste was imported to support its throughput, also why more countries weren't using AmeyCespa in this field?

A further contribution about the importing of waste from other countries to Andorra.

Reference to an article covered by the Yorkshire Post quoting a professor who lectured on recycling. An example from the United States; some states had adopted legislation which required businesses to minimise plastics and packaging etc. If a similar circumstance arose in the UK would the plant have the flexibility to respond to such a change in the composition of waste?

Concern expressed that no alternative approach appeared to have been looked at. Reference to the waste hierarchy and the preference to reduce, re-use and recycle waste, ahead of incineration or landfill. Landfill was not a good way forward, although it might provide an opportunity to temporarily store waste for which there may be future markets when technology had developed further. Regarding incineration what nano particles would come out of the stack to date no answer to this question. The example of San Francisco where in 2000, recycling was 50% and is now up to 75%. In Ryedale recycling was already over 50% and if food waste were added approximately 73% could be achieved. If card and plastics were also added that would take the performance to 75% plus. Concerns about incorporating bottom ash with recycling performance, taking it up to 65%. The approach would take something non-toxic and make it toxic. Greater efforts to be made to separate waste to avoid this. 70 jobs projected to be created at the plant was poor and that if recycling was taken to the 70% - 80% level, this could create between 500 to 1,000 jobs. This would also avoid the need to commit £1.4b of expenditure. How much would it cost to recycle at an 80% level across North Yorkshire, in terms of green house gases, materials saved etc? Exactly what was in the toxic ash and what could be salvaged? There was a need to know the answers to these questions before an informed decision could be made. Reiterated desire for the Authority to put forward an alternative approach, as the choice currently faced was poor: to either stay with landfill or only move up the waste hierarchy by one notch. Stressed the need to concentrate on reducing, reusing and recycling.

If that were the case then increased recycling had not been taken sufficiently seriously.

Query about the 17 options considered and asked why this hadn't become apparent during previous consultation? Reference to the Harewood landform site, reflecting that some 20 years ago the proposals for the site had been openly considered. Could documentation be made available to the public which showed how the current preferred proposal had been arrived at?

This was clearly a very complex issue but was disappointed that the paying public couldn't see the result i.e. the scored rankings for themselves.

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS - SELBY

What is the number of vehicle movements?

What was the anticipated number of vehicle movements from waste transfer sites to plant?

What was the exact location of waste transfer sites?

What was the anticipated number of vehicle movements to/from waste transfer sites?

Would waste be separated at transfer sites?

Would transfer sites store waste in enclosed buildings?

Would planning permission be needed for transfer sites?

Is NYCC confident about its ability to negotiate successfully a contract of this size and complexity?

What happens if during the course of the contract cheaper alternative methods of dealing with waste emerge?

Does NYCC have a contingency plan?

What happens if AmeyCespa go bankrupt?

What happens if NYCC can't meet the stipulated minimum target for the amount of waste to be disposed of at the plant?

As the plant is capable of separating recyclables, wouldn't it be cheaper and more efficient if the districts stopped separating waste, and domestic waste was collected from one bin and was then separated into recyclables at the plant?

Concern at cumulative impact of plant – the local area already has Drax and there is a planning application for a similar plant at Ferrybridge.

Is it necessary for each county to have its own waste treatment plant would it have been better to adapt an existing plant (e.g. Teesside)?

The efficiency of the power generation is poor at the projected 28%.

Why isn't the heat produced by the plant used?

Maintenance – will routine maintenance affect the operation of the plant?

If the plant is out of action due to technical failure what would happen to the waste routinely collected by the districts?

How will the flue gases be cleaned?

What is the difference between domestic/commercial waste?

What happens to commercial waste in North Yorkshire at present?

The targets quoted for recyclables are too low

The volume of plastics will drop due to the high price of oil – what will be the impact of this?

Is there motivation for the districts to keep recycling rates low?

District Councils have an incentive to recycle as they get income based on performance.

The predicted saving of £9.2M is misleading, as during the three years the plant is under construction the County Council will still be paying for landfill costs.

The contract figures quoted, even allowing for inflation, are excessive and don't add up.

Will waste be imported from outside the county?

The site of the waste transfer stations needs careful consideration in order to minimise the number of miles the waste travels before being finally disposed.

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS - YORKSHIRE COAST AND MOORS

Why was the County Council pursuing a 25 year contract? This seemed a very long time. No allowance appeared to have been made for technical or social change. There was almost a disincentive to reduce waste and yet trends show that recycling is increasing. In view of this the excess capacity of the plant will it be used to process commercial and industrial waste – although it had been thought that the aim was to keep this to a very small amount?

Not against incineration but was against the hauling of waste over long distances across the County. Had a satellite arrangement been considered where plants would feed energy into the grid via incineration locally?

Concern regarding the timing of meetings, feeling that this was not conducive to optimising public attendance. Noted that AmeyCespa would have further road shows and sincerely hoped that these would not be during the day time but at evenings or weekends when people were more easily able to attend. In the event of a Judicial Review, North Yorkshire County Council and York City Council could find themselves in a difficult position regarding public consultation. The important decision would be taken on 15 December 2010. Rumours abounded regarding the imposition of penalties if the contract wasn't awarded, in the region of £5m? Was this correct? Comment about the huge financial consequences for rate payers, 25 years being a very long time during which there would be inevitable change – technology, governments, public attitudes. Emphasis should be more on waste prevention then disposal. A Government report due out in 2011, would look at the nationwide strategy reflecting changes in public attitude and changing trends within the packaging industry and supermarkets. In view of this, wasn't a decision on 15 December therefore premature? Had all read the report of a Professor of Durham University which looked at issues around the composition of waste in the area? Changes in the practices of local industry were likely to have an impact upon the composition of waste. Reiterated view that there was insufficient emphasis upon the imperative to reduce waste and recycle. Had the County Council considered the alternatives thoroughly enough? The Professor's report supported the views expounded by a fellow attendee.

All County Councillors should be present to vote.

There was favour of diversion from landfill however no mention had been made of the emissions from the plant. What about carbon emissions, dioxins, heavy metals etc. How had these issues been considered?