

**TO: JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD**  
**13<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

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**PROGRESS REPORT**  
**Report of the re3 Strategic Waste Manager**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to brief the re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board on progress in the delivery of the re3 Joint Waste PFI Contract.

**2 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **That Members note the contents of this report.**
- 2.2 **That Members approve the revision to the non-household waste charging structure described at 5.3 and 5.4.**

**3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 3.1 None for this report.

**4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1 The purpose of this report is to both brief Members and seek support for change identified as necessary in support of both the re3 Joint Waste PFI Contract and the re3 Strategy.
- 4.2 Recommendation 2.2 relates to one of a series of sections within this report which relate to ongoing improvements in the Household Waste Recycling Centre service.

**5 REVIEW OF WASTE ACCEPTANCE PROTOCOL**

**Review of Charging Structure for Non-Household Waste**

- 5.1 The current charging structure sets out a price per 25L bag or equivalent, a per-sheet rate for plasterboard, a rate for certain items and a number of per-vehicle (or part-vehicle) rates for loose material. The various rates were introduced to make the charges easy to administer, provide certainty to residents about what they would be required to pay and were based on a calculation of maximum permissible payload.
- 5.2 As part of ongoing service review, re3 officers sought feedback from Meet and Greet Staff (employed by the Contractor) on the implementation of the non-household waste charges and also took into account correspondence from residents. The purpose of seeking feedback was to improve clarity for both residents and staff and seek improvements in the information provided in support of the service. The feedback indicates that
- Charges for non-household waste based on vehicle size can be confusing both for residents and for staff.
  - Plasterboard sheet charges are difficult to apply, particularly where sheets have been broken.
  - Residents would find it beneficial to have more context, or explanation, from the Waste Acceptance Protocol added to the signage on site.

- 5.3 An amended table has been drafted where loose waste would be calculated based on an estimate of 25L units presented, rather than the vehicle type. This amendment should support more transparent charging and reduce confusion. This is intended to support a fair system under which residents pay for the quantity of waste they generate.
- 5.4 The amended table also excludes the plasterboard sheet charges and includes descriptions of key terms such as 'rubble' and 'single items'.
- 5.5 Members are recommended to approve these amendments to the charging structure. If agreed, Officers will update the Waste Acceptance Protocol and Recycling Centre Signage, take appropriate steps to alert users to the changes and undertake additional training with the Meet and Greet Staff.

**Increasing the frequency of commercial and commercial-type vehicle permit data downloads**

- 5.6 A commercial and commercial-type vehicle permit scheme was introduced at the re3 recycling centres in September 2016 in order to limit the ability of businesses to illegally deposit trades waste at the taxpayers' expense. Residents wishing to use a vehicle such as a van, pick-up or sign-written vehicle to access the recycling centres must apply for a permit prior to every visit. This enables officers to assess where high levels of usage may indicate activity more like that of a trader than a householder.
- 5.7 Users of Commercial and Commercial Vehicle Permits are asked to apply at least 24 hours before they visit the recycling centres to deposit their waste. This ensures that the permit is present on the FCC system at the time of the residents' visit, and is the easiest way for staff to cross-check application details.
- 5.8 A significant proportion of commercial vehicle users are utilising permits on the same day as they apply. According to the 2017/18 data received to date, 40% of permits applied for use at Longshot Lane and 55% of permits applied for at Smallmead are used in this way. This can have impacts on site, slowing access for other users, and may be a tactic of business users seeking to deposit trade waste at council tax-payer expense.
- 5.9 This unforeseen pattern of usage has prompted officers to consider potential amendments.
- 5.10 The three options identified are as follows:
  - 1) To increase the frequency of file transfer - enabling more same day applications.
  - 2) To accept only permits applied for on the preceding day.
  - 3) To continue with the current system.
- 5.11 The preferred option is to increase the frequency at which data from commercial vehicle permit applications is uploaded to the FCC database. This would aid the monitoring process whilst maintaining convenience for residents.
- 5.12 Colleagues involved in Information Technology (IT) at FCC have identified a potential solution via which the Contractor's database would be populated directly with the application details supplied to the webform. This is reliant on a software update due to be released in the last quarter of 2017.
- 5.13 re3 Officers will meet with IT colleagues at FCC and RBC when a release date for the software is known in order to discuss the costs and benefits involved and determine if

a test environment can be created. Members and Officers will be briefed accordingly.

### **Monitoring of Frequent Permit Users**

- 5.14 As of September 2017, over 450 letters reminding householders that the Recycling Centres are for the deposit of waste from their household only have been sent to users who have used nine or more permits.
- 5.15 re3 and FCC officers continue to monitor usage of the Commercial and Commercial-Type Vehicle permits after the letters have been sent and are working with the re3 Councils to follow up on the most frequent users.
- 5.16 The re3 team hopes to be able to add a postcode look-up function to the webform in order to ensure that non-residents are unable to apply for permits using their genuine address. In addition, the re3 team would also like to add an address look-up function in order to assist residents in inputting their addresses.
- 5.17 An option to utilise third party databases in the provision of these functions has been explored but not found to be workable. As such, re3 Officers will work with IT colleagues in order to investigate possible alternatives and will keep Members informed of progress.

### **Commercial and Commercial-Type Vehicles for Taxis**

- 5.18 Commercial and commercial-type vehicles have previously been known to deposit business waste for free at the household waste sites. As such, our commercial vehicle permit scheme was introduced in September 2016 in order to enable easier monitoring of these vehicles and to limit the illegal deposits made at expense of the taxpayer.
- 5.19 Taxis are clearly a type of commercial vehicle and it was therefore intended that users of these vehicles would need to apply for a permit prior to every visit. However it is difficult to list all types of commercial vehicle in our Waste Acceptance Protocol and these vehicles are not specifically listed. A small number of users questioned whether they needed to apply for a permit and whether these vehicles are known to deposit trade wastes at the sites.
- 5.20 re3 Officers listened to the views of the residents and site staff indicated that there is limited evidence to suggest that taxis are depositing business waste at the current time. As a result, a period of monitoring commenced during which taxis were not required to apply for commercial vehicle permits in order to access the re3 recycling centres.
- 5.21 During the period of monitoring, no instances of suspected trade waste deposit were recorded. As such, officers recommend that taxis no longer be required to apply for commercial vehicle permits and that the Waste Acceptance Protocol be updated to reflect this.
- 5.22 The use of Taxis at the Recycling Centre and the types of waste deposited would continue to be kept under review.

## **6 GREEN MACHINE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT**

- 6.1 The Green Machine (Enterprise) CIC is a local Community Interest Company which gives volunteer and employment opportunities to disabled and disadvantaged people.

- 6.2 The Green Machine paint reuse scheme uses non-hazardous paint deposited at the re3 recycling centres. The reuse of this paint helps community groups and families improve the appearance of places and the wellbeing of many people in addition to benefiting the environment by keeping this material out of landfill and reducing carbon emissions.
- 6.3 In order to maximise paint sales and the reputational benefits to both parties, officers have put together a Service Level Agreement (SLA) setting out the working relationship between the re3 Partnership and the Green Machine.
- 6.4 The price per tonne of paint paid to the Green Machine currently varies on a month by month basis and is affected by the quantity and composition of paint and chemicals handled by another offtaker. In order to enable the re3 Partnership to continue to support this community interest group, a flat rate of £750 per tonne is proposed in the SLA. This will represent good value for the re3 Councils and provide certainty for both parties.
- 6.5 As part of the SLA, re3 officers will also visit the Green Machine on a six monthly basis in order to provide support, updates and advice. In addition the re3 partnership will also provide limited support in communicating and promoting the paint reuse scheme.
- 6.6 The Green Machine will remain fully responsible for the business including compliance with all relevant legislation. They will ensure that paint is collected, transported, stored, marketed and sold in an efficient manner, including safe and effective stock control, remixing of paint and product presentation and pricing.
- 6.7 Re3 Officers will keep Members informed of progress in relation to agreement and implementation of the SLA.

## **7 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY REVIEW OF WOOD WASTE**

- 7.1 The Environment Agency has expressed some concerns about whether the precise nature of waste wood is known before it is treated.
- 7.2 Where treatment involves burning, for example, wood which has been treated with substances considered to be hazardous should, the EA asserts, be subject to higher standards of treatment than may be the case. Plants which cannot comply with the Industrial Emissions Directive should not be treating 'hazardous' wood.
- 7.3 The issue is relevant to re3 and other councils because it may, depending on the ultimate decision of the EA, mean that higher standards are applied to the separation of wood than is currently necessary. It is doubtful that certainty of composition can be achieved for all wood via visual inspection, even if all deposits could first be inspected. As a result, one potential outcome may be that any wood whose composition cannot be confirmed will be treated as hazardous.
- 7.4 Further discussions are ongoing between key organisations within the industry and the EA on the implications.
- 7.5 Officers are liaising with the Contractor and will brief Members further as the situation develops.

## **8 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW**

### **Glass Recycling Campaign**

- 8.1 Members will recall a proposal for a glass recycling campaign that was presented and approved at the July JWDB meeting.
- 8.2 The campaign's aim is to increase glass recycling at bring banks by at least 24% on current levels in a period of 12 months (around 70% of the glass available in household waste).
- 8.3 The Glass Recycling Community Fund Campaign was due to be launched with a press release, photocall and on social media at the time of these papers being prepared for the Board.
- 8.4 A series of photocalls in all three Council areas have been scheduled with the Lead Members and community representatives.
- 8.5 The current re3 Marketing and Communications Officer has prepared marketing collateral that can be used for the campaign launch and beyond to support the registration of groups and promote participation among residents.

**Overview of activity since the appointment of the current re3 Marketing and Communications Officer**

- 8.6 The current re3 Marketing and Communications Officer is leaving re3 in early November to take up a new position elsewhere.
- 8.7 As the first officer to take on this role, she was tasked with developing re3's social media presence, producing campaigns to encourage positive behavioural change in waste management and recycling, and communicating the visitor access requirement changes at the re3 Recycling Centres. Below is a brief review of key achievements:

**Social Media - Facebook**

- 8.8 re3's Facebook page was started from scratch in January 2016, and now has 451 followers. This is around a quarter of the followers for the Council's individual Facebook pages, but obviously concentrates on one service area only.
- 8.9 The Facebook page has been particularly successful in providing information quickly on service changes, including those due to unforeseen circumstances i.e. over 4000 residents were updated on the recent Smallmead fire and temporary closure through Facebook.
- 8.10 The Mythbusters series of communications were launched on Facebook to over 7,000 residents, generating 300 click-throughs to the relevant page on the re3 website.
- 8.11 Paid for promotions have been successfully trialled for a handful of messages, with a small ad spend of under £40 generating a reach of nearly 15,000 re3 area residents for this summer's food waste prevention advert.

**Social Media - YouTube**

- 8.12 There are 13 approved short films available on the re3 YouTube channel. The 'Keep your Cap On' campaign launch remains the most viewed as it has been seen over 500 times.

- 8.13 A 30 second clip with a Love Food Hate Waste tip that was embedded directly into the re3 Facebook page was viewed over 740 times.
- 8.14 There is scope for waste minimisation officers to utilise this resource more frequently when talking to community groups, in school assemblies etc. The films also encourage press coverage as they are continuously reproduced on local news websites.

### **Social Media - Twitter**

- 8.15 re3's Twitter account has now exceeded the 1000 follower mark, an increase of 165% from when the account was first reactivated by the Marketing and Communications Officer just over two years ago.
- 8.16 In the three months from June to September 2017, the re3 account generated 112.9k impressions.
- 8.17 Recent high profile tweets of over 5,000 impressions include a 'keep your cap on' campaign follow-up, the food waste prevention advert and a recycling factsheets reminder.

### **Communicating the 2016 changes at the recycling centres**

- 8.18 The wide-ranging but cost-efficient communications campaign was instrumental in driving behavioural change by residents using the re3 recycling centres, and has contributed to achieving key objectives.
- 8.19 An (unpaid) Facebook post at the start of the visitor access changes reached over 17,000, generated over 1100 click-throughs to the website and recorded 116 comments.
- 8.20 The bin bag splitting initiative, publicised through a YouTube video and featured in a BBC South Today report, has been successful in diverting over 47,000 tonnes of waste from landfill in 2017 alone.
- 8.21 In terms of building re3 brand and service awareness, 80% of respondents in an online survey at the start of 2017 confirmed that they were aware of re3 after receiving their recycling centre resident's permit and letter in the post. For the first time, residents were told in clear terms about the cost and value of waste and how their contribution could save them money as a Council Tax payer.
- 8.22 Within 3 months of communicating the changes, 95% of visitors were displaying their windscreen stickers to gain access to the recycling centres.
- 8.23 Considerable effort has gone into communicating the ongoing impact of the changes, including addressing challenges to the legitimacy of charging for non-household waste from residents' and councillors' feedback and through the local and trade press.

### **Other Communication Initiatives**

- 8.24 Working with designers including the University of Reading's typography department, a house style has been developed for use by re3 across all its communications. This has helped to unify messaging and aims to continue promoting greater brand awareness.

- 8.25 Internal communications through briefings, staff messaging and meetings have raised awareness of re3 and its aims among colleagues in the partner councils, as well as soliciting their support for initiatives like the recycling centre changes.
- 8.26 Strong relationships with the media have been developed resulting in good coverage on BBC Radio Berkshire, the 'Get ...' range of local news websites and in TV news reports on BBC South Today and ITV Meridian.
- 8.27 With input from the re3 Marketing and Comms Officer, re3 has submitted a handful of national trade award applications, resulting in the shortlisting for three categories, with one pending.

## **7 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY**

### Head of Legal Services

- 7.1 None for this report.

### Corporate Finance Business Partner

- 7.2 None for this report.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.3 None.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 7.4 None

## **8 CONSULTATION**

### Principal Groups Consulted

- 8.1 Not applicable.

### Method of Consultation

- 8.2 Not applicable.

### Representations Received

- 8.3 Not applicable.

### Background Papers

None

### Contacts for further information

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