

TO: JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
16th June 2022

PROGRESS REPORT
Report of the re3 Project Director

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 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Members note the contents of this report.**
- 2.2 **That Members approve the recommendation at 5.20 to discontinue the reporting of Sainsbury's bring bank tonnages and add a statement on the re3 website to highlight the separate nature of the council services.**
- 2.3 **That Members approve the recommendation at 5.31 to end the rigid plastics recycling trial and make the service a permanent arrangement at both recycling centres.**

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 None for this report.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 The purpose of this report is to brief Members in relation to progress in delivery of the re3 Joint Waste PFI Contract.

5 PROGRESS IN RELATION TO WASTE MANAGEMENT

Councillor and Stakeholder Briefing Sessions

- 5.1 The re3 partnership is a significant and successful example of councils working together to provide services to residents.
- 5.2 The arrangements provided through the partnership are complex. For example:
- The shared facilities manage over 500,000 vehicles every year, receiving, sorting and hauling-onwards, to treatment or disposal, 175,000 tonnes of waste.
 - There are 62 specific waste streams, managed through the re3 arrangements, and each sent to a specific destination and/or treatment.
 - Market requirements for secondary materials, for recycling, often change daily. Nearly all of our waste remains in the UK, but some is exported to near-Europe.
 - Economic factors and developments in packaging, mean that the content of waste is changing all the time.
- 5.3 In preparation for significant developments in waste over the next few years, the re3 Project Team is preparing some Member and Officer briefing sessions about the re3 shared arrangements. The sessions will be specific to each council, can be online or

in person, and will be arranged as convenient.

- 5.4 A further, online, session will be arranged for residents, in the autumn. It will be a chance for residents to hear about the shared arrangements, what happens to their waste and to ask questions.

re3 and Council Performance Statistics

- 5.5 The provisional recycling rates for 2021/22 are presented below alongside a comparison with 2020/21.

	2020/21	2021/22	Increase
BFC	43.5%	56.2%	12.7%
RBC	36.0%	51.5%	15.5%
WBC	49.5%	54.2%	4.7%

- 5.6 In Bracknell, there was a 33% reduction in kerbside residual waste following the introduction of three-weekly residual waste collections and the roll out of food waste caddies from March 2021. Of the reduced tonnage, about two thirds was diverted food waste. Some of the waste appears to have been diverted to the recycling centre and there was a 5% reduction in overall household waste arisings.

- 5.7 In Reading, there was a 34% reduction in kerbside residual waste following the introduction of smaller residual waste bins, and the roll out of food waste collections from February 2021. Of the reduced tonnage, just over half was diverted food waste. There was also an 8% increase in mixed dry recyclables, some waste was also diverted to the recycling centre and a 3% reduction in overall household waste arisings.

- 5.8 In Wokingham, there was an 8% reduction in kerbside residual waste. This probably reflects some return to normal following the first year of the pandemic; with more waste being received at the recycling centres. There was also a 2% reduction in the received tonnage of waste collected as 'mixed dry recycling' at the kerbside. Officers consider that a contributory factor may be the reduced moisture content, made possible through the introduction of waterproof bags. The waterproof bags enabled 100% of the waste to be processed via the MRF in 2021/22.

- 5.9 The provisional 2021/22 recycling rates for the re3 recycling centres are presented below alongside a comparison with 2020/21.

	2020/21	2021/22	Decrease
Longshot Lane	72.1%	68.5%	3.6%
Smallmead	76.3%	74.0%	2.3%

- 5.10 At Longshot Lane, there was a 24% increase in waste received, which included an 18% increase in recyclable waste, and a 41% increase in residual waste.

- 5.11 At Smallmead, there was a 35% increase in waste received, which included an 31% increase in recyclable waste, and a 48% increase in residual waste.

- 5.12 In 2020/21, recyclable waste received at the re3 recycling centres fell by 33% as a result of the pandemic, and residual waste fell by a similar amount – 37%. The greater increase in residual waste tonnages in 2021/22, may therefore be linked to the changes made at the kerbside.

- 5.13 The provisional recycling rates for April 2022 are presented below alongside a

comparison with quarter 1 of 2021/22.

	2020/21 (Qtr1)	2021/22 (April)
BFC	58.4%	56.5%
RBC	53.0%	51.7%
WBC	55.3%	56.5%

- 5.14 Members will observe that the April recycling rates for Bracknell and Reading, are below the quarter one figures for last year. Analysis shows that performance for April is actually slightly above the performance for April alone last year. However, the HWRC recycling rates were especially high in April, due to a smaller amount of residual waste being weighed out in this month. The Smallmead recycling centres was particularly high at 92%, and this will come down in the coming months. As a result it is probably too early at this stage to assess how performance in 2022/23 will compare to that from 2021/22.

Supermarket Bring Banks

- 5.15 The re3 Councils have a statutory duty to report Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste (LACMW) via Waste Data Flow. LACMW is defined as any municipal waste which is collected under arrangements made by a local authority. This encompasses household waste, or similar, collected by the unitary authority directly or by formal or informal agreements with third parties.
- 5.16 Where a supermarket collects waste through its own private arrangements, the supermarket can voluntarily report data, and this can be included in Waste Data Flow returns as LACMW.
- 5.17 Over a number of years, the Sainsbury's Supermarkets within the Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough areas have reported tonnages of glass, plastics, cans, paper and cardboard collected at recycling banks located at their stores. In 2020/21, Sainsbury's bring banks contributed 0.76% to the Bracknell recycling rate and 0.62% to the Wokingham recycling rate.
- 5.18 Following notification in April that the off-taker (the company emptying the banks) for this material had changed, Officers sought updated information via council colleagues about the processing of this waste. In response it was confirmed that the plastics, cans, paper and cardboard collected at these banks is no longer recycled.
- 5.19 The bring bank arrangements at Sainsbury's supermarkets are entirely separate to the kerbside or bring bank collections undertaken by the councils. The re3 Partnership has no control over how the Sainsbury's waste is processed and no obligation to report this waste as LACMW.
- 5.20 Although the tonnage of recycled glass from this source outweighs the quantities of non-recycled materials, Officers recommend that we no longer include these tonnages in the Council statistics. If Members agree this recommendation, Officers will add a statement on the re3 website and re3cyclopedia app to ensure that residents are aware of the separation and to help prevent the recycling efforts of the re3 Partnership, and its residents, being undermined by the actions of a third party.

re3Grow Compost

- 5.21 Members will recall that 10,000 bags of 40L compost were ordered for sale at the Recycling Centre. The sales began in mid-March with more than 5,800 bags having been purchased by residents as of the end of May.

- 5.22 As Members will be aware, the Partnership also launched the Community re3Grow scheme on 13th of May. Through this scheme, local community groups are able to apply to receive free bags of compost to help promote environmental principles. In order to support improvement works in the re3 area, up to 5000 bags will be made available through this scheme in June, July and August.
- 5.23 The scheme has been advertised through a press release, newsletters and social media, as well as on the re3 website.
- 5.24 As of the 30th of May, 46 applications had been received. Officers will share details from the expression of interest forms with Members of the Joint Waste Disposal Board in early June so that decisions can be made about which applications to approve.
- 5.25 Officers look forward to receiving photos and data from the community groups who receive the re3Grow compost and will publish relevant information about the benefits of the scheme as it develops.

Rigid Plastics Recycling Trial

- 5.26 Members will recall that a rigid plastics recycling trial commenced at both Recycling Centres in early July 2021. The purpose of the trial was to enable the costs and benefits of the service to be assessed.
- 5.27 At the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board in December, Officers reported that the average cost per tonne in September and October stood at £133. Although this was below the cost of sending the same waste to landfill, Members agreed that the trial should be extended until June 2022, whilst Officers continued to work with the Contractor to ensure that transport of loads was efficient.
- 5.28 As no improvement was seen in the first few months of 2022, Officers requested that a joint meeting with the Offtaker and the Contractor take place in March. During this meeting, the offaker again confirmed that the weights could be further increased without compromising recyclability.
- 5.29 Officers are now confident that the cost of the recycling the plastics will remain consistently below the cost to send the same waste to landfill. Between January and April, the estimated cost was £134 per tonne, compared to £147 for landfill. During the course of the trial, no contamination payments have been requested and the reprocessor has confirmed that the material from re3 is of a high quality.
- 5.30 Residents have also continued to make good use of the service; with over 260 tonnes of rigid plastics having been sent for recycling in the nine months between July and March (inclusive).
- 5.31 Although a review of the transport arrangements will continue, it is recommended that Members request that this service now be made permanent. Our suggested target is to ensure that the cost of recycling rigid plastics is at least 15% below the cost of landfill.

Mixed Glass

- 5.32 Members will recall that the re3 glass recycling banks began accepting mixed glass in November 2021. Machinery at the reprocessor sites separates the glass by colour, so that it can be recycled back into bottles and jars, without residents needing to separate the glass into multiple banks.

- 5.33 At the December meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board, Officers advised that the benefits were expected to include reduced numbers of overflows, options to optimise the collection schedules and more efficient transport.
- 5.34 A six-month review took place with the re3 Contractor in May 2022, to review the service. The data demonstrates the following:
- There were 38 overflows in the period between mid-November and mid-May. This compares to 67 overflows in the same period in 2018/19. (There were also significantly more overflows in the same period in 2020/21, but these were affected by higher tonnages experienced during the pandemic).
 - There were six initial sites that the Contractor identified where reduced collections are possible now that the risk of one bank overflowing, whilst others are partially empty, has been reduced. The councils are liaising with the Contractor about other sites where schedule changes may be possible. These will then be rolled out and monitored. Optimising the collection schedules has financial benefits for the councils and it may be possible to re-route the rounds to lead to environmental benefits also.
 - In April 2022, the glass trucks transported almost 2% more glass per load, than in the same month in 2021. Previously the vehicles had to return to the transfer station when a compartment in the vehicle became full. Now that separate compartments are not required, the transport has become more efficient.
- 5.35 It has been identified that there are a small number of sites where residents are continuing to separate their glass by colour. Feedback from the glass truck drivers indicates that some residents remain unaware of the recent changes. Although mixed glass stickers are already present on the banks, larger stickers will be produced for these sites, to reduce any confusion and to encourage mixing in the banks.

Communications

- 5.36 On Friday 13th May, re3 launched the Community re3Grow Scheme, a joint venture between re3 and FCC Environment. Over the summer period, up to 5000 (40L) bags of re3Grow compost will be awarded to community groups in the re3 area for free. re3 will welcome expressions of interest from community groups who can demonstrate how the compost will be used for a community benefit. The provision of free compost is designed to promote recycling and community activities within the re3 area and a third of the bags will be available for allocation in each authority area over the course of June, July, and August. The lead members of the JWDB will decide which groups are awarded the bags.
- 5.37 re3 were made aware that there have been a few near misses at the HWRC's, due to children exiting cars whilst their guardians are using the facilities. We have planned some communications about safety on our sites, which we will be consistently promoting over summer.
- 5.38 Whilst engagement with residents who already follow our communication channels remains high, the re3 social media channels have not gained many new followers over the past quarter. In response to this, a targeted, paid advert has been created through Meta Business Suite, to advertise our page and services to the local re3 community. The advert will run for one month.
- 5.39 Filming for a planned series of educational videos about how recycling is sorted once it reaches our Smallmead facility is underway. The first video will focus on what happens to household recycling if it is contaminated with non-recyclable materials. The video will aim to educate residents about the consequences of contaminating

their recycling.

- 5.40 A new update was released to the re3yclopedia phone app at the end of May. The phone app now utilises a new barcode technology, that allows residents to scan their items to learn how to best recycle them. We have soft launched the update and are planning some more focused communications around the new app updates over the next quarter.
- 5.41 The MRF robot picker is now fully functional at the Smallmead facility. With the optimisation stage complete, the AI-driven waste picking robot is now fully technically and commercially operational, using computer vision to sort types of plastics and achieving purity with less than 1% contamination.

Council Objectives and Performance Information Review

- 5.42 At the March re3 Board meeting, Members discussed the importance of corporate objectives being met through the delivery of the re3 contract.
- 5.43 The re3 Project Team has collated the existing corporate objectives of the three councils. They are shown at Appendix 1.
- 5.44 Appendix 1 also includes a list of other measurables, either related to statutory reporting or because it reflects an important business area for the partnership and shared arrangements.
- 5.45 At present, data and information about waste management can sometimes be requested and/or used in an ad hoc way by the councils. A more targeted approach would be beneficial – reflecting greater focus on objectively important areas of the business and to assist in directing resources appropriately. It is also important to ensure that performance information is given the same importance as financial information. Such approaches will be important in supporting the councils as legislative change emerges.
- 5.46 Accordingly, the re3 Project Team will undertake a review of performance information, supported by the Contractor. The purpose of the review will be to:
- a. Identify data collection, manipulation and sharing efficiencies.
 - b. Balancing the collection and use of information with genuine business needs.
 - c. Reducing the time burden of statutory reporting.
 - d. Move information processes towards emerging legislative requirements.

- 5.47 The re3 Project Team will share the results with the Board, at a subsequent meeting, for approval.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY

Head of Legal Services

- 6.1 None for this report.

Corporate Finance Business Partner

- 6.2 None for this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.3 None.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.4 None

Climate Impact Assessment

6.5 None.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Principal Groups Consulted

Not applicable.

7.2 Method of Consultation

Not applicable.

7.3 Representations Received

Not applicable.

Background Papers

December 2021 re3 Board

Contacts for further information

Sarah Innes, re3 Monitoring and Performance Officer
0118 937 3459
sarah.innes@reading.gov.uk

Oliver Burt, re3 Project Director
0118 937 3990
oliver.burt@reading.gov.uk

Lauren Shute, Interim re3 Marketing and Communications Officer
0118 937 3460
Lauren.shute@reading.gov.uk