

Date: 23 April 2020

Subject: Household Waste Recycling Centres

Report of: David Taylor, Executive Director, Waste and Resources, GMCA

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report requests that Combined Authority Chief Executive exercise his powers contained in the GMCA Constitution Part 3 Section F

- paragraph 3.16 - all matters associated with the day-to-day operation of waste disposal functions, and
- paragraph 3.1 - to take action which is required as a matter of urgency in the interests of the GMCA, in consultation (where practicable) with the Chair of the GMCA

to approve the phased re-opening of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) in Greater Manchester.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The GMCA Chief Executive is requested:

1. To approve the phased re-opening of Household Waste Recycling Centres in Greater Manchester as set out in Option 1 of the report subject to:
 - a. further consultation with the districts on the detailed arrangements for the re-opening of sites; and
 - b. the agreement of each district on the re-opening of any site in its area.
2. To approve the incurring of additional costs in respect of external resources for off-site highways management referred to in paragraph 8.1 of the report.
3. To confirm that the opening of HWRCs will be kept under review.
4. To approve the above decisions as urgent and the seeking of exemption from call-in from the Chair of the Housing, Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

CONTACT OFFICERS:

David Taylor, Executive Director, Waste and Resources, GMCA
david.taylor@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Risk Management – see paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3

Legal Considerations – see paragraph 7.1 and 7.2

Financial Consequences – Revenue – see paragraph 8.1

Financial Consequences – Capital – it is not anticipated that there will be any capital consequences

Number of attachments included in the report: none

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

TRACKING/PROCESS		
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		Yes
EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?		Yes, there is an urgent requirement to restore HWRC services to the public following their immediate cessation on 24 March 2020 on the Government's announcement on 23 March 2020 of social distancing and movement restrictions in response to the COVID-19 emergency.
TfGMC	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Exemption from Call-in to be sought from the Chair of Housing, Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
N/A		

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. On 30 May 2019 GMCA entered into a contract with Suez Recycling and Recovery UK Limited (Suez) for the provision of Household Waste Recycling Centre Management Services.
- 1.2. On the evening of 23rd March 2020 the Government announced social distancing and movement restrictions in response to the COVID-19 emergency. As a result, GMCA instructed Suez to close the HWRCs with effect from Tuesday 24th March 2020 in accordance with 'Civic Emergency' provisions in the contract.
- 1.3. This report sets out the proposal to resume services under the contract in a phased approach.

2. RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH RE-OPENING HWRCs

- 2.1. Non statutory guidance from Defra issued on 7th April indicated that consideration should be made for a service to be provided via priority sites. Defra released a media statement on the 14th April that recommends opening of recycling centres where social distancing can be maintained on site. This guidance is at odds with Public Health England advice on what constitutes an essential journey and places the onus on local authorities to determine whether a trip to the recycling centre meets that test.
- 2.2. In anticipation of the lockdown restrictions being lifted at some point in the future, GMCA Waste and Resources team has developed operational plans with Suez Recycling and Recovery UK (Suez) to enable the sites to reopen whilst maintaining social distancing measures.
- 2.3. There are several factors that need to be taken into account in order to recommence site operations. These are:
 - Maintaining social distancing measures on site to comply with Defra Guidance and ensure safety of site staff and site users;
 - Site size/capacity to queue cars and operate with social distancing measures;
 - Suez staff resource availability due to prevailing levels of sickness absence at the time of opening;
 - Minimising impact on WCA refuse and recycling deliveries to ensure rounds complete; and
 - Minimising offsite impacts on the highway and residential areas

3. PROPOSED OPERATING MODEL

- 3.1. The proposed site operating model is as follows (subject to review based on staff availability at the time of implementation):

- Sites under the HWRCMS contract referred to as Lot 2 (see appendix A) to operate 7 days per week 0800 to 1800 taking account of district feedback on sites that may have significant highways issues;
 - Sites under the WRMS contract referred to as Lot 1 (see appendix A) to operate weekends 0800 to 1800 to minimise impact on district refuse collection deliveries during the week;
 - Sites to operate on restricted access with a site specific limit of maximum numbers of vehicles being able to tip at any one time;
 - 4 members of staff on each site. Placement will be 1 operative at the gate for controlling access, 1 operative controlling egress from sites, 1 operative in the public area to provide advice from a safe distance only and 1 operative to operate the machine for changing containers etc. There will be minimal interaction between the staff and the site users;
 - Residual waste only to be accepted. In order to maximise vehicle throughput and maintain social distancing each car will have a landfill skip and a thermal treatment skip allocated to it under direction of site staff. Inclusion of additional recycling skips reduces the number of cars that can be accommodated on site at any one time and therefore reduces vehicle throughput;
 - High sided vehicles carrying household waste that cannot fit under the HWRC height barriers will be able to tip at a specific set of main weighbridge reception facilities at weekends only to avoid any impact on district refuse collection deliveries;
 - Transit type vans and vehicles with trailers will not be accepted to maximise vehicle throughput, cars and small vans only. This is consistent with the approach taken by Wigan; and
 - The annual threshold number of visits based on vehicle types reset on 1st April 2020 to 52 for cars and 18 for residents using vans. Individual vehicle visit numbers will be monitored during the reimplementation phase to identify any suspected trade waste abuse. Those vehicles that have been banned from site for delivering trade waste will remain banned.
- 3.2. Site specific management plans and risk assessments have been developed by Suez that set out vehicle queuing areas on site, locations of site staff and their roles and social distancing measures. Signage and markings for social distancing have also been installed on sites ready for operation. Districts are in the process of reviewing the offsite highway management requirements.
- 3.3. Site reopening will be accompanied by a strong communications plan, in advance, setting out the restrictions, social distancing measures, materials to be accepted etc and will include firm messaging about whether to visit the sites or not (and what to do if residents arrive with materials that cannot be accepted). In the event of queues forming on the highway then vehicles may be turned away. The communications will also emphasise that the sites will only remain operational with the co-operation of the public, excessive queuing/antisocial behavior/disregard for social distancing may result in the closure of sites. Messaging will be via the Recycle for Greater Manchester website, links to district websites and social medial channels. The communications plan will be based on allocation of days to odd and even vehicle registration numbers in order to seek to spread the level

of site visits more evenly. This is reliant on compliance from residents. Based on the social distancing requirements, vehicle throughput per hour is likely to be between 40 and 100 vehicles per hour depending on site size, meaning that effective off site traffic management will be required to manage queues.

4. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- 4.1. Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and districts have been consulted on whether they can support the reopening and commit resources to manage offsite highway impacts. GMP confirmed that they would add sites to neighborhood patrol routes but could not provide officer attendance to specifically manage traffic. Concerns were also raised regarding whether neighbouring authorities were opening and potential for increased traffic volumes from cross boundary movements.
- 4.2. Concerns have been expressed by districts regarding traffic management, the management of queues, impacts on residential areas, potential for threatening/abusive behaviour and how compliant members of the public will be with rules for site use. Experience from Wigan over the last week has gone some way to addressing these concerns with lower than anticipated levels of site use.

5. OPTIONS

- 5.1. Opening all 20 sites is not immediately possible due to current Suez resource constraints. The options for opening sites based on the proposed operating model and district feedback are:
- 5.2. Option 1 - Open sites as set out in Appendix A using external resources to support districts where required with lead time for this to be established. A reopening date needs to be agreed and fixed so that resources/signage/diversions etc can be put in place. This Option gives maximum coverage across GM and reduces the potential for excess travel between districts with 9 sites available 7 days per week and 17 sites available at weekends. The actual configuration of sites to reopen will be agreed with districts and will be subject to resource availability at the time of opening;
- 5.3. Option 2 - Operate a staged opening with sites in Manchester and Bury remaining closed in the initial phase as set out in Appendix B. This gives reduced coverage across GM and will increase pressure on those sites that are opened in the initial phase. This approach results in 7 sites available 7 days per week and 14 sites available at weekends. Based on feedback from districts on the time required to reinstate bulky collections, the initial phase of partial site opening could last for about 1 month; and
- 5.4. Option 3 - Maintain closure for the lockdown period, review and coordinate opening with surrounding authorities at a future time.
- 5.5. If sites are opened, as Suez resource levels return to normal, additional sites and extended opening hours can be offered and as social distancing measures are eased additional

commodities for recycling can be introduced. As more staff resources become available then the sites at Chester Road, Every St and Rosehill could be opened. In the event of sickness levels increasing then the range of sites that are kept open will need to be reviewed with districts at that time.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1. District councils are supportive of Option 1 subject to:

- 6.1.1. further consultation with the districts on the detailed arrangements for the re-opening of sites; and
- 6.1.2. the agreement of each district on the re-opening of any site in its area.

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1. By virtue of the GMCA (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017 the GMCA is the Waste Disposal Authority for the purposes of the Waste Regulation and Disposal (Authorities) Order 1985 and is responsible for the discharge of all the functions of a waste disposal authority.
- 7.2. By virtue of 113A of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the GMCA has a general power to do anything it considers appropriate for the purposes of the carrying-out of any of its functions or anything it considers appropriate for purposes incidental to its functional purposes.

8. FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES – REVENUE

- 8.1. The costs for external resourcing referred in section 4 of this report are estimated to be at £75k to £100k per week. This would be an ongoing cost until social distancing restrictions are relaxed and increased site throughputs can be achieved or if actual demand on sites is lower than anticipated. TfGM potentially has conflict management trained staff that could support, this is being explored.

9. FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES – CAPITAL

- 9.1. It is not anticipated that there will be any capital consequences.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1. Recommendations are set at the beginning of the report.