

**Contracts and operations update**

**SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the Authority's waste treatment arrangements and procurements. The key points are:

- The Authority's largest contract, which involves sending non-recyclable waste by train to an energy recovery centre, is operating well despite challenges from ongoing strike action.
- The loss of two mobile plant operatives at the Abbey Road site has presented resourcing challenges, but the site continues to deliver improvements.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)** The Authority is asked to:

- 1) Note the information within this report.

**1. Introduction**

This report provides an update on WLWA's existing contracts and operations for managing west London's waste.

**2. West London Residual Waste Services contract**

This contract is with West London Energy Recovery Limited (WLERL) and is operated by Suez. It involves the acceptance of waste from Boroughs at west London transfer stations, from where most of the waste is compacted into containers and transferred by rail to Severnside Energy Recovery Centre (SERC) for thermal treatment and energy recovery. It is the Authority's largest contract, handling over 300,000 tonnes of residual waste each year, with a value of around £35 million per year.

The contract continues to perform very well against its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the current year-to-date, where a landfill diversion rate of 99.9% (target 96.1%) was achieved along with a recycling rate of 5.2% (target 2.1%).

Since the last Authority meeting, the Contractor has had fewer rail strikes to contend with. Strikes led to cancelled trains on 14 to 17 October, and the threat of strikes in early November (which were eventually called off), still led to reduced services in the week commencing 7 November. At the time of writing, a further strike is scheduled for 26 November and an agreement between the unions and the rail companies does not seem likely soon. The Contractor has managed the impact of rail strikes well, with little disruption to services. Officers are working with the Contractor to ensure that contingency arrangements continue to be fit for purpose in the medium to long term.

There is no planned industrial action for Borough waste collections and the risk of such strikes appears to have decreased.

Improvements are progressing well at the waste transfer stations with the new fire suppression system at Transport Avenue now fully operational, and the cranes at Victoria Road now operating more reliably following electrical upgrades.

### **3. Viridor residual waste contract (Lakeside)**

This contract is for 90,000 tonnes a year of residual waste which is thermally treated at Lakeside energy recovery centre near Slough. The contract is operating well and received additional waste during the rail strikes. Deliveries to Lakeside have been reprofiled for the remainder of the year to ensure that the 90,000-tonne limit is met.

### **4. Food waste contract**

The food waste contract with Biocollectors continues to operate well. A recent composition analysis of residual waste gives the latest picture of how much food is in the residual waste stream. This is described in the Projects Update.

### **5. Green waste contract**

The new green waste contract with West London Composting (WLC) was mobilised on 1 May and has been operating very effectively. The contract is back to normal operations following a fire at WLC's composting site in Harefield on 12 September.

### **6. Transport contracts**

The Authority lets two waste transport contracts:

- One for transporting non-recyclable waste from Borough waste transfer stations and Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR) collected by Ealing, typically using bulk haulage vehicles, operated by Waste-A-Way Recycling.
- One for the removal of segregated materials from Borough HRRC sites in roll-on roll-off (RoRo) containers, operated by Suez.

Both contracts are operating well. The bulk haulage contractor continues to refine its schedule of collections from one of the Borough sites to ensure it works well for all parties.

### **7. Dry Recyclables**

The contract is operating well, and there are no operational issues to report.

### **8. Abbey Road HRRC and Waste Transfer Station (WTS)**

Abbey Road HRRC and WTS is managed by WLWA, and the HRRC is run on behalf of Brent.

September's version of this report described a collision between a Loading Shovel and a 360 Grab on the WTS which caused damage to the vehicles. An investigation has since determined that the driver of the loading shovel was guilty of gross negligence and has since been dismissed, subject to appeal.

On 23 September Richard Gallagher, a mobile plant operator seconded from Suez, sadly died at home of a heart attack. Richard was well liked and respected by colleagues at WLWA and Suez, and his loss will be felt deeply by all who knew him.

As a result of the loss of Richard and the dismissal, the site is short of mobile plant operators, and agency staff have been employed to provide cover with experienced staff from other parts of the site providing support. Recruitment is ongoing but proving challenging, particularly for mobile plant operators. After a prolonged search, a vacancy for a Waste Minimisation Operative has been filled and a new Operations Data Officer has been appointed subject to pre-employment checks.

Despite staffing challenges, the site continues to deliver invest-to-save improvements including the installation of solar panels on the workshop roof, which will reduce the site's carbon emissions and costs over time.

### **9. HRRC Improvement Programme**

At the start of this financial year, WLWA made £200,000 available to each Borough to make improvements at HRRCs. Improvement works have started at Ealing and Hounslow's sites and

plans are being developed for Richmond, Harrow and Hillingdon. Abbey Road HRRC (on behalf of Brent) will be trialling black bag splitting to further increase the capture of recyclables that would otherwise have gone to energy recovery. This approach has been highly successful in other parts of the country, and lessons from the trial could be rolled out to the other HRRCs. The WLWA HRRC improvement team is also developing a business case for separating bulky non-recyclable waste from black bags to reduce the amount that needs shredding. This has been successfully demonstrated at Abbey Road and Richmond's HRRC and leads to lower cost, less carbon, and the reduced risk of fires from shredding flammable materials.

## 10. Health and Safety Implications

Risk assessments are being fully reviewed to account for outcomes from the investigation of the above incident at Abbey Road.

New staff at Abbey Road, including agency staff, will be fully inducted to work safely on the site.

## 11. Financial Implications

Upgrades to the cranes and fire suppression systems at the waste transfer stations will be financed by the Contractor.

Under the WLERL contract, any increased haulage costs, or gate fees at alternative energy recovery centres will be borne by the Contractor. However, if alternative energy recovery centres or landfill sites are used, WLWA will miss out on a contract rebate for this material. WLWA may also miss out on a share of third party waste income from SERC if the plant is unable to be run at full capacity.

Increased use of agency staff to cover vacancies at Abbey Road will be financed through savings made at site, including from increased trade waste income.

Please refer to the Finance Update for a summary of the current position against the budget.

## 12. Staffing Implications

None.

## 13. Legal Implications

None.

**14. Joint Waste Management Strategy Implication** - The contracts mentioned in this report meet the Authority's Joint Waste Management Strategy policies, as described in Section 1.

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