

AUTHORITY REPORT: REUSE & RECYCLING CENTRES – CONTROLS (RRC)

1. Confidential Report

1.1 No.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 Members are asked to note this report and:

- a) consider the suggested changes/updates to the RRC Protocol outlined in paragraphs 6.1, 6.2 and 6.4;
 - b) receive further reports on the potential to introduce charges for restricted waste as outlined in paragraph 7.2.
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3. Purpose

3.1 To report on the results to date of the change in access requirements at the RRCs and propose modifications to enhance the system.

4. Background

- 4.1 As part of a wider review of the IWMS contract, restricting free of charge access at the RRCs to ELWA residents only was identified by ELWA officers as a potential cost saving. Members instructed officers to implement a system requiring ELWA residents to provide proof of address within the ELWA region in order to access the sites free of charge.
- 4.2 From 09/05/11, ELWA residents were asked to show both a council tax bill and a driving license upon arriving at the RRC. During the first week of operation the requirement was reduced to one of the two named documents.
- 4.3 Site visitors from outside of the ELWA region could still access the RRCs but a standard charge was made depending on the nature of the vehicle; cars were charged a rate of £10 and vans £40. These charges apply to the type of vehicle rather than the type of waste – trade waste was still charged at trade waste rates.
- 4.4 An extension of the existing Restricted Waste Protocol was also proposed and implemented, to ensure all vans and cars with trailers accessed the sites via the weighbridge.
- 4.5 The new system was accompanied by an extensive and ongoing communications campaign.
- 4.6 An automated traffic count system was set up and tonnage monitoring was carried out to assess the impact of the changes.

5. Current position

5.1 The system is currently running as intended, with minor alterations:

- a) the requirement for one or the other named documents rather than both is still in place;
- b) other forms of ID are being accepted on a discretionary basis by site staff, such as resident's parking permits.

5.2 The anticipated drop in both tonnage processed through the sites and vehicle numbers has materialised, although from a significant initial drop both showed signs of increasing slightly.

- a) Appendix A shows, both for the individual RRCs and as a total, the monthly tonnages from April to July against the same period last year. For each site the tonnage dropped significantly after the system was introduced in May and continued to fall through June, typically steadying in July although the overall trend shows a continuing drop. As compared to the previous year, June and July (as the two complete months of operation) produced a 31.5% average drop in tonnage across the sites, amounting to 5,376 fewer tonnes processed. This equates to a contract cost saving of approximately £320,000 for those two months.
- b) Appendix B shows the results of the automated vehicle counts, which ceased at the end of June, for each site and as a total. There was a similar pattern for the sites of a sharp drop in traffic in the week the system was introduced followed by a brief but sharp increase on the Bank Holiday weekend at the end of May. After the Bank Holiday the traffic returned to a low level until mid-June when it began to slowly increase. Although the data stops at the end of June, ELWA officers have first hand and anecdotal evidence that traffic through the sites remains considerably lower than it was prior to the system's introduction.
- c) Appendix C shows the tonnages Shanks have processed as trade waste at the RRCs (excluding Chigwell Road which does not accept trade waste). To give an indication of how volatile these tonnages are, the data runs from April 2010 through to July 2011. Beyond surmising that Jenkins Lane clearly processes the highest tonnage and Gerpins Lane very little, it is difficult to say whether the new access requirements or the strengthened restricted waste protocol have had an effect on the trade waste processed.
- d) Appendix D gives an account of the number of vehicles that have paid to access the RRCs, presumably because they were bringing in waste from outside the ELWA region. The higher number in May suggests that more people were turning

up unaware of the changes in those early weeks and opting to pay, indicating a gradual spread of awareness.

e) With only two full months' worth of data to analyse, it is considered too soon to establish how the recycling rates at the sites have been affected by the changes. ELWA officers will monitor this as further data becomes available.

- 5.3 Complaints arose from the public as expected but did not amount to a significant number. The majority of calls taken by the helpline set up by Shanks were for clarification on the changes or from residents outside of ELWA unhappy that they now had to pay the charge. By the end of the first month these calls had become very infrequent and Shanks were able to close the dedicated helpline after six weeks (although calls can still be directed to their general helpline).
- 5.4 A small number of residents have been unable to provide either a council tax bill or a driving licence as proof of residence. In these cases the resident was required to sign a disclaimer with an explanation as to why they could not provide ID. They were then sent a letter from ELWA to be used at the RRCs in lieu of ID, once ELWA officers were satisfied that they were ELWA residents disposing of household waste. Only 19 letters have been issued to date.
- 5.5 Concerns about excessive queuing proved to be unfounded as during the first week (the busiest so far), no queue reached a stage where the system had to be suspended. Extra Shanks staff and ELWA officers were on hand to assist where necessary during those early stages but have not been required since.
- 5.6 There have been no reports of an increase of fly-tipping from any of the boroughs. ELWA officers will continue to monitor this as data becomes available.
- 5.7 A communications campaign accompanied the introduction of the changes, spanning the four Borough publications, local newspapers, websites and extensive leafleting, in addition to substantial signage at the RRCs.
- 5.8 Despite this, there appeared to be a widespread lack of awareness in the early weeks, leading to heavy usage of the disclaimer forms provided to those who did not have the relevant ID with them on arriving at site. However, roughly three months after the changes were made, the number of site users unaware of the need for ID has dramatically fallen. Approximately 5,000 forms were used in the first week alone; the most recent number at the time of reporting was less than 500 for the week. Nonetheless, this, coupled with the upward trend in site traffic in June, suggests that the planned second wave of communications before the Christmas period is warranted.

6. Next steps

- 6.1 The scope for abuse of the current system is widened by accepting alternatives to the named ID requirements. A return to allowing only a council tax bill or a driving license would re-enforce the controls and ensure a more straightforward process for site staff on the gate.
- 6.2 The use of the disclaimer form further compromises the integrity of the system as it allows access without the proper ID. This was intended as a measure to allow ELWA residents to access the sites in the event that they were unaware of the ID requirements and was not expected to be used indefinitely. In order to maximise the effectiveness of the system, use of the forms should be discontinued at the appropriate time. A second communications campaign would be a solid justification for doing so.
- 6.3 ELWA officers have used the vehicle count data to assess site traffic by day and hour. Discussions are being held with Shanks as to the benefits and practicality of amending site opening hours.
- 6.4 If changes are to be made to enhance the system, a second widespread communications campaign would be needed to deliver the message and act as a reminder. The different release frequencies of the borough publications (by all accounts the most effective contact method) mean that a concerted campaign is limited to quarterly junctures, the next of these occurring in December. An editorial describing the reasons for and successes of the system would help boost support for and justify the action.
 - a) The ELWA and borough websites would need to be updated, as would the signage and leaflets being given out at site.
 - b) Buying space in local newspapers again is a further option, although there is doubt over the value for money of doing this given the relatively low readership of these publications.
 - c) Borough officers have been asked to gauge the possibility of using next year's council tax packet as a further means of promoting the system.

7. Future Measures

- 7.1 Although the system is by and large having the desired effect, further measures could be considered to both shore up the existing restrictions and facilitate increased savings.
- 7.2 The Government is proposing changes to the Controlled Waste Regulations that may change the way waste disposal authorities can charge for certain types of waste. There is further scope for limiting the cost of waste processed at the RRCs by introducing a charge for any rubble, ceramics or tyres ('restricted waste'), operated

in the same way as the charge for non-ELWA residents i.e. one rate for cars, a higher rate for vans. Given that restricted waste tends to be dense and heavy a third rate for large vans would be necessary in order to prevent abuse of the charging structure. A charge would have the effect of both limiting the amount of waste tipped at the sites and covering, at least in part, the cost of disposing of the waste that does come in. ELWA could discuss with Shanks how such a system could be introduced at our sites.

7.3 An across the board, generic charging system would also eliminate the current difficulties experienced between the boroughs and Shanks in operating the Restricted Waste Protocol. At present, there is not a cohesive procedure across the boroughs for identifying acceptable amounts of restricted waste being tipped by any given vehicle. Often, vehicles are turned away by Shanks only to be given permission to tip by a borough due to a lack of verifiable information on that vehicle, causing agitation for all parties.

7.4 The table below shows the tonnage of restricted waste materials processed at all sites in 2010/11. Combined, this material represents a disposal cost of approximately £600,000 to ELWA. Potentially this full amount could be recouped through a charge, but even a modest contribution from residents would represent significant savings to the Authority.

Material	Tonnage
Rubble	8,501
Ceramics	1,222
Tyres	431

8. Conclusion

8.1 The new system has achieved what was expected of it to date, providing savings through lower waste processing costs at the RRCs. In order to maximise these savings, the system would benefit from re-enforcement of existing policies and the introduction of further restrictions:

- a) Charge for restricted waste.
- b) Allow only a council tax bill or driving licence as proof of residence
- c) End use of the disclaimer form and refuse entry to anyone without the required ID.
- d) Publicise the enhanced restrictions with a comprehensive communications campaign.

9. Relevant officer:

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10. Appendices attached:

Appendix A – Monthly RRC tonnages

Appendix B – Vehicle counts

Appendix C – Shanks' trade waste tonnages

Appendix D – ELWA income

11. Background Papers:

27/06/11 – Contract Monitoring Report & Minute No.2011/10

12. Legal Considerations:

The implications of charging for restricted waste at the RRCs.

13. Financial Considerations:

This report is asking Members to consider changes to the current Protocol requirements required at RRC sites and to receive further reports on the potential for charging for restricted waste.

Members were advised at the last Authority meeting of the documentation checks in operation at RRC sites. This has led to a reduction in tonnage at the sites and the projected end of year financial benefit of this (£500,000) is reported as part of the budgetary control report elsewhere on this agenda. ELWA officers need to continue to monitor management information on this to identify what the long term effects on tonnages will be. Paragraph 6.4 proposed an additional communications campaign to be delivered to residents. The costs of both the earlier and the additional communication campaign would need to be contained within ELWA's overall resources.

Paragraph 4.3 identifies that site visitors outside the ELWA region have been charged to dispose of their waste at RRC sites and as at the end of July 2011 this has generated income of £1,400.

Paragraph 7 identifies that there are opportunities for additional charging for restricted waste items. Whilst any income streams helps in limiting levy increases, ELWA officers will need to undertake detailed business cases to ensure that the additional income generated is greater than the ongoing costs of administering any new schemes.

14. Risk Management Considerations:

None.

15. Follow-up Reports:

After a suitable evaluation period, a report will follow reflecting the outcome of Members' decisions.

16. Websites and e-mail links for further information:

None.

17. Glossary:

ELWA = East London Waste Authority

RRC = Reuse and Recycling Centre

IWMS = Integrated Waste Management Strategy

18. Approved by Management Board:

12 September 2011