

AUTHORITY REPORT: FOOD WASTE BRIEFING

1. Confidential Report

1.1 No

2. Recommendation:

2.1 Members note the report.

3. Purpose

3.1 To provide members with information about the disposal of food waste.

4. Background

4.1 Reducing food waste is a major issue. UK households throw away 7.2 million tonnes of food every year, which has serious financial and environmental implications.

4.2 Historically, food waste tended to be collected as part of the residual waste stream and invariably ended up in landfill. Home composting and the Love Food Hate Waste campaign have made inroads to diverting food waste from landfill but the development of anaerobic digestion (AD) facilities has resulted in many local authorities introducing separate food waste collections. The diversion of UK food waste to AD could:

a) Save local authorities £461 million/year in landfill tax.

b) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfill equivalent to taking 1 in 5 cars off the road.

4.3 In addition, the introduction of weekly separate food collection services is seen to be preferable to alternate weekly collections, whereby residual (including food) waste is collected every other week.

4.4 Needless to say, ELWA constituent councils are considering whether they too should introduce separate food waste collections. ELWA officers have received requests for information about the impact of such a change on the IWMS contract.

5. Current Position

5.1 Unlike many other local authorities, there is no imperative requiring ELWA to manage food waste separately from the rest of the residual waste stream. None of the constituent councils have alternate weekly collections resulting in 'smelly' waste not being collected for two weeks. Also, the BioMRF technology we use relies on the presence of biodegradable waste, such as food, to activate the process that results in the production of SRF. The only remaining fraction of waste that would benefit from AD processing is the BioMRF fines material.

5.2 From a contractual perspective, there are several implications if constituent councils were to introduce separate food waste collections:

a) Any reduction in food waste could mean that the diversion performance (primarily through moisture loss) could reduce and have a financial consequence to Shanks.

b) Any significant change to input composition that affects BioMRF performance could affect the quality of outputs, particularly SRF where there are strict tolerances, and Shanks will not accept this market risk.

c) Separately collected food would still be considered contract waste and subject to processing by Shanks. As our contract is based upon the use of BioMRFs, this waste would be put through that process, i.e. re-combined with the residual waste thus negating its separate collection.

5.3 The fact that Shanks are constructing an AD facility on land adjacent to Frog Island should not be confused with this being an alternative processing route for ELWA waste. The new plant will be a merchant facility, processing waste from a variety of commercial sources, and will not be part of the ELWA contract's capital assets.

5.4 Shanks are likely only to consider accepting separately collected contract food waste into their AD facility if it is financially attractive to displace other commercial inputs. At this point, Shanks are not indicating this is the case, especially when the above points are considered. However, Shanks are planning to process the ELWA BioMRF fines material through the new AD facility because this will be commercially cheaper than sending the material elsewhere for processing or to landfill.

6. Conclusion

6.1 At this time, ELWA officers do not consider it necessary or beneficial for constituent councils to consider the introduction of separate food waste collection services. The ultimate aim of separately collecting food waste is to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill. The 2012-2013 ABSDP includes 78% diversion of waste from landfill, on the basis of current waste management arrangements, and this is likely to increase to 80% in following years.

6.2 Nevertheless, we will continue discussions with Shanks' management about the most efficient and cost-effective use of the ELWA and their merchant facilities.

7. Relevant officer:

7.1 Paul Taylor, Managing Director, paul.taylor@eastlondonwaste.gov.uk, 020 8724 5750

8. Appendices attached:

8.1 None

9. Background papers:

None

10. Legal considerations:

10.1 None

11. Financial considerations:

11.1 This report provides Members with a background into the disposal of food waste and the financial and non-financial implications on the current IWMS contract if each constituent council were to have a separate food waste collection service

11.2 The Officer report concludes that there would be a number of financial risks to ELWA and to constituent council if, at this time, a separate food waste collection was introduced. However, it is noted that some financial benefits may arise if Shanks are able to process the ELWA BioMRF material through their new anaerobic digestion facility. It will important to ensure that any future proposals to make this change will require a detailed cost benefit analysis before any decision is made.

12. Performance management considerations:

12.1 None

13. Risk management considerations:

13.1 None

14. Equalities considerations:

14.1 None

15. Follow-up reports:

15.1 No

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

www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

17. Glossary:

ABSDP = Annual Business and Service Delivery Plan

AD = Anaerobic Digestion

BioMRF = Biological Materials Recycling Facility

ELWA = East London Waste Authority

IWMS = Integrated Waste Management Strategy

18. Approved by management board

18.1 23 April 2012

19. Confidentiality:

19.1 No