

**5 January 2022****Agenda Item:7**

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES**

### **RECYCLING CENTRE (RC) STRATEGIC REVIEW**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval to undertake a strategic review of recycling centre provision in Nottinghamshire and Nottingham, subject to agreement on an appropriate funding allocation by Nottingham City Council.

#### **Information**

##### Background and Context

2. Veolia operates 12 Recycling Centres across Nottinghamshire on behalf of the County Council as part of the Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Contract. Appendix 1 shows the locations of the 12 County RC plus the Nottingham City site at Lenton
3. In 2019/20 overall waste deposits to the 12 County sites totalled 87,519 tonnes.
4. Veolia generally subcontract Recycling Centre operations to individual site licensees based around a performance driven payment mechanism alongside a minimal hourly charge. Site licensees generate income to cover operating costs by sorting the waste and selling some of the waste streams, through various outlets. This operating model was historically known as “totting” and is a common approach across the UK.
5. Collectively, high performance is achieved at the County sites, with approximately 80% recycling and composting performance, and 98% user satisfaction. The sites accept a wide range of materials for recycling including batteries, carpet, garden waste, inert waste, fridges/freezers, wood, plasterboard, and glass. Trade waste is not accepted at Recycling Centres.
6. Paint reuse through the Community RePaint scheme is operated on four of the 12 sites (Beeston, Calverton, Newark and Warsop) where reusable paint is collected and re-distributed to individuals, families, communities, and charities. There are aspirations to expand this offer, where site capacity and budgets allow.
7. Despite the successful performance noted above, several sites are operating at capacity and many experience operational difficulties due to where they are located, generating complaints from residents.

8. This has been highlighted further throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic, which has periodically seen extensive queues at some sites as a result of social distancing/lockdown restrictions, with traffic management arrangements having to be deployed to ensure safety in some locations. In particular, a temporary booking system had to be implemented at the West Bridgford Recycling Centre during 2020/21 because of road safety concerns.
9. Nottingham City Council operates one site in Lenton which is operated in a similar way to the County sites but by a different contractor.
10. It is therefore proposed to undertake a strategic site review of the Recycling Centre network in the County (and Nottingham City subject to funding – see below) in light of lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic, the upcoming changes to kerbside collections needed to meet the statutory obligations of the Environment Act and Resources and Waste Strategy, and housing growth across Nottinghamshire.

### **Operational / Access Difficulties**

11. As noted above, a significant number of the recycling centres in Nottinghamshire experience operational difficulties and are constrained due to their location. The City Council Lenton site adjacent to the A52 suffers similar issues.
12. The Recycling Centres range in size, layout, usage and location. Whilst some are relatively modern – Newark, Worksop and Calverton are planned into the modern highway network for example – the majority of sites were established many years ago near to landfill or other waste sites. These have often now been developed for commercial and residential use, placing resultant constraints on site development and access, and in busy periods generating highway problems for adjacent businesses and residents that were not in situ when the sites originally opened.
13. It is also the case that even the newer sites can face highway issues through off site queuing at times due to limited on site capacity. This is particularly the case for Mansfield Recycling Centre for example, where the site footprint is small and constrained by adjacent development.
14. West Bridgford Recycling Centre required a temporary booking system to be implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic due to road safety concerns from queueing traffic. This site in particular has had a history of complaints from residents, and reports of dangerous driving from drivers overtaking vehicles queueing to access the site. This issue has been exacerbated by the cycle route improvements on Rugby Road over recent years, which have narrowed the carriageway making it harder for vehicles to pass any stationary queueing traffic.
15. Another example is the Warsop Recycling Centre, which has historical HGV access difficulties due to a low height railway bridge on the preferred route to the site, meaning that Veolia vehicles need to access the site from the A6097 via a significant length of unmade highway, resulting in frequent vehicle damage, and operational delays.

### **Housing Growth**

16. Extensive housing growth is also occurring across Nottinghamshire. Although Waste Management seeks financial contributions from housing developments through developer contributions via section 106 agreements very little funding has historically been forthcoming

and no improved or additional recycling centres have been developed to cater for such growth as a result.

17. This ongoing housing growth, without improving or expanding the current recycling centre provision, adds additional pressure to the existing network which is now operating at capacity.

### **Resources and Waste Strategy**

18. The Resources and Waste Strategy for England (RWS) and the associated Environment Act provides a further opportunity to undertake a strategic review of the sites.

19. The changes proposed to kerbside waste services through the Environment Act will increase the range of materials collected as it will require kerbside glass collections, weekly separate food waste collections and potentially free garden waste collections throughout the growing season.

20. This change in materials collected at the kerbside could substantially affect the composition of the waste delivered into recycling centres, in particular the free garden waste proposal.

21. Longer term proposals are also being considered by Government in respect of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to meet the disposal costs of more difficult wastes to dispose of, such as mattresses, carpets and paints. If implemented this would mean these items would require separate collection and therefore extra capacity.

22. There are other aspirations from Government included in the Strategy around reviewing the barriers to reuse at Recycling Centres. This could include re-use shops on the sites. Currently, none of Nottinghamshire's 12 sites have space to provide reuse facilities, and very few would be able to be expanded to allow for additional waste separation.

### **Nottingham City Council**

23. Nottinghamshire's recycling centres are only open to residents of Nottinghamshire. A registration scheme has been in place since 2016 to help manage cross-border usage from our County neighbours and Nottingham residents.

24. Prior to implementation of the registration scheme, it was estimated that over £1m per year was spent by the Council on treating and disposing of waste received from out of county residents. Attempts to develop cost sharing arrangements with neighbouring authorities prior to implementing the system were unsuccessful.

25. Nottingham City Council has one site to serve their residents. The centre is located on Lenton Industrial Estate on the south west of the city close to the A52 outer ring road. Like the County sites this facility is well used and post Covid 19 lockdown experienced significant traffic issues and access delays at peak times.

26. Historically, the County Council site at Calverton was shared with Nottingham City to provide convenient access for residents in the north east of the City, with the City Council making a 50% contribution to operating and waste treatment and disposal costs for the site. The City Council chose to end this arrangement on 31 March 2011.

27. Officers have recently received an approach from Nottingham City Council regarding the potential for City residents to use County Council recycling centres once again.
28. In view of the capacity constraints noted above, adding Nottingham City residents into the existing network could have significant negative impact upon service levels and would be extremely complex given the need to split performance and costs between the two Councils.
29. Discussions have identified however that the City Council may, subject to approval, be prepared to contribute to the proposed strategic review of recycling centre provision with a view to better understanding needs and providing a more cohesive offer to residents going forward. This would be useful in the context of the potential for devolution.

### **Strategic Review**

30. As a result of the issues outlined above, officers are proposing to undertake a strategic review of the recycling centre network in Nottinghamshire to ensure individual facilities, and the wider network, are fit for the future, both in terms of public and residential expectation, and imminent legislative requirements.
31. It is therefore proposed that an external assessment of the current network is undertaken in order to ensure recycling centre facilities are appropriately located and have enough capacity to offer residents a high-quality service going forward.
32. The strategic review will consider:
- Level of Recycling Centre provision in Nottinghamshire and the accessibility of current site locations.
  - Implications of the proposals contained within the Resources and Waste Strategy and Environment Act as noted above.
  - Population and household growth and gaps in coverage due to new communities emerging.
  - Management processes on the sites, including implementation of Automatic Number Plate Recognition.
  - Partnership working/shared service opportunities with Nottingham City Council.
33. It is expected that the review will deliver the following outcomes and recommendations:
- The optimum number and locations of Recycling Centres.
  - Constraints on the existing network and individual sites.
  - Opportunities for improvement of the existing network
  - Best practice operating models within the existing contractual framework
  - Range of services and material types to be covered to align with imminent legislative requirements.
  - Future investment needs
  - Opportunities for efficiencies and income generation
34. It is anticipated that the review will be complete in around 3 months with an intention to report back to Committee before the summer recess if possible.

## **Other Options Considered**

35. Do not carry out a strategic review of the recycling centre network. Whilst do nothing is an option the challenges of population growth and changes to waste flows resulting from incoming legislation would result in the current recycling centre network becoming increasingly problematic and risks reductions in recycling performance and increased customer complaints.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

36. The current recycling centre network in Nottinghamshire is operating to capacity, with many sites experiencing operational difficulties.

37. The Resource and Waste Strategy provides an opportunity for a strategic review due to the potential significant changes the proposals are going to make to materials collected.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

38. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

39. There will be approximately £50k required to carry out the strategic review, which will be met from existing service budgets.

40. Any subsequent financial implications and impacts will be reported separately to the appropriate Committee.

## **Implications for Service Users**

41. A strategic review of the recycling centres is an opportunity to review whether the current network could be enhanced and improve the service offered to residents.

## **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

42. An enhanced, fit-for-purpose and sustainable RC network will reflect and help deliver the Councils ambition to be carbon neutral in all its activities by 2030.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Committee:

- 1) Approves the undertaking of a strategic review of current recycling centre provision within Nottinghamshire at an estimated cost of £50k to be met from existing service budgets.

- 2) Approves Nottingham City Council being a partner in the work to identify any opportunities for additional facilities in Nottingham, or options for cross border working, subject to reaching an agreement on joint funding of the expected consultancy costs.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Place and Communities**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Mick Allen, Group Manager, Place Commissioning, Tel: 0115 9774684

**Constitutional Comment (LW 25/11/20221)**

43. Transport and Environment Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

**Financial Comment (SES 24/11/2021)**

44. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 37 and 38 of the report.

45. There will be approximately £50k required to carry out the strategic review, which will be met from existing service budgets.

46. Any subsequent financial implications and impacts will be reported separately to the appropriate committee.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

- None.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All