

**Report of: Chief Officer (Acting), Environmental Services**

**Report to: Outer North West Community Committee**

**Report author: John Woolmer, Chief Officer (Acting)**

**Date: 30th November 2020**

**To note**

## **New operational base for Environmental Services – impact on Outer North West area**

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### **Purpose of item**

1. To provide the Outer North West Community Committee with an update on the Key Decision: Creation of a new/replacement citywide depot, operational and administrative base for Environmental Services (inc Refuse Service)

### **Main issues**

2. Ward members have asked for an update in relation to the environment impact of the key decision and the impact on service delivery.
3. A report covering this proposal/key decision was presented to Executive Board on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020 for a decision. The Board approved all the recommendations.
4. This followed the original decision made at Executive Board in June 2017 where approval was given for the development of a new operational depot on land off Newmarket Approach behind the Refuse and Energy Recovery Facility (RERF), subject to necessary consultation and Planning permission.
5. The June 2017 report included details on how a new depot bringing refuse operations together to a single site located adjacent to the Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility (RERF), on Cross Green Industrial Estate, would improve operational efficiency. This included the section:

*The transition from disposing of residual waste at various, disparate locations across the city, to a single point of disposal at the RERF, means that Henshaw depot now presents logistical challenges to the service. Crews are travelling from the RERF to Henshaw depot in the afternoons after their last tip, and the service is losing productivity through increased travel times at that part of the day. Whilst a move to a depot near to the RERF would increase travel time in the early part of the day, for example for a crew working in Otley to get from the depot to their first collections, this would be at a time where traffic was lighter, and so productivity would be gained.*

6. The report also set out the lack of physical capacity/space at existing operational sites/depots and the risk associated with that. Specifically, being compliant with the operator's licence and the consequences of not being.
7. The updated and revised proposal presented to Executive Report on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020 included the following, updated background information;

*The current depot provision and operational route design was created at a time when there were no Alternate Week Collections and the proportion of black bin waste was much higher than now. All black bin waste was taken to either of two landfill sites; one in Bradford and one in the east of the city. From 2016 this changed so that all the city's black bin waste was taken to the Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility (RERF) in the Cross Green area, and the now increased proportion of green bin waste to a sorting facility in the south of the city.*

*Since 2016, around £1.4m per annum has been saved by the Council through the rollout of Alternative Weekly Collections and over £7m per annum through the commissioning of the Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility (RERF).*

*In June 2017, Executive Board approved funding for the delivery of a new operational "waste depot" at Newmarket Approach. The Executive Board agreed the council's current waste depot provision was insufficient and inefficient for the needs of the council's operational fleet and the provision of new, purpose built, replacement facility was required.*

*The Board agreed the Henshaw operational depot presents operational risks due to a lack of capacity and since the opening of the RERF in late 2015 it was no longer the most efficient location for the refuse collection service serving the west side of the city to operate from.*

*The Board also noted that the depot facility at Knowsthorpe Way was close to licenced capacity, was unable to be developed to accommodate any further operations/vehicles and was already identified by Health and Safety officers as a concern due to lack of space. The staff wash/changing facilities, operational start up/control desk and meeting room/office space for up to 50 staff at Knowsthorpe Way are all contained within a modular Portakabin built around 2000. This temporary structure had an intended design life of 10 years and so is beyond the end of its planned, useable life.*

*Environmental Services currently operate from four sites across the city:*

- *Henshaw depot (Yeadon) – The service operates 17 frontline refuse collection routes, using 18 vehicles, and associated supervisory and management resources from this depot. It is shared with the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team and Highways,*

for whom it is a critical site for operation in the north and west of the city. It is not proposed to move the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team operations from this site. The site will continue to provide strategic facilities for Highways and other council services once Refuse operations vacate the site. The site has an “operator’s licence” for 30 vehicles over 3.5 tonnes.

- Knowsthorpe Way depot (Cross Green) – The Refuse Service operates 53 frontline collection routes, using 65 vehicles, and two medical waste collection routes from this depot. It also houses the replacement bin delivery team as well as the Cleaner Neighbourhoods and City Centre cleansing teams who operate a further 25 vehicles. The site has an “operator’s licence” for 100 vehicles over 3.5 tonnes.
- Knowsthorpe Gate (Cross Green) – The service’s supporting strategy and infrastructure functions and household waste site management staff are all based at the Knowsthorpe Gate offices. The site has a very limited “operator’s licence” for 12 vehicles.
- Millshaw – Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team uses this building to locate back office/administrative functions and office space for teams serving the south/south east of the city.

The future use of each site, once it is no longer required by Waste Management Services will be managed and facilitated by Asset Management.

All goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes, that are used in a business, need a goods vehicle operator’s licence to operate legally. Each operator’s licence is associated with an ‘operating centre’ and generally restricts the numbers of such vehicles that can operate from a site. The main purpose of the licence is to ensure the safe and proper use of goods vehicles and to protect the environment around operating centres. During the application process any applicant needs to satisfy a traffic commissioner that their operating centre is suitable, i.e. that it will be big enough, have safe access and be in an environmentally acceptable location. The process is also subject to public consultation. Once the licence is obtained, any breach of the licence could result in a traffic commissioner restricting the use of the site, reducing the number of vehicles allowed to operate at the site, or even taking the decision to revoke the licence altogether.

Suitably licenced and located sites are therefore essential for the council to deliver safe, efficient and reliable operational services to Leeds residents.

The best strategic location for the new facility is, therefore, as close to the RERF as possible to minimise vehicle mileage and maximise efficiency. Newmarket Approach site is the former wholesale market land to the rear of the RERF. This site is in Council ownership but needs significant investment to develop it into an operational depot as the site has mine-workings and geotechnical ground faults that all need remediation before the site can be utilised.

The Newmarket Approach site has been given an operator’s licence to facilitate the safe use of up to 120 vehicles over 3.5t, allowing the whole of Waste Management and a significant number of Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team vehicles to be located on the site.

*Since April 2016, all residual (black bin) waste has been treated at the new Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility (RERF), on Cross Green Industrial Estate, rather than via the old network of disposal points across the city. This long-term PFI contract, has improved service efficiency, but has led to real challenges in delivery of services from Henshaw depot. Henshaw depot is therefore no longer logistically advantageous for the refuse collection service. It remains however, an essential location for Highways and the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team and will be retained for their operational use.*

8. The programme milestones for the development of the new facility was set out in the report as:

- Stage 4 price submission 12<sup>th</sup> September 2020
  - Executive Board decision November 2020
  - Planning determination November 2020
  - Anticipated Main contract award [Jan 2021\*]
  - Anticipated Start on site [Feb 2021\*]
  - Anticipated completion [Dec 2021\*]
- \*subject to some relaxation of lockdown restrictions and market improvement

9 The report stated that completion of the works is essential to allowing the Waste Management Service the ability to implement new route planning improving the service.

10. Route planning for the garden waste service has already been completed and implemented. This was possible as we had capacity to move the small number of garden crews operating from Henshaw to the Knowsthorpe Way depot in the Cross Green industrial estate.

11. Redesign/planning of the black and green bin collection routes is planned to restart as soon as Covid19 related priorities and pressures on capacity and resource allow.

12. If that work is completed ahead of the above milestones for the new facility, a decision will then be made as to whether to implement the routes ahead of moving to one depot and whether that should be done in phases. A key priority in making that decision will be impact on service delivery/the customer. So, for example, we would not want to introduce new routes in an area of the city ahead of moving to one depot if we could not then complete routes on the scheduled collection days.

### **Recommendations**

13. To note the contents of the report and receive the update.

### **Related papers:**

Waste Depot Development – Executive Board, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017:

<https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=87843>

Replacement depot and operational centre for Environmental Services - Executive Board, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020:

<https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=109139>