

Report of the Head of Performance & Communications (Environmental Services)

To: Inner North East Area Committee

Date: 16th March 2009

Subject: Residual Waste Treatment Project: Update and Communication and Community Engagement Strategy

<p>Electoral Wards Affected:</p> <p>All</p>
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Specific Implications For:	
Ethnic minorities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Women	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disabled people	<input type="checkbox"/>

Council Function

Delegated Executive Function available for Call In

Delegated Executive Function not available for Call In Details set out in the report

Executive Summary

Members of the Area Committee are requested to note the current status of the Residual Waste Treatment PFI project. Members of the Area Committee are asked to feedback on the proposed strategy for communication and community engagement for the Residual Waste Treatment PFI project.

Purpose of this report

1. This report describes the current status of the residual waste project. Its purpose is to update Area Committees about the project and to consult with Area Committees on the proposed communication and community engagement strategy for the Residual Waste Treatment PFI project.

Background information

2. The Residual Waste Treatment project progressed to procurement in July 2008 following the issue of an OJEU Notice, approved by the Executive Board, in June 2008. In November 2008 a further report to the Executive Board was submitted and the evaluation methodology for the project was approved. The competitive dialogue procedure commenced in November 2008 with the issue of the first detailed bidding stage, ISOS (Invitation to Submit Outline Solutions). Ten bidders were involved in this stage, the bidder numbers having been reduced from the original list of thirteen bidders who responded to the OJEU notice.

Main issues

3. Current status:
 - i. The ISOS bidding stage asked 69 detailed questions to each bidder so that their proposal could be fully defined within the bid response. The questions included the technology they proposed, their proposed site, the level of diversion from landfill they anticipated and a range of environmental and other factors.
 - ii. ISOS bids were received from 9 bidders on 21st January 2009, the 10th bidder having withdrawn from the bidding process. These bids are now in the process of being evaluated by the project team.
 - iii. The council undertook a programme of formal consultation to find out what stakeholders thought were the most important things to take into account when deciding on the Residual Waste Treatment Solution for Leeds. This consultation has directly influenced the criteria by which we will decide on the technology and site for a Residual Waste Treatment facility.
 - iv. The outcome of the evaluation will be reported to the project Board in mid April 2009 and a decision to proceed to the next bid stage with either 3 or 4 bidders will be sought.
4. Overview of bids received:
 - The bidders have responded well to the invitation with good quality submissions being received from all 9 bidders. The bidders are all substantial businesses well known in the waste sector and a number are international companies.
 - This bid stage will consider the price of the overall contract, however the complexities of the project have resulted in the need to restrict the amount of detailed price information at this stage. Nevertheless, the bidders have supplied sufficient detail to give a good indication of price and to allow the evaluation to reflect price within the overall assessment. A fully worked up price submission will be evaluated at the next stage of the process.

- A range of sites have been suggested for the location of the final treatment facility, including the councils reference site, the former wholesale markets site on Pontefract Lane. The final location of any facility will be dependent on the adoption of relevant Development Plan Documents and final planning applications. The majority of bidders propose to take advantage of the Council's reference site for a waste transfer station being the site of the existing Council waste transfer station at Evanston Avenue, Kirkstall.
- The bidders are proposing varying mixes of technologies that are being considered under the approved evaluation criteria. The evaluation process has been tested to ensure that it does not favour any particular technology proposal.

5. Future Timetable:

The future timetable for the Residual Waste Treatment Project decision is as follows:

Decision/milestone	Date
Complete ISOS bid evaluation – reduce from 9 bidders to 3 or 4 bidders	Mid April 2009
Complete Invitation to Submit Detailed Specifications (ISDS) bid evaluation – reduce from 3 or 4 bidders to 2 bidders	November 2009
Announce preferred bidder	Spring/early Summer 2010
Preferred bidder submits planning application	Autumn 2010
Contract signature	Autumn 2010
Planning permission obtained – commence construction	Mid 2011
Service commencement – plant operational	April 2014

Communication and Community Engagement Planning

6. There has been extensive public communications and consultation on the Waste Strategy for Leeds over the last two and half years; the most recent exercise being a programme of consultation to find out what stakeholders thought were the most important things to take into account when deciding on the Residual Waste Treatment Solution for Leeds.
7. We now want to build on this work in order to communicate and engage with our stakeholders to support the delivery of the Residual Waste Treatment solution for the city. A communications and community engagement plan has been developed which consists of five distinct elements:

(a) Consultation with officers and Elected Members to agree the delivery plan (February to April 2009);

Our communication and community engagement plan needs to be consulted on with Elected Members for it to be delivered effectively and meet its aims. This report is therefore being presented to Area Committees during the March/April cycle for feedback.

In addition to the report, there will also be attendance from Waste Management Officers at the Inner East, Outer East, Inner South and Inner North-west committees, reflecting the likelihood of greater impact of the Residual Waste Treatment Project in these areas.

(b) Communications and education about the Residual Waste Treatment Project (April to November 2009);

If we are to successfully deliver project we need to further educate the public about the process we have gone through and the reasons for it, so that they can make informed decisions about how to react when a preferred bidder is chosen. At this stage therefore we will seek to communicate with, and educate stakeholders about:

- the environmental and financial need to reduce landfill and why we need a Residual Waste Treatment Facility to do so;
- the process by which we have come to a shortlist of four bidders;
- the likely technologies and sites, and what this means for stakeholders;
- the future process and how and about what stakeholders can be involved.

The nature of the project means that there will be citywide interest, but that there will also be localised, more intensive, interest in areas near to the proposed sites for the residual waste treatment facility and transfer station. This means that we need to cover the Leeds area, but target engagement to those areas most affected.

The approach will therefore involve communication covering all wards, but more focussed and intensive communications activities in the wards most affected. We need to ensure that all information will be accessible to all stakeholders, relevant, accurate and timely.

Residents and businesses in the proximity of any proposed sites for the Residual Waste Treatment Solution will be invited to register for the chance to attend a briefing session in their local area, to receive information updates (electronically or by post), or to 'opt-out' of receiving any information. We will use a wide variety of methods to get this invitation to the communities, including the use of local community spaces, newsletters and leaflets to households and 'local' access points.

We are also aware of the need to engage with community advocates in these areas. We propose to contact the chairs of residents committees and other community organisations directly, to invite them to be involved in a programme of communications and education events. This could also include visits to Residual Waste Treatment facilities in other areas of the country.

We will also communicate with the wider Leeds public, through the local press and our website, again inviting them to register to receive further information and updates about the process.

(c) Community engagement on the proposals from the final two bidders (November 2009 to Spring/Summer 2010);

Once the number of bidders is reduced to two we will begin a further round of communications, but also seek to engage stakeholders local to the identified sites in a dialogue about the proposed solutions, this is expected to directly involve the remaining bidders. At this stage we need to provide genuine opportunities for key stakeholders to contribute, and to have their voices heard, to enable proper account to be taken of their views.

The intention of this stage is to further communicate with stakeholders about the final two proposed solutions and enable stakeholders to feed back on issues with particular bids and sites, to allow scope to address any issues prior to the formal planning process. We would also seek to use this stage to identify any opportunities for stakeholder benefits arising from the Residual Waste Treatment Facility, such as amenity value.

We propose taking a similar approach to Stage 2 above, inviting residents to be involved in facilitated sessions in the local areas most affected by proposals. Because of the nature of the project, and the timescales involved this is, in practice, the pre-planning consultation process for the Residual Waste Treatment Facility and will be managed as such, engaging with all statutory stakeholders.

(d) Community engagement on Evanston Avenue proposals (date to be determined.)

Given the likelihood of the Evanston Avenue site being an integral part of the council's waste infrastructure, there is a need to progress community engagement in this area differently to the areas near to possible residual waste treatment sites and to Leeds as a whole.

We will deliver a pre-planning process to enable local stakeholders, including Elected Members, local business and residents to feedback on issues around our proposals for the site in order to address any concerns prior to a formal planning application being submitted for this site.

(e) Statutory consultation process for planning permission for a Residual Waste Treatment Facility (Spring/Summer 2010 onwards)

At this stage the council will undertake a formal consultation, in line with the statutory planning process, on the council's preferred technology and site.

Recommendations

8. The Area Committee is requested to note the current status of the Residual Waste PFI project and the bids recently received.
9. The Area Committee is requested to feedback on the proposals for communication and community engagement for the Residual Waste Treatment Project, i.e. that no specific community engagement activity will be targeted in the Inner North East wedge, but there will be general opportunities for residents to access more information about the project and to feedback to the council as it progresses.