

**Forward Plan reference number:** Not Applicable

<b>Report title: Recycling Centre for Household Waste (RCHW) Mobilisation</b>	
<b>Report to:</b> Functional Resilience Team	
<b>Report author:</b> Sam Kennedy Director Environment and Climate Action	
<b>Date:</b> 03 July 2020	<b>For:</b> Discussion
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Jason Searles Head of Strategic Development and Compliance <a href="mailto:jason.searles@essex.gov.uk">jason.searles@essex.gov.uk</a>	
<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to mobilise for reopening the remaining six Recycling Centre for Household Waste (RCHW) sites, which have remained closed since the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The sites were originally closed to comply with social distancing guidance and to maintain an operational viable network; the recent changes to government guidance on social distancing can now enable the sites to operate as part of the Essex RCHW network.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Executive Director, Place and Public Health agrees to the reopening of the six RCHW sites listed below as soon as it is operationally practicable
- Burnham on Crouch
  - Dovercourt
  - Lawford
  - Kirby Le Soken
  - Waltham Abbey
  - West Mersea

## 3. Summary of issue

- 3.1 Essex County Council has been operating a reduced RCHW service since the relaxation of Covid-19 lockdown measures in March 2020. Fifteen of the twenty-one RCHW sites operated were reopened on the 18<sup>th</sup> March, however six small sites have remained closed. The reasoning for not opening these smaller sites was that the 2m minimum social distancing requirement necessary would have been too impactful to deliver an effective service without impacts on the local area and the RCHW network as a whole.
- 3.2 The Government announced changes to the 2m social distancing measures that currently form part of the Covid-19 response on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March. From the

4<sup>th</sup> July the social distancing guidance will be amended to include 1m+ where mitigation measures are in place, and 2m is not practicable or achievable.

- 3.3 Government guidance on social distance detail a number of mitigation measures which make 1m+ social distancing acceptable which are directly relevant to the operation of the RCHW service. These include

- Limiting the number of users into an area
- Enhanced cleansing regimes
- Minimising the amount of time people are in contact with others outside of their own household or bubble
- Being outdoors

The nature of the RCHW operation enables these mitigation measures to be adhered to thereby reducing the risk of Covid-19 transmission. The operation of the small six RCHW sites which have not been operating since March 2020 could therefore begin operating from the 4<sup>th</sup> July in compliance with the latest social distancing requirements.

- 3.4 The changes to social distancing requirements mean the operational justification for the six sites to remain closed no longer exists. Whilst this does not mean that sites will not be busy and local highways congestion will not exist it does mean the sites can operate in a manner which conforms with social distancing rules and can be operationally maintained. The reopening of these sites will not only meet the demand in these areas but will also release some of the service pressure on the other sites which have picked up this service access gap since 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020.
- 3.5 To ensure the safe operation of the sites the revised RCHW operating model, which limits public access on sites so social distancing can be appropriately managed, will continue. This requires the deployment of additional staff across the network by the site operator to manage traffic and users on site. This cost of this is currently being absorbed within the waste budget. The opening of the additional six sites will result in additional non-contract costs estimated at £9,902 per week.
- 3.6 Dialogue with the RCHW contractor on mobilisation has identified the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020 as a target opening date for the remaining six sites. This provides adequate time to source the required staff and complete all necessary staff inductions and on-site alterations to ensure sites are ready to accommodate users.

## **4. Options**

- 4.1 **Do Nothing:** Keeping the sites closed can no longer be justified from a compliance with social distancing perspective. Maintaining the current suite of fifteen sites only will leave parts of the county with limited service access. The continued operation across a reduced number of sites will also see increased transfer of users to these sites increasing the congestion potential.

- 4.2 **Open the Six Small Sites (Recommended):** The changes to the social distancing rules from the 4<sup>th</sup> July will enable the small sites to be opened and operate in a manner which conforms with social distancing requirements providing the additional staffing compliment across the network is maintained. The operation of all twenty-one sites across the network will enable user numbers to be more effectively spread across the sites and should assist in reducing congestion levels.

## **5. Next steps**

- 5.1 The Cabinet Member Action closing the sites gave authorisation to the Executive Director, Place and Public Health to reopen sites and therefore no further Member approval is required

## **6. Issues for consideration**

### **6.1 Financial implications**

- 6.1.1 The RCHW service is contracted out to Veolia UK on a fixed price service contract. However the required changes in operation to comply with Covid-19 requirements necessitating the deployment of additional staff is not budgeted for. The full additional cost to the service of operating the RCHW is unknown at present as this is dependent on the duration of the alternate operating model and the requirements for additional staffing.
- 6.1.2 The service is working closely with the operator to put in place measures to mitigate additional expenditure and reduce additional staffing requirements as quickly as possible whilst maintain a safe operating environment.
- 6.1.3 A reconciliation of contract service costs is taking place and a recovery plan, if required, will be developed.

### **6.2 Legal implications**

- 6.2.1 None

## **7. Equality and Diversity implications**

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
  - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 Reopening of the remaining six RCHW facilities does not have a disproportionate impact on any protected groups.

**8. List of appendices**

None

**9. List of Background papers**

None