

**EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING MINUTES – 07 MAY 2020
ONLINE MEETING (8AM – 8.40AM)**Present:

Councillor O Dervish (Chair) (Havering), Councillor D Akwaboah (Barking & Dagenham), Councillor S Ghani (Barking & Dagenham), Councillor R Benham (Havering), Councillor J Asser (Vice Chair) (Newham), Councillor S Bain (Redbridge), Councillor J Howard (Redbridge).

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor G Kitchen (Newham).

2. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were none declared.

Members were asked if they were content for this meeting to be recorded because members of the public were unable to attend the online meeting. Members agreed.

3. RRC Re-opening Plans

Members received the Managing Director's Report concerning re-opening the Authority's four Reuse and Recycling Centres (RRCs) that have been closed since 24 March as part of the government's 'lockdown' following the outbreak of Covid-19. The Government has issued guidance about how RRCs can be re-opened and will be reviewing its lockdown measures later today, 7 May 2020, with a public announcement due from the Prime Minister on Sunday 10 May.

The Managing Director noted that key issues include ensuring social distancing to preserve and protect the safety of the staff and public. This will reduce the number of vehicles per hour that the RRCs can manage, which may lead to queues forming. Another key issue is that residents should be invited to use the RRCs only where it may cause injury or harm, and where residents are unable to wait until the next scheduled collection, in accordance with public health regulations.

He then outlined the operational measures and communications messages that have been developed, and the preparations that firstly Renewi and its subcontractors / offtakers, and secondly the Constituent Councils and their contractors have made in order to be ready to re-open on 11 March, subject to Members' decision.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Managing Director noted that the site staff and the traffic marshals will be reviewing the site throughput and the length of any queues during the day, and as the closing time approaches will make residents aware of the likelihood of getting in or not, and will then close the queue. However, an additional hour's operation has been approved at two of the RRCs if necessary.

In response to a suggestion by the Chair that the demand from residents be spread out in accordance with the car number plate system at paragraph 5.17 of the report be reconsidered, Councillor Howard expressed the view that it was now too late to consider implementing such a scheme in view of the Bank Holiday weekend before opening on Monday 11 May, both for operations and communications reasons. He further noted that Constituent Councils would be needing to communicate about the restoration of currently suspended collection services, and that doing this at the same time may not be effective.



Councillors Asser and Ghani agreed with Councillor Howard. Cllr Asser added that the Authority should however keep the situation under review in case changes were needed.

The Chair thanked the Members for their feedback and said he was pleased that everything is now in place, and asked Members to vote on the recommendation.

Members unanimously agreed to the recommendation that the four Reuse and Recycling Centres are re-opened on Monday 11 May 2020 in accordance with the operational measures and communications plans set out in the report.

4. Any other public items

Councillor Asser raised the issue of a letter from the Leader of the London Borough of Havering about the Authority's preparations to re-open the RRCs that the Leader of Havering had openly published.

Councillor Asser took issue with a number of points in the letter, saying it was inaccurate and disingenuous, failed to recognise previous discussion, included a view on police advice that was different to what he understood, and was unfair. Also, he was concerned publication of the letter by the Leader of Havering was unhelpful and didn't recognise the collegiate way in which ELWA as a joint authority works.

The Chair said he would prefer to discuss this further at a later point in time, but that his council had received much correspondence and that his Leader felt some frustration in the initial instance at what seemed to be a lack of preparedness when other councils were re-opening or getting ready to re-open their RRCs, and ELWA didn't seem to have had its plans ready. He said that was why the letter had been sent, but in terms of how it was handled he would like to have that discussion at a separate time.

Councillors Ghani, Howard, Akwaboah and Bain agreed with Councillor Asser. They added that residents' health and safety was paramount in the preparations to re-open the RRCs; that there had been many issues to consider such as government guidelines, police advice and insurance; that Authority Members had worked well together before and not had party-political fights that could harm cooperation between them beyond the topic of wastes management; that the Havering Leader's concerns should have been put to the Authority Members and not sent to the press; that the Redbridge residents had been incredibly understanding about the closure of the RRCs, noting that Redbridge is the most similar to Havering; that the Authority as a joint body needed Members to work together for the collective benefit of residents of the four Constituent Councils as they had always done; and that the Authority had always fulfilled its statutory duties. Members also said the letter had misrepresented arrangements and any concerns should have come to ELWA Members rather than the press, which they said was really unhelpful.

During the above and at the end of the discussion, the Chair agreed with the point about residents' understanding and support to councils pausing some collection services, noting that his own council reinstating its green waste collections would help reduce demand at the RRC as it re-opens; he noted that Members could carry on the discussion at the next meeting about how the Constituent Councils and the Authority worked together; and he thanked Members for their comments.

The Managing Director informed Members that next steps have been put in place for communications with each Constituent Council following this meeting to make sure these are consistent across the four Constituent Councils. He also advised that the Authority's and the Constituent Councils' operational arrangements were all ready.

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5. Any other confidential or exempt items which the Chair decides are urgent

There were none.

The Chair closed the meeting at 08:40.

Chair:

Date: 29/06/20

