

SERVICE UPDATE

<u>Name of Function:</u>	Operations, Waste & Recycling Service
<u>Date:</u>	11/08/22
<u>Title of Update:</u>	Altens East Fire Update
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<u>Committee Terms of Reference:</u>	Operational Delivery Committee

Purpose

The purpose of this update is to provide Members with an overview of the current situation following the recent fire at Altens East Recycling and Resource Facility.

Current Situation

A fire broke out at Altens East Waste and Recycling Facility on Friday 8th July. The fire began in the reception hall area of the materials recycling facility and was very serious and continued over the weekend to 13th July 2022, at which point the emergency services handed back control of the site to Suez.

The fire resulted in serious damage to the facility, particularly the materials recycling facility (MRF) which suffered the most damage, however, the refuse derived fuel facility (which treated our residual waste) was also affected and sustained fire damage. The connected office block was less affected but has suffered smoke damage.

The buildings are currently unusable with the main MRF building being declared unsafe to enter and the offices are not fit for occupation. There are also no utilities on site at this time.

Altens East was also the main refuse collection depot with all of the City's waste and recycling fleet based there and the office building housed the Council's Waste & Recycling Team and the SUEZ team. During the weekend of the fire it became clear that the fleet would need to move from Altens. On Sunday 10th July the team moved all of the fleet across to Kittybrewster and the service is

currently operating from there. The service has been able to access the Altens office building to remove essential equipment and documents.

Following the fire, approximately 500 tonnes of material was heaped in the main yard (which was the refuse collection vehicle parking area) in front of the building, 250 tonnes was piled externally at the rear of the building and 250 tonnes of material is still within the confines of the building.

The fire service kept a presence on site to douse down material and to reduce the risk of reignition, until the evening of the 15th of July 2022.

Following hand over of the site from the fire service, Suez has arranged removal of the waste material and the site is now clear of this material. The remaining waste inside the building cannot currently be accessed for safety reasons. This waste was sent to Stoneyhill Landfill Site near Peterhead.

The plant at Altens processed up to 1000 tonnes of recycling and 900 tonnes of residual waste a week. In 2021 a total of 100,000 tonnes of materials was processed on site including recyclables from other local authorities.

Assessment of the current structure is taking place to see how the site can be made safe and whether any of the buildings are salvageable.

Immediate short -term solution.

SUEZ and the council's Waste and Recycling Service both put in a tremendous effort to ensure that there was minimal impact to the day-to-day collection services and normal services were only suspended for one day, Monday 11th July, with those collections that were missed rescheduled and caught up the following weekend. The following contingency is currently in place:

- Suez have made temporary local arrangements for processing of the recyclable materials which is being bulked up at a local waste contractor prior to being taken to Hartlepool for sorting and reprocessing.
- Residual waste is being bulked up at Sclattie Transfer Station in Bucksburn (Council site) prior to being taken to landfill at Stoneyhill.
- Garden waste processing is unaffected.
- The increase in volume at Sclattie has meant limitations on the other activities that were carried out at Sclattie such as separation of materials from Recycling Centres and this has put additional pressure on this site.
- ACC has a temporary solution for the Waste and Recycling service which is co-location with Building, Fleet and Environment services at Kittybrewster. Whilst this has enabled the W&R service to resume operations, it is not an ideal solution due to limited space and welfare facilities and work is ongoing to find an alternative solution. There are also impacts on the collection routes as these were designed to run to and from Altens East, with the contingency arrangements in place vehicles are now based at Kittybrewster and tipping elsewhere.

Cost Implications

The cost and contractual implications of this event are still being quantified and at this stage it is not possible to determine what the figure may be.

The MRF also processed material from other local authorities which did provide a revenue stream for ACC which will now be lost. SUEZ have made arrangements for this material to be processed elsewhere and ACC has no responsibility for these contracts.

For residual waste, the loss of the refuse derived fuel (RDF) facility means that treatment costs for residual waste will increase. However, the RDF facility was due to close in the near future ahead of the opening of the new Ness Energy Facility at East Tullis which is due to open next year. Once Ness is open, residual waste will be treated there and SUEZ will no longer be required to deal with this element of the waste stream. This was in place as planned before the fire.

Costs for the current temporary solution for the collection service at Kittybrewster are still to be fully understood though are expected relatively low. To date additional costs have included overtime for routing impacts (and possibly fuel impacts), rent of a temporary unit for supervisor use in the yard, etc. This is not a sustainable alternative in the longer term and alternative options are being explored, which may bring further cost implications.

Assessment of the consequences from a financial and operational position to the council is on-going following the fire at Altens East Waste and Recycling Facility.

Operational Solutions Medium-term

Discussions are ongoing for more sustainable solutions for both the material processing and collections operations.

- a. Suez is currently considering alternative options for longer-term solutions for dealing with the recyclable materials, this could include identifying an alternative site or the reinstatement of some temporary facilities at Altens East but this will be dependant upon the outcome of the insurance investigations to understand what the final condition of the buildings are.
- b. ACC has a temporary solution for the Waste and Recycling service which is the co-location with Building, Fleet and Environment services at Kittybrewster. Whilst this has enabled the W&R service to resume operations, it is not an ideal solution and work is ongoing to find an alternative solution.

There is a negative impact across all services operating out of Kittybrewster as the site is not of sufficient capacity to hold all the services. In addition, vehicles are being parked on land which is reserved for the “Berryden Corridor” roads project.

The service is currently looking at other solutions for collection operations:

- I. Identify an appropriate location from which the service can operate until Altens is once again available, however any new site would require to apply for an Operator’s Licence.
- II. Operate from the yard at Altens East and site temporary office and welfare facilities in the yard space. This is also an option for Suez.

Next Steps

The pressing action is to ascertain exactly what the position is with the condition of the Altens East Facilities and understand whether there may be any scope to reinstate operations (either disposal or collection) from there.

ACC and SUEZ will consider what the future of the Altens East Facility will look like. This was a modern facility and had performed well since it opened in 2017 contributing to Aberdeen City Council having the highest recycling rate of any city in Scotland. It is clear that ACC requires a facility that can deal with its recyclables and therefore the question is around what type of processing will be needed for now and into the future. They may be an opportunity to “build back better” being cognisant of proposed sector legislation and its impact on collection schemes and the transition to the Ness energy from waste facility.

It is expected that it could be 18-24 months before Altens East is fully operational again but that is yet to be confirmed.