

**HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING SERVICE PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK**

*To:* **Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee**

*Meeting Date:* **18 November 2014**

*From:* **Executive Director: Economy, Transport and Environment**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **N/A** *Key decision:* **No**

*Purpose:* **To inform the Committee of the feedback from the Household Recycling Service Review public consultation**

*Recommendation:* **The Committee is asked to:**  
  
**Note the feedback from the Household Recycling Service Review consultation so that the results can be considered as part of a wider waste review going forward.**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2014, the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee agreed a range of options for consultation with RECAP partners and the public on the future of the Household Recycling Service.
- 1.2 The consultation options were developed in association with our Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contractor (AmeyCespa) and RECAP partners, with the aim of understanding the impacts of potential savings, including any costs that could arise to the Council and other parties. This ruled out some options early on, such as to stop taking certain waste streams or advertising/putting up mobile telephone equipment at the household recycling centres (HRCs), which would either cause operational issues or not deliver enough savings to warrant pursuing. An option relating to selling the recyclates was also not considered as part of the review as recyclates remain the property of AmeyCespa as part of the PFI contract.
- 1.3 The consultation options were categorised into six areas:
  - Implement a permit scheme to limit larger vehicles and trailers etc. to 12 visits per year to avoid the service bearing the cost of some waste that should be treated as trade waste and reducing excessive quantities of construction and demolition waste at our sites;
  - Charge for construction and demolition waste e.g. soil, hardcore, plasterboard etc. based on the size of the vehicle (amounts to be confirmed);
  - Keep the existing 9 Cambridgeshire Household Recycling sites but close each of them for 2 weekdays ensuring the next closest is open as an alternative;
  - Keep the existing 9 Cambridgeshire Household Recycling sites but reduce the operating hours midweek, which will include the standardisation of hours across the network;
  - Transfer up to 3 existing sites within Cambridgeshire to a community facility to be managed by a third sector operator e.g. a charitable or voluntary organisation;
  - Close up to 3 existing sites within Cambridgeshire on a permanent basis (specific sites have not been considered at this stage).
- 1.4 The aim of the consultation was not only to identify savings options for 2015/16, but also help develop a long term strategy to reduce the cost of the waste service. The location of the existing network of household recycling centres (HRCs) across Cambridgeshire, including the location of neighbouring counties' facilities, is shown in **Appendix 1** to highlight how the existing service is delivered prior to any future changes.

## 2. INFORMATION SUPPLIED AND FEEDBACK FROM THE CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Information was provided to our RECAP partners on the costs for maintaining and operating the existing HRCs, the tonnages of each waste stream collected and the visitor numbers for each of the sites prior to the consultation to help inform their responses. This information has been updated to include the most recent period, to help provide Members with an up-to-date overview which includes the busier summer months (see **Appendix 2**). The statistics in relation to visitor numbers help to compare the actual movements on days/times at each of the sites with the responses to the surveys. This data is

necessary to help inform Members of the potential impact of reducing hours and the number of days opened midweek at each of the sites. For example, by using the data in Appendix 2 it is possible to see that reducing the HRC opening hours to 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. across all sites would accommodate between 72% and 86% of the visits when looking at the times the sites are currently used.

- 2.2 Early consultation was undertaken at the annual AmeyCespa Open Day on 21 June 2014 (see **Appendix 3**). Consultation was then undertaken with existing users of the service using customer surveys at all nine HRCs during August 2014 (see **Appendix 4**). A wider 6-week consultation, detailed in Section 2.3 below, was undertaken between 15 August and 26 September 2014 (see Appendix 5). In total 3,462 responses were submitted as part of the consultation (82 responses from the Open Day; 1,124 through the HRC site surveys; and 2,256 through the 6-week consultation).
- 2.3 The 6-week consultation took the form of online surveys together with feedback from our RECAP Partners, neighbouring Authorities and Parish/Town Councils. Paper copies of surveys were also available to anyone who requested one. The consultation was promoted using posters at all 9 HRC sites and local libraries and via websites such as 'Shape your Place', RECAP, the County Council's homepage and AmeyCespa's homepage. A press release was sent out to all local newspapers and radio stations by the County Council prior to the start of the consultation period and further press releases were sent out by City / District Councils.
- 2.4 The analysis from the online consultation shows that over half of the responses submitted with comments raised concerns that flytipping would increase if closures or charges for construction and demolition type waste are implemented. Noticeable other comments suggested the proposals might also divert waste into costlier kerbside collections resulting in 'cost shunting' to the City/District Councils, increased travelling would impact on residents' carbon footprints, and that charging may reduce recycling rates. There were also a large number of comments made about not closing specific centres close to the consultee's own homes. Articles published in local newspapers incorrectly reporting specific site closures stimulated a large number of responses in some of these areas, e.g. Witchford, Whittlesey, Thriplow and St Neots.
- 2.5 Other key points to note from the online consultation analysis are:
- 38.3% of all respondents indicated they visited a HRC approximately once a month. Just over 30% indicated they visited a site fortnightly or more often. However, where Milton was chosen as the main site by users, only 5.1% indicated use on a fortnightly or a more frequent basis;
  - The four most popular items taken to recycling centres according to respondents are garden waste (71.0%); electrical items (68.6%); cardboard (57.5%); and general household rubbish (56.7%).
  - 22.3% of respondents recorded Whittlesey as their primary site, and a further 20.9% selected Thriplow. This imbalance is consistent with the level of local newspaper articles and public anecdotes about closures in and around these locations;
  - 89.3% of respondents stated that the key reason for selecting their chosen site was owing to it being close to their home;
  - A higher proportion of all respondents listed Saturday as their primary day to visit;

- 24.6% of all respondents indicated they would usually visit the site between 10am and 11am;
- 73.3% of respondents agreed to some extent or agreed completely with the potential to reduce all opening hours to 10am to 4pm during the week. Those in Milton and Witchford (sites that currently have longer opening hours than the others) showed least support for this proposal;
- 86.8% of respondents use their car to visit their HRC;
- The proposal to implement a permit scheme to limit larger vehicles and trailers to 12 visits a year was strongly supported with 49.2% agreeing completely and 28.9% agreeing to some extent;
- 64.1% cited keeping the existing household waste service free of charge was more important than the number of days or hours the sites are open or maintaining the current number of sites in the county.

- 2.6 In addition to the results of the online consultation noted above, the results of the overall consultation (covering the Open Day, site surveys, RECAP partners, neighbouring authorities, Parish/Town Councils and online consultation) in Appendices 3 to 5 show a number of common themes. Flytipping is a particular concern, as is charging, although many appear to favour the permitting scheme to ensure that trade abuse and construction and demolition waste is minimised. Furthermore, there appears to be an understanding across all the surveys that, to save money, a reduction in hours/days of the week should be considered. The results show that this appears to be far more palatable than closing sites. Site closures are not supported. Indeed, where closures were split down into the number of sites to be closed through the online and on site surveys, up to 83% totally disagreed with any site closures; with up to 93% totally disagreeing with 2 site closures; and up to 97% totally disagreeing with 3 sites closures.
- 2.7 The consultation highlighted the need for the Household Recycling Service Review to contribute to the total savings of £149 million required by the County Council over the next five years. It also highlighted that ‘no option on its own will deliver the level of savings required’. This emphasised the need for a combination of options, including permanent closure of up to 3 sites, which ensured that the consultation covered all potential HRC changes.

### **3. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE FOR REVIEW**

- 3.1 Discussions with AmeyCespa have highlighted that any changes to the Waste PFI Contract, regardless of their number or complexity, would incur costs to get agreement from their funders (‘the banks’). This is because any change to the Waste PFI Contract needs to demonstrate to the funders that AmeyCespa are still capable of repaying their loan. The demonstration of this is likely to involve technical reports and specialist advice being requested by the funders which the County Council are contractually required to pay for. AmeyCespa have estimated that these costs could be between £50,000 and £300,000. Ensuring that all changes to the Waste PFI Contract are made at once will minimise these cost implications to the County Council.
- 3.2 Implementing all changes to the Waste PFI Contract at once also allows officers the opportunity to work with AmeyCespa and DEFRA to discuss wider contract changes, alongside HRC service amendments, to find the best way to deliver savings. The results of this consultation will be used to help prepare any future changes as part of a wider waste review, to help inform Members before any decisions are made next year. The current Business Plan

proposals include a saving of £2.44m over three years, commencing with a saving of £100k in 2015/16.

- 3.3 Following the large number of responses received and the level of waste savings that need to be delivered, officers recommend that any HRC changes should be considered as part of a wider waste review. This would ensure that only one set of changes are made to the Waste PFI Contract with AmeyCespa, to avoid the duplication of costs incurred by the County Council.

#### **4. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

##### **4.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

- Household Recycling Centres are seen as a key service to local communities. However, misuse of the service particularly by trade waste needs to be addressed as part of the waste review.
- Engagement with key partners, stakeholders and the local communities needs to continue to take place through any wider waste review to ensure that we continue to use our resources in a way that benefits individuals, communities and the County as a whole.
- Any changes to the waste service need to take account of the growth agenda for Cambridgeshire.

##### **4.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

- Providing an effective recycling service is important in facilitating a high quality of life, by meeting the needs of the individual, whilst remaining responsive to the changing waste needs for the wider communities. This approach will ensure that the assessment of services will be monitored; savings are met in line with the Business Plan and future requirements; and facilities are delivered in the right place at the right time to serve the needs of Cambridgeshire's residents.

##### **4.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

- Continue to use our resources/services to support the new communities and the vulnerable within Cambridgeshire and in particular those people in most need of access to such facilities.

#### **5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

##### **5.1 Resource Implications**

- When redesigning the waste service there is a risk that changes to the service may have implications to our RECAP partners and also the way trade waste is handled in the future. This may also have implications to the general public.
- There may be staffing and cost implications from any changes implemented as a result of the wider waste review including any contract changes and negotiations, with input from specialist advisors. This work also needs to take account of any implications for our RECAP partners to address any potential 'cost shunting'.

## 5.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

- There are likely to be Waste PFI contract negotiations and costs as part of a wider waste review. The risk is that AmeyCespa, their funders or DEFRA will not agree to the changes.
- Should any future changes through the wider waste review result in the closure of up to 3 sites across Cambridgeshire there will be potential reputational implications that also need to be considered, including the potential for further public consultation prior to changes.

## 5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

- An initial Community Impact Assessment was carried out on the Household Recycling Service Strategy that overarches this consultation and options work which was presented to the Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee on 15 July 2014. As no decisions have yet been made, the original assessment still stands. However, this overarching assessment will need to be updated as part of the wider waste review to help inform Members. The final version of the assessment will need to be created to ensure that fairness, equality and diversity issues are taken into account.

## 5.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

- The options review work has been subject to wider consultation. This was communicated through the use of County Council websites including such as 'Shape your Place' and the RECAP website. Information was also provided to City/District and Town/Parish Councils. Posters were displayed at the nine HRCs and sent to all the libraries in Cambridgeshire raise awareness. Social media was also used to help spread the message and local District/Village magazines were sent information for publication where practical. This is in addition to a press release sent out to all local newspapers and radio stations by the County Council.
- If members eventually opt for permanently closing sites as part of the wider waste review, which goes against the feedback of the consultation, further public consultation is recommended prior to implementation.

## 5.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

- As the Household Recycling Service Review impacts on all Local Members in relation to matters affecting their divisions we informed all County Council Members of the consultation process to seek their help in promoting the service review. Information was also shared with our RECAP partners to inform our District/City colleagues/Councillors. This approach is recommended to take place again to help promote any future changes.

## 5.6 Public Health Implications

No implications have been identified for this section.

Source Documents	Location
Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee (15 <sup>th</sup> July 2014) report and minutes	Room 117, Shire Hall