

Cross border use of Thriplow and Royston Household Recycling Centres

To: Environment and Green Investment Committee

Meeting Date: 13 July 2023

From: Executive Director; Place and Sustainability

Electoral division(s): The Thriplow Household Recycling Centre is located in the Duxford division and the catchment area for the site could also impact on Gamlingay, Melbourn & Bassingbourn divisions.

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Outcome: The Committee is being asked to consider a proposal, to allow cross border use of the Thriplow and Royston Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) by residents from Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. The report also seeks endorsement of officers procuring research to quantify the use of Cambridgeshire County Council's (CCC) HRC sites by residents from all neighbouring councils, and the use of neighbouring councils' HRC sites by Cambridgeshire residents, to estimate the associated costs and impacts to the Cambridgeshire taxpayers to inform a future update to this committee.

If the Committee agrees to enter into a cross border arrangement with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), payment will be made from the existing waste budget to compensate HCC for the net increase in costs resulting from the use of its HRC by residents of Cambridgeshire as the neighbouring council; and if the committee endorses officers in procuring research to quantify the use of HRC sites, this will provide up-to-date information to inform any future decisions or discussions with other neighbouring councils, whilst also being included as part of a future waste update to this committee.

Recommendation: The Committee is being recommended to:

a) Approve the principle of exploring and implementing a reciprocal access and cost sharing arrangements with Hertfordshire County Council, as outlined in sections 2 and 3 of this report and in the confidential Appendix 1, to not disadvantage Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire residents from using the nearest recycling centre to their homes in the Thriplow and Royston areas.

b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, to make a final decision on implementing a reciprocal arrangement with Hertfordshire County Council.

c) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability to procure research to quantify the use of the County Council Household Recycling Centre sites by residents from all neighbouring councils, and the use of neighbouring councils' sites by Cambridgeshire residents to estimate the associated costs and impacts to the Cambridgeshire taxpayers to inform a future update to this committee.

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1. Background

- 1.1 Waste Disposal Authorities in England have a statutory responsibility to “arrange for places to be provided at which persons resident in its area may deposit their household waste”. In Cambridgeshire this responsibility is discharged by the provision of nine Household Recycling Centres (HRCs). These sites are managed and operated by Thalia as part of the overall Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract, where residents can deposit their bulky waste and recyclables to complement the recycling and disposal services that are provided at the kerbside by the city and district councils.
- 1.2 Residents that live close to local authority boundaries may find it more convenient to use a HRC located in a neighbouring local authority’s administrative area which may be closer or easier to travel to than the HRC provided by their own council. The local HRC policies of some councils can restrict access for certain vehicle types, limit the deposit of some waste types (e.g., “DIY” waste or Construction and Demolition waste) or charge for acceptance of some waste types that can encourage the use of HRC sites in neighbouring councils where such policies and restrictions are not in place.
- 1.3 Some neighbouring local authorities have policies in place that restrict the use of its HRC sites to its own residents only and restrict access by the use of booking systems, a ‘meet and greet’ service at the entrance to sites which requires proof of residency prior to permitting access to the HRC facilities, as well as using technology such as automated number plate recognition (ANPR) and booking systems to verify residency status.
- 1.4 In Cambridgeshire the public are advised that the HRC sites are provided for Cambridgeshire Residents. Our HRC site staff are instructed to turn away non-Cambridgeshire residents where identified, but residency checks are not automatically checked by site operatives and no “meet and greet” service is carried out on entry. The booking system that was used at Thriplow and other selected HRC sites to prevent queues forming on the surrounding public highways while site capacity was reduced, due to COVID restrictions, was withdrawn in March 2022.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 On 20 March 2023 Hertfordshire County Council’s (HCC) Cabinet agreed to a policy of restricting non-Hertfordshire residents from accessing Hertfordshire HRCs to be adopted and introduced as soon as resources would allow, and to write to neighbouring local authorities prior to implementation of the policy.
- 2.2 At the March meeting HCC’s cabinet authorised its officers to explore and implement any reciprocal access and/or cost sharing arrangements with any neighbouring local authority as may be appropriate, in so far as any such arrangements are at least cost neutral to HCC and do not disadvantage the majority of recycling centre users.
- 2.3 In April 2022 the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched a call for evidence on booking systems at household waste recycling centres and a technical consultation on preventing charges to householders for the disposal of “Do It Yourself” (“DIY”) waste at household waste recycling centres. Government is not in favour of unnecessarily restrictive systems or charges for waste types. On 18 June 2023 Environment Minister Rebecca Pow

announced that the Government will abolish the fees which some local authorities charge for disposing of DIY waste at HRC sites. It is proposed that the 2012 regulations will be amended to make it clear where construction and demolition waste should be treated as “DIY” waste and to prevent local authorities charging for the disposal of “DIY” waste from small-scale projects undertaken by householders themselves at HRCs.

- 2.4 HCC obtained information on the origins of users of the Hertfordshire HRCs and the HRCs of their neighbouring councils using data from a major mobile phone provider between September 2019 and February 2021 to quantify the use of its HRCs by non-HCC residents and HCC residents’ use of neighbouring councils HRCs. The information obtained by HCC indicated that 52.78% HCC’s Royston site use is by Cambridgeshire residents and 12.24% of the CCC Thriplow site use is by Hertfordshire residents. Although CCC residents mainly use HCC’s Royston site the information shows that CCC residents also use other HCC sites but at significantly lower levels.
- 2.5 During the period discussed in paragraph 2.4 above when HCC gathered data on use of its HRC sites, CCC had a booking system in place at the Thriplow HRC to manage demand and mitigate the risk of queuing on the surrounding public highway while the site’s capacity was reduced due to COVID restrictions. The use of the booking system may have reduced HCC residents from using that site and encouraged CCC residents to use HCC’s sites to avoid having to make a booking. After CCC removed the booking system in March 2022 the data indicated that CCC residents use of the Royston site reduced to 47.67%.
- 2.6 In April 2023 the County Council was informed by HCC that it would be restricting non-resident access use of its’ HRCs due to significant cost pressures, from May 2023. However, as the County Council has engaged in active dialogue with HCC this position has been delayed until August 2023, to allow officers time to follow proper governance arrangements to receive a formal steer from Elected Members and to provide time to finalise agreements. As such, HCC will still allow unfettered access to Cambridgeshire residents, (to their Royston HRC site). However, only cars will be accepted, and Cambridgeshire is continuing to offer access to HCC residents at the Thriplow site under this reciprocal arrangement.
- 2.7 If the recommendations in this report are supported by Elected Members, CCC and HCC officers will work together to agree a joint communication campaign to inform residents on both sides of the border of the cross border arrangement and how to access HRC sites in the neighbouring authority’s area.

3. Cost Implications

- 3.1 The net effect of the position of the Cambridgeshire residents use of Royston and HCC residents use of Thriplow will be that HCC are proposing to charge CCC for the difference, (under a net cost arrangement) between the cost of CCC’s residents use of the Royston site and HCC’s residents use of the Thriplow site. Based on the research discussed in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 this would result in a requirement for CCC to make a payment to HCC to continue with a cross border arrangement. Any payments will be made between Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire County Councils, residents will not be charged for use of a neighbouring council’s HRC site.
- 3.2 The basis of the HCC charge proposed covers both haulage and residual disposal costs

per tonne. If the arrangement is taken up, there is proposed to be quarterly meetings to review and monitor the operations, (as well as site user numbers) plus a final tonnage and financial reconciliation at the year end. The predicted annual net cost to CCC based on the research discussed in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 is set out in Confidential Appendix 1 to this report.

- 3.3 If CCC decides not to have a cross border arrangement with HCC and HCC enforces its policy restricting non-Hertfordshire residents, the Cambridgeshire residents currently using the HCC's sites will be redirected to the Thriplow HRC increasing the demand at that site from current levels based on the research discussed in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5. This would in turn see an increase in CCC haulage and residual disposal costs based on the research discussed in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5. The potential financial implications of this additional haulage and residual disposal costs based on 2023/24 rates from the Waste PFI Contract are set out in Confidential Appendix 1.
- 3.4 If the recommendations in this report are approved by Elected Members it is proposed to continue discussions with HCC to allow a final decision to be made by the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, which will ensure that the cost for keeping an open border between the Thriplow and Royston HRCs will be lower than the cost for not keeping an open border when a triple bottom line is factored in.
- 3.5 The estimated cost for CCC to procure research on the full HRC usage of its sites by external users is approximately £15,000. This would give CCC useful information and data to assess the levels of use of CCC HRCs by residents outside Cambridgeshire and Cambridgeshire residents' use of HRCs in neighbouring council areas. This research would help to inform any future decisions on the potential to introduce new policies such as charging for non-residents from neighbouring authorities to use Cambridgeshire HRCs or to restrict use of CCC's sites to Cambridgeshire residents only. If the recommendation to procure research on cross border use of CCC HRCs is approved by Elected Members officers will follow the required competitive procurement process.

4. Alignment with ambitions

- 4.1 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes.

There are no significant implications for this ambition. The intention of the recommendations is to make it as easy as possible for Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire residents to use the most convenient HRC sites based on their home locations and prevent unnecessary road journeys.

- 4.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable.

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

- 4.3 Health inequalities are reduced.

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

- 4.4 People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs.

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

- 4.5 Helping people out of poverty and income inequality.

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

- 4.6 Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised.

There are no significant implications for this ambition. The intention of the recommendations is to continue to allow access to good quality public services for Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire residents and to allow them to use the most convenient HRC sites based on their home locations.

- 4.7 Children and young people have opportunities to thrive.

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

5. Significant Implications

5.1 Resource Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in section 3 and in confidential Appendix 1

5.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category. If Elected Members agree to keep an open border between the Thriplow and Royston HRCs waste officers will work with the Waste PFI Contractor to formalise the arrangement to adhere to the contract terms. The contract variation described in the report is covered by Regulation 72 of the Public Contract Regulations as the value of the variation falls below the 10% and is therefore consistent with the provision at 72 (5). If Elected Members agree to procure research full HRC usage, as discussed in paragraph 3.5 above, this will be carried out in accordance with Public Procurement Regulations.

5.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in paragraphs 1.1 and 2.3.

5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The report above sets out details of communications implications in paragraph 2.7.

5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category. The local member for Duxford, Councillor Peter McDonald is a member of the Environment and Green Investment Committee and nearby county councillors for the Melbourn & Bassingbourn division, and Gamlingay division, whose residents are known to use the Royston HRC site, have also been kept informed of the discussions taking place on this matter with HCC.

5.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.8 Climate Change and Environment Implications on Priority Areas:

5.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: The report does not relate to energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

5.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: The report does not relate to low carbon transport. The recommendation is to maintain an open border so residents from Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire can use the HRC that is most convenient and to minimise travel distances to access from their home locations in the Royston and Thriplow areas.

5.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: The report does not relate to green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

5.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: The report recommends maintaining an open border so residents from Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire can use the HRC that is most convenient to access from their home locations in the Royston and Thriplow areas to recycle their plastic waste.

5.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: The report does not relate to water use, availability and management.

5.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: The recommendation is to maintain an open border so residents from Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire can use the HRC that is most convenient and to minimise travel distances to access from their home locations in the Royston and Thriplow areas. This should mean that the air pollution created by residents' car use travelling to an HRC will be neutral.

5.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure, and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral
Explanation: The recommendation is to maintain an open border and the current situation so this will have a neutral impact on resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change. This may slightly increase resilience to climate change by avoiding a potential increase in demand at the Thriplow HRC.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes
Name of Financial Officer: David Parcell

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement and Commercial? Yes
Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Legal? Yes
Name of Legal Officer: Emma Duncan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqIA Super User?
Yes
Name of Officer: Emma Fitch

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?
Yes
CCC and HCC officers have met with a view to issuing a joint press-release on this subject if Elected Members agree the recommendations in this report.
Name of Officer: Kathryn Rogerson

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes
Name of Officer: Emma Fitch

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?
Yes
Name of Officer: Iain Green

If a Key decision, have any Climate Change and Environment implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?
Yes
Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

5. Source documents

5.1 Source documents

Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Cabinet Report from 20 March 2023 titled "Recycling Centre Non-Resident Restriction Policy Proposal and related minutes".

5.2 Location

[Hertfordshire County Council link to Cabinet Report Agenda Pack Cabinet Panel Report \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

[Hertfordshire County Council link to Cabinet Meeting Minutes \(Public Pack\)Minutes Document for Cabinet, 20/03/2023 14:00 \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](#)