

# Cabinet 7<sup>th</sup> January HRC Service Summary

I would like to start off by covering the background to this item.

## Executive summary

The HRC report is very full and detailed. I do not intend to walk you through all of the detail I will go through key aspects.

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1. The proposed changes are designed to meet budgetary demands in the short to medium term (from financial year 2019/20 a £1.25m savings target is needed). Benchmarking data shows the current HRC service is cost effective.
  
2. Although I would much rather inconvenience no-one, these closures are unfortunately necessary if we are to realise the level of cost savings the Council's budget requires.
  
3. This will help balance Value for Money (VfM), levels for an existing service contract and plans for a new proposed service model. The new service model can then be used to plan a new service contract from late 2019.

## **Recap - what happened and when**

1. In the summer of 2017 I visited all the Household Recycling Centres in Buckinghamshire. A wide range of things were considered from site layouts and flexibility, drive times, customer usage patterns, service costs, benchmarking with other local authorities and many more things. More than 50 options were investigated with a focus on the possibilities of service delivery. The range of things considered are available as background technical summary & modelling associated appendices to the main cabinet report. This has been a detailed piece of work and taken many hours of member time and officer time.
2. Pre-engagement work undertaken by Ipsos MORI during July 2018. This then informed the design of the public consultation which commenced on the 28<sup>th</sup> August to 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018, with a comprehensive communication plan. 17 events across the county were attended during the consultation period.
3. This cabinet agenda item was originally intended to be on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018 Cabinet meeting agenda. Due to the high number of consultation responses and engagement, we required more time to fully consider the public views and possible alternatives suggested. At the Cabinet meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> November, I announced I was going to delay bringing this item to

Cabinet until 7<sup>th</sup> January 2019. I have been open, transparent about the HRC service review since early summer 2018 and decision timelines.

4. There are strict democratic processes and timelines we have to follow with decision reports. The report and papers were all published quickly as possible and on time. We would not normally issue a press release when a cabinet decision report is published. However I am well aware there is much interest, emotion and passion related to the HRC service. I therefore I ensured a press release was issued, to keep everyone informed and highlight the cabinet report and supporting information was published and available.

### **Consultation Report - Themes**

The detailed Consultation Report and analysis is available as Appendix 1.

There are six appendices to the formal consultation report. The key themes expressed:

- **Fly tipping** – I recognise the strength of residents' feelings about fly tipping. The Council has a zero tolerance stance on fly tipping. In Buckinghamshire 1 in 38 cases result in a successful prosecution compared to the national average of 1 in 638. I therefore will be looking to monitor fly tipping incidents to identify whether there has been an increase and take further mitigation actions if necessary.

- **Alternative suggestions were put forward** - to find different ways to fund the HRC service including charging at the gates, increasing council tax, organisational back of office costs and squeezing other public services. The alternative suggestions would not be legally available, and the current financial pressures highlight the Council must balance its budgets as a public body.
- **Reducing days and hours to avoid site closures.** Both of these alternative options represent a wider impact across the HRC network to the majority of residents as whole, compared to the two site closures. This is detailed in section 17.1 of the cabinet report.
- **Charging out of county users.** Residents have expressed mixed views on whether to charge non-Buckinghamshire residents or to do nothing. However, there is a clear theme that those wishing to charge suggest any income should help fund the existing service. Cabinet Report point 17, **Table 5 Potential non-Buckinghamshire charging solutions.** This is not recommended at present due to the high implementation costs and inconvenience introduced to Buckinghamshire residents compared to relatively low revenue recovery.
- Residents in general oppose charging for non-household waste. This opinion does soften when the scale of savings is explained, and the details of what waste can be charged for. Whilst I acknowledge residents'

concerns introducing charges for some waste types helps the council manage the risk of further HRC closures.

**Equality Impact Assessment** – see Appendix 3 for more details.

Cabinet Report (Section G). The EIA sets out the evidence of potential impacts of the proposed changes on the nine protected factors. There is some evidence that persons over 65 years are more likely to use the HRCs than other age groups and are more concerned about increased travel times.

**Site Closures and user/demographic analysis** - The most popular frequency of visits was monthly (37.8%); with 54.4% of respondents said they visited the sites monthly or less.

**Week day site closures (up to three HRCs)** – No obvious weekday preference emerged, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday all registering between 5-6% of responses. The significant majority said that they did not mind which day (83%). There is some evidence that closing on consecutive days may be more supported.

**Charging non-Buckinghamshire residents for using - HRCs** - mixed views, some support that the Council should charge, whilst others feel HRCs are a universal service irrespective of administrative boundaries.

**Site Closures and Travel Times** - If closures go ahead, residents will have to drive further to use their nearest HRC. The Council estimates 10.8% of Buckinghamshire households are nearest to Bledlow and Burnham. This data is provided by measuring the distances from each postcode in Bucks to the nearest HRC. The data is not actual visits, but homes potentially impacted if a site were to close. A map detailing the drive times is given in the Cabinet Report.

## **Summary**

The changes being put forward to the household recycling centre service have been very carefully considered, so that they make as little disruption as possible to residents across the county as a whole. However, I do accept that some of the changes, especially permanent closure of sites, will have an impact on residents living in that specific locality. There will be a continual need to carry out extensive communications to ensure that residents are aware of the changes.

Waste Access and Acceptance Policy (WAAP) covers the service provision for the HRC service, key policy update areas:

- **Control of vehicles accessing HRCs** – remains
- **District Councils use of designated HRCs** – remains
- **Charging for some types of waste (*waste outside definition of household waste*) entering HRCs** – new
- **Controls and charging out-of-county** – updated . To be managed part through direct administrative arrangements with neighbouring local authorities and part through the charging of non-household waste.

- **Charities / Parish Council restrictions** – updated
- **Planned weekday closures for some sites** – new

### **Finances this year and over the MTFP period**

In year 2018/19 the underspend in Waste Management has largely been due to low volumes of green waste (over £400K). We had an exceptional hot summer exceptional weather, this is a one-off item and can't be relied upon year upon year. The HRC service incurs weekly, monthly and daily revenue costs - requires continual funding sources.

The other £1m underspend in waste management is the opportunity related to the EfW contract income. This is not reliable income either and contingency to manage risks relate to the EfW contract, and it is being used to help balance cost pressure in Children Services. There are wider and continual financial pressures across the council, so whilst these changes are difficult they are needed to realise the level of cost savings the Council's budget requires.



I intend to take each recommendation in turn:

1. Agree the revised Waste Access and Acceptance Policy (WAAP) (Appendix 2);
2. Introduce charging for construction and demolition waste (also known as non-household waste) for Buckinghamshire residents and non-Buckinghamshire residents;
3. Close the Rabans Lane (Aylesbury), Chesham and Burnham (during closure review period) HRCs on Wednesdays and Thursdays, reducing the opening days from 7 to 5 days a week;
4. Close the Bledlow HRC and delegate authority to the Environment Services Director, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment, to determine future arrangements for the site;
5. Agree that based on the current financial analysis, it will be necessary to close Burnham HRC on a permanent basis on 30th September 2019, but agree that a final decision to continue with closure, or rescinding the closure, should be made in the 9th September 2019 Cabinet meeting, following a detailed financial appraisal of the other savings implemented from 1st April 2019;
6. Delegate authority to the Environment Services Director, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment, to maintain a service level agreement with Slough Borough Council, and

enter agreement(s) with any other neighbouring authority, to share costs of operation of the HRCs on a fair basis to reflect usage;

7. Agree that incidents of fly tipping should be monitored to identify whether there is an increase in activity and delegate authority to the Environment Services Director, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment, to identify appropriate mitigating measures should fly tipping activity increase; and
8. Delegate authority to the Environment Services Director, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment, to extend the current HRC contract with FCC up to 31st March 2022 as appropriate to align with future procurement strategies and timelines.

Finally I would like to thank everyone for taking part in this consultation; it is not something I wanted to do. I would also like to thank officers for working outside of normal working hours.