



**Buckinghamshire County Council**

# Consultation Evaluation Report

Household Recycling Centre Review – Appendix 1 to the  
Cabinet Report 7<sup>th</sup> January 2019

*10<sup>th</sup> December 2018*

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## 1. Executive summary

This summary highlights the key themes generated by the consultation regarding the Household Recycling Centre (HRC) service review. Over 6,000 responses to the consultation were received, containing over 23,000 free text comments.

**There is a clear view that any change to HRCs will have a negative impact on fly tipping.** Respondents expressed this opinion whether considering weekday closures, site closures, charging for some types of waste or restricting non-Buckinghamshire users.

**Responses have focussed on possible HRC closures; therefore many comments are framed with that in mind.** Residents would prefer no reductions in the service as it stands, and see site closures as a last resort. Those who use the Bledlow and Burnham sites are strongly against possible closures. Respondents expressed the need to look at other options (specifically the options of reducing opening hours or days across the network to avoid the need for complete site closures).

**Residents are mixed 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.

**There is no clear preference on which days to close some sites during the week.** However, a deeper analysis shows there may be some support for closures on consecutive days.

**Residents generally oppose charging for some types of waste.** This opinion softens when the scale of savings is explained and the detail of what wastes can be charged for. However, residents see charging for some types of waste as a policy difficult to enforce and as sending out the wrong message about recycling.

**Respondents express clear concern about the wider impacts of change on residents and the local environment.** The additional travel times to alternative sites are deemed by many to be too far and make recycling harder. The same journeys are believed to have an increased detrimental impact on air quality and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

**There is a clear understanding of the Council's need to save money.** However, further analysis of comments suggest, many respondents are willing to pay more and/or want the Council to find the money from other sources.

## 2. Background

- a. Buckinghamshire's household recycling centres are popular, well used and highly thought of with more than 70% of all waste received being recycled and a 99% approval rate from visitors. But the harsh reality is that the Council cannot afford to continue 'as is' due to the financial pressures on all Council services. In line with decreases in public spending nationally, the amount Buckinghamshire County Council has to spend on all of its services is much reduced. This means that all of the Council's services and spending have to be reviewed. The Council also needs to prepare a household recycling centre service for future growth in the county. The outcomes of the review will put the Council in a position to make suitable changes to reduce costs from April 2019, but also be ready to provide new, modern sites in the future in areas of the county where there is population growth.
- b. The Council made the decision to undertake a public consultation in order to seek the views on the future of the service from all key stakeholders. The consultation started on

28<sup>th</sup> August 2018, lasted for 8 weeks, and closed at midnight 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018.

### 3. Purpose of this report

This report will:

- a. Detail the Household Recycling Centre Review consultation process and outputs
- b. Outline response numbers, types and key themes
- c. Be appended to a Cabinet report about the HRC Review

### 4. Consultation Process

- a. A project team, led by the Waste Promotions Officer, was convened to co-ordinate the consultation process. The team also included the Council's Consultation & Engagement Lead and two members of the Communications team. The team received regular input and liaison with the Waste Commissioning Team Leader, Head of Waste Management, Director of Environment Services and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment.
- b. The project had four distinct stages:
  - I. Planning and research to inform the engagement
  - II. Pre-engagement work
  - III. Public consultation
  - IV. Consultation close & report
- c. The Council's corporate consultation process was followed and throughout the consultation the Project Team reviewed the consultation and provided further information to respond to feedback from residents.

### 5. Methodology

#### a. Planning and research to inform the engagement

- I. Significant data gathering, benchmarking and modelling was undertaken as part of the wider HRC service review. This work helped understand the requirements for the pre-engagement.

#### b. Pre engagement

- I. The project team commissioned a piece of pre-engagement work to inform the full public consultation. The work comprised of four discussion groups led by Ipsos MORI, an independent research company, in High Wycombe and Aylesbury (on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July 2018) for around 90 minutes each. Three groups were with residents who have used a HRC in the past 6 months and one group was with residents who have not used a HRC in the past 6 months. All groups contained a combination of residents from different districts, with a mix of demographics including age, gender, ethnicity, disability and social grade. The methodology and information used in the discussion groups can be seen in [Appendix D](#).
- II. The key findings highlighted that:
  - While broader issues contribute to residents' preferences, the potential personal impact on them is ultimately the key driver. Therefore, the explanation of options in the consultation should clearly explain who will be affected by

changes, and to what extent.

- Residents were often confused about the practicalities of implementing service changes, leading to views that the options would inconvenience them while also not delivering the required savings for the Council. Explanations of how changes will be implemented are therefore important to reassure residents.
  - Context is essential. Residents became more amenable to certain options after knowing the potential cost savings, for example, charging for some types of waste. Residents were also more open to site closures after seeing site locations in the context of the whole county.
  - Fly tipping was a key concern for residents.
  - Wording should reflect the language used by participants, containing sufficient detail to reassure residents about whether they will be affected and to what extent.
  - Residents were unaware of the option of charging for some types of waste and needed clear explanation of the details to understand the implications of it. There was a strong focus on the implementation of any charges, with attendees suggesting that people will actively avoid the charges, which may lead to fly tipping. The pre-engagement work gave attendees a list of options and asked them to rank them in order of preference, when doing so, charging for some types of waste was placed in the middle of five. After the relative savings for each option were detailed, attendees were asked to rank them again, and it moved up to 2nd place, behind reducing opening days. The feedback from Ipsos MORI highlighted that residents were more willing to consider charges when the potential savings were listed.
- III. Council officers attended all discussion groups, as observers, and also attended a feedback session with Ipsos MORI. The key findings and more detailed feedback were used to inform the design of the Council's preferred options and the consultation documents. The final report produced by Ipsos MORI can be seen in Appendix D.

### **c. Public consultation**

- I. The project team created supporting information and consultation survey using the pre-engagement feedback, consultation best practice, HRC project data, annual satisfaction survey analysis for both waste and public consultation aspects.
- II. An online survey (Survey Monkey) was produced. Printed copies were also available at libraries to enable residents without access to the internet to respond to the consultation. In addition a dedicated webpage contained the supporting information.
- III. The supporting information informed residents in detail about the proposals whilst remaining succinct to remain accessible.
- IV. The survey design collected user and demographic data, to allow analysis of the results and possible impacts on different groups of residents. The questions mirrored previous on-site annual surveys completed on behalf of the Council, which allows the consultation results to be set against comparable data. The survey asked respondents to give the first half of their postcodes, usual HRC visited and alternatives to help identify impacts or common themes in local areas across the

county.

- V. The survey was designed to allow residents to fully explain their responses and give in-depth feedback on the consultation.
- VI. The Council set an eight week period to hold the consultation, starting on 28 August 2018 running until midnight 22 October 2018. The online survey was available throughout the consultation period.

## 6. Communications

- a. The Council wanted to hear from as many residents and stakeholders as possible and the following methods were used to promote this consultation:
  - I. Dedicated webpage
  - II. Press releases (coverage received in print, online & radio)
  - III. Social media – Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor
  - IV. On-site HRC promotion – posters & business cards handed out by staff
  - V. Council publications (My Bucks newsletter) & Library digital screens
  - VI. MPs and District, Town & Parish Councils
  - VII. Community engagement (detailed in [section 7](#) below)

The pre-consultation announcement (16<sup>th</sup> July 2018) and consultation launch (28<sup>th</sup> August 2018) press releases were distributed through the Council's distribution list and methods listed above. Officers also sent specific emails to key stakeholders, listed in [Appendix B](#) to ensure all relevant parties were directly informed and invited to comment, where appropriate.

- b. A summary of the communications methods used is provided below:

During the 8 week consultation:
17,200 website unique visitors
60,000 business cards printed for distribution on HRC sites
52 separate social media posts, articles & adverts
101,000 social media impressions
13+ different communications methods used
365,000 times a social media post, advert, article any consultation content was seen

## 7. Community Engagement

- a. The face to face, drop-in sessions were a key part of the consultation. Initially, eight events were planned in libraries across the county, including the consultation launch at the County Show. These events allowed residents to ask questions about the consultation in person and gave the Project Team opportunities to listen to residents' views directly and answer their questions.
- b. Officers and the Lead Member for Planning and Environment offered Parish & Town Councils the opportunity to attend their meetings to answer questions on the consultation. This was also extended to Local Area Forum meetings across the County. Seven of the public events attended were as a result of invitations from groups. In addition to the events above, extra events were planned in Princes

Risborough and Burnham, due to the popularity of previous events and to allow residents the chance to attend an evening event.

c. The summary of the community engagement is below:

18	Public events attended
42	Hours available at public events
755	Residents visited events

A summary of feedback from the drop in sessions is in [Section 9b](#)

d. Officers responded to all contacts made from local groups and organisations to answer questions, attend events or encourage more responses to the consultation.



## 8. Summary of Consultation Responses

### a. Submissions received

Method	Responses
Online survey	6,010
Hard copy survey	31
<b>Total survey responses</b>	<b>6,041</b>
Letters	6*
Organisational responses	17*
Petitions	1**
Emails	42
<b>Total other responses</b>	<b>66</b>

\* Detailed in [section 9a](#)

\*\*Detailed in [section 9c](#), considered differently to individual responses

### b. User analysis (Questions 1-5)

This map (Figure 1), shown in large format in [Appendix A](#), shows the geographical spread of responses to the consultation. There are a significant amount of responses in the areas surrounding Bledlow and Burnham, highlighting the strength of feeling in those areas.

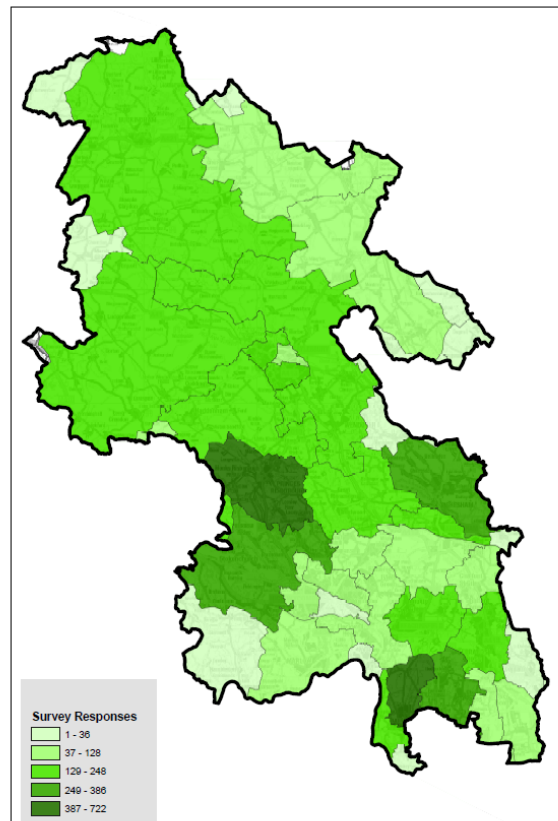


Figure 1 – Location of responses to consultation

Responses to question two echoes figure 1, with significant responses from residents who use the two sites possibly affected by closures (see figure 2). Langley and Buckingham HRCs had the fewest respondents selecting these two sites as their “usual” sites, which may reflect the relative visitor numbers at the sites and the assumption that they “were not affected”.



Q2. Which household recycling centre do you usually visit?

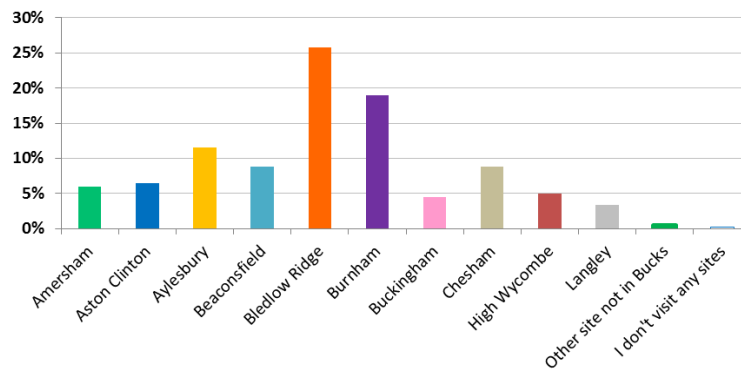


Figure 2

Respondents were asked in question 3 what site they would use if their usual site was unavailable. Amersham, Aston Clinton, Rabans Lane (Aylesbury), Beaconsfield and High Wycombe HRCs each had more than 10% of respondents choosing them as “alternative” sites. The five remaining sites were significantly lower, on average 2.4% each and less popular than “Other site not in Bucks” (7.2%). More than 20% of respondents suggested not visiting any alternative sites.

Respondents were asked how often they visited HRCs in question 4. The frequency that residents visit HRCs broadly reflected that of previous annual independent HRC satisfaction surveys. Figure 3 shows the most popular frequency of visits was monthly (37.8%); in fact 54.4% of respondents said they visited the sites monthly or less.

Q4. How often do you visit a household recycling centre?

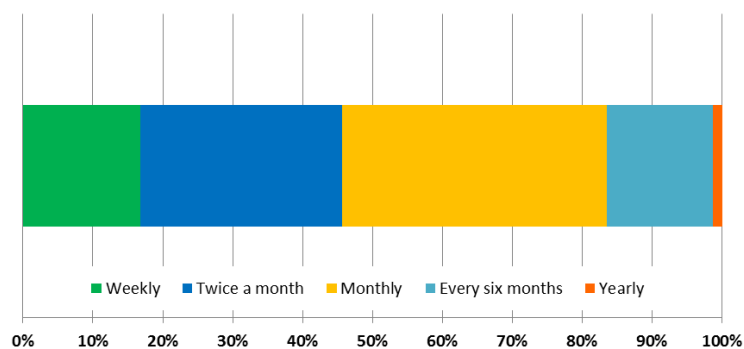


Figure 3

Figure 4 below, shows the wide variation on the frequency of waste types being brought to sites. This data also remains in line with previous independent HRC annual satisfaction surveys, highlighting ‘Garden Waste’ as the most popular material to come to site. Although the materials for which the Council could legally charge for are not specifically listed, it should be noted that 38.1% of respondents never bring ‘Construction Waste’, the majority of which would include waste that could be charged for if the proposed service changes are introduced. In fact, only 10% of respondents bring ‘Construction Waste’ more frequently than every six months.

Q5. How often do you bring the following waste?

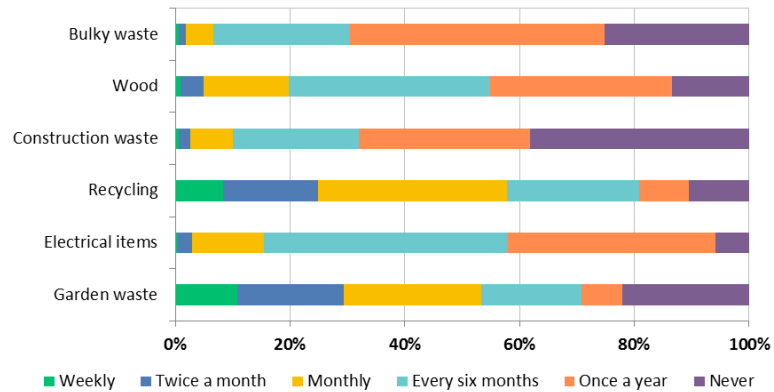


Figure 4

- c. **Q6 - We propose to close the below sites on two of their quietest weekdays. All sites would stay open on Friday, Saturday, Sunday & Mondays. If you have a preference for which weekday a site should remain open, please indicate this below**

Q6. Which weekday would you prefer to stay open?

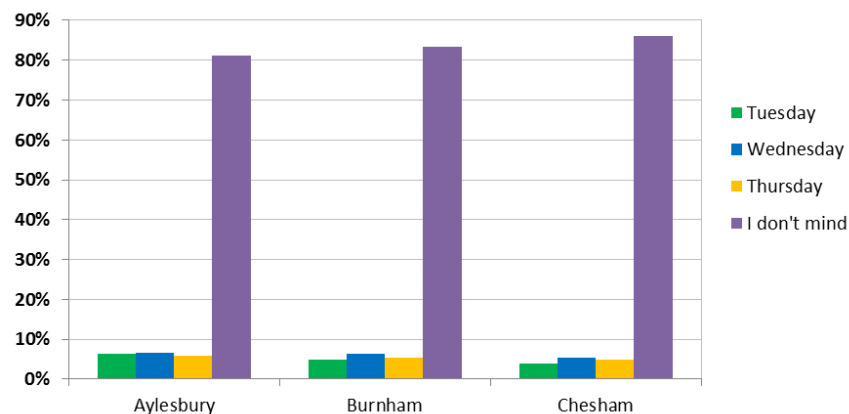


Figure 5

No obvious weekday preference emerged, with Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday all registering between 5-6% of responses (see figure 5). The significant majority said that they did not mind which day (83%). Those selecting Tuesday or Thursday have chosen an option which would mean consecutive days for closure (Tuesday and Wednesday or Wednesday and Thursday). 10.4% selected either Tuesday or Thursday, compared to 6.1% of those selecting Wednesday. There is some evidence that closing on consecutive days may be more supported.

- d. **Q7 - Please tell us why you made that choice (in response to Q6)**

The responses showed a high proportion of respondents saying "I don't mind", averaging 83% of respondents. 59% of respondents selecting "I don't mind" suggested it was because it didn't affect them, for example:

*"It doesn't matter what day the site is open as long as it is well communicated"*  
*"I work during the week so would recycle at the weekend anyway"*

When analysing the comments of those who had selected a particular day, it was

typically because it was the most convenient day for that individual (54.3%). Some respondents felt that distributing the closure throughout the week would make more sense (13.5%), whereas others (16.7%) felt that closing on consecutive days before or after the weekend were better.

If only responses from residents who use the possibly affected sites is assessed, the proportion of those saying they don't mind drops to 51%, but there is still no clear preference on which day to remain open.

**e. Q8 - People from outside of the County use Buckinghamshire Household Recycling Centres, at a cost to local taxpayers. What do you think we should do about this?**

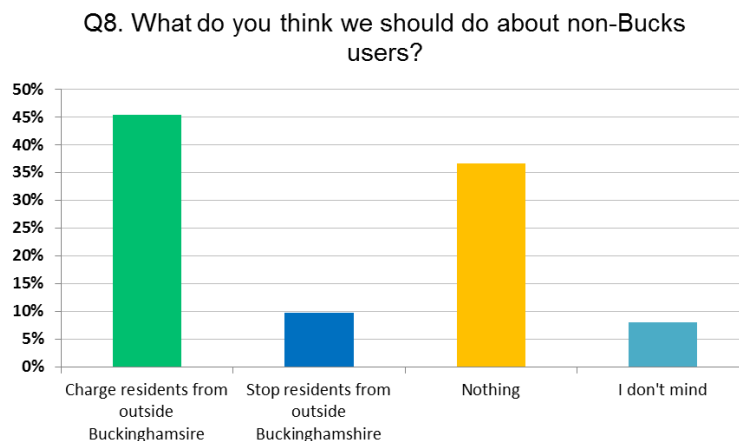


Figure 6

In figure 6 the responses show a clear split between those who wish to charge non-Buckinghamshire residents (45.4%) and those wishing to do nothing (36.8%). It is clear that whether they are charged or not, Buckinghamshire residents still want to see non-Buckinghamshire users able to use these sites. Only 10% responded with “stop residents from outside Buckinghamshire”.

**f. Q9 - Please tell us why you made that choice – in response to Q8**

The most popular comment, made by 22% of those choosing to charge non-Buckinghamshire users, suggested this was because they did not wish to stop them, but felt they should pay for the privilege:

*“Residents pay for their local services and can always use their own counties. However, people should be given a choice and pay for the privilege of that choice.”*

This sentiment is reflected in other comments from respondents who suggested charging non-Buckinghamshire users, with 12% suggesting that the Council look to neighbouring authorities to cover any costs from non-Buckinghamshire users. 14% stated that charging non Buckinghamshire users makes financial sense to the Council and finally 12% said that residents over the border are not the responsibility of Buckinghamshire taxpayers.

Of the respondents who said the Council should do nothing, the most popular response was that County residency doesn't matter (26%) as every household pays council tax, for example:

*“doubtless tips in neighbouring counties are used by Bucks residents: swings and roundabouts”*

Another strong view was that charging or stopping non-Buckinghamshire users would result in unintended consequences (24%) and 10% expressed concern regarding the implementation of a charge/ban and administering it, for example:

*“Stopping will only result in flytipping, so charging is the logical alternative to save costs”*  
*“I think introducing a scheme which needs admin and "policing" will add to costs unnecessarily.”*

The comments for charging non-Buckinghamshire users tend to focus on the financial aspects and the need to prioritise Buckinghamshire’s services, with charging non-Buckinghamshire residents seen as a suitable way of doing so. Whilst those suggesting the Council do nothing believe that people use services across many borders, and any implementation of a charge/ban would be hard to administer and lead to fly tipping.

**g. Q10 - We cannot continue with 10 Household Recycling Centres. Considering the options detailed here, please select your preferred option below.**

Q10. Considering the options detailed please select your preferred option below.

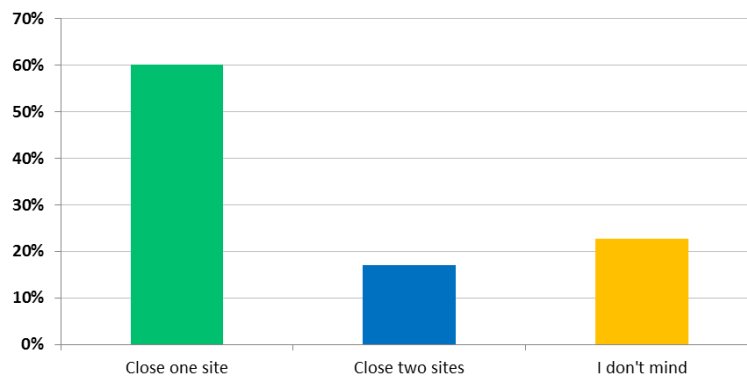


Figure 7

This question was a structured question based on the Council’s work prior to the consultation, which informed the option that keeping ten sites open was not financially deliverable. As such the option of “Don’t close any sites” was not given. The data in figure 7 above shows that most respondents selected to close one site (60.1%).

Q10 - Further analysis of responses given from users of each site

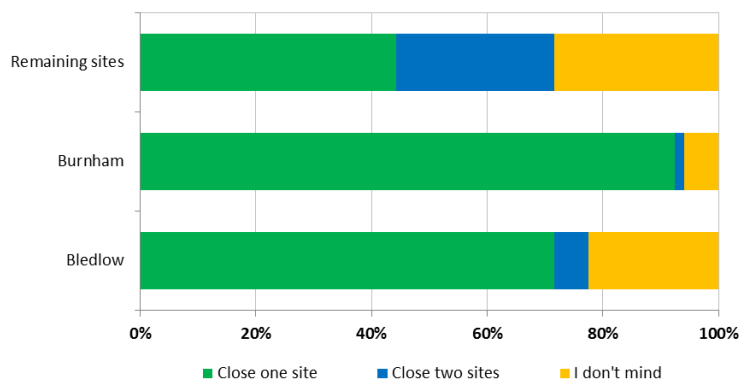


Figure 8

Figure 8 shows the difference when responses are matched against the respondent's usual site. 71.6% of Bledlow users and 92.4% of Burnham users selected to close one site, compared to 60% of all respondents and 42% of the users of the eight sites unaffected by possible closure. The picture from users of other sites is much less clear. It is to be expected when the consultation sets out clear preferred options, that strong support or opposition can depend on the impact residents expect to see on their lives.

The comments detailed in section h below provides more insight into respondents' thoughts and should be strongly considered when analysing this question.

**h. Q11 - Please tell us why you made that choice (in response to Q10)**

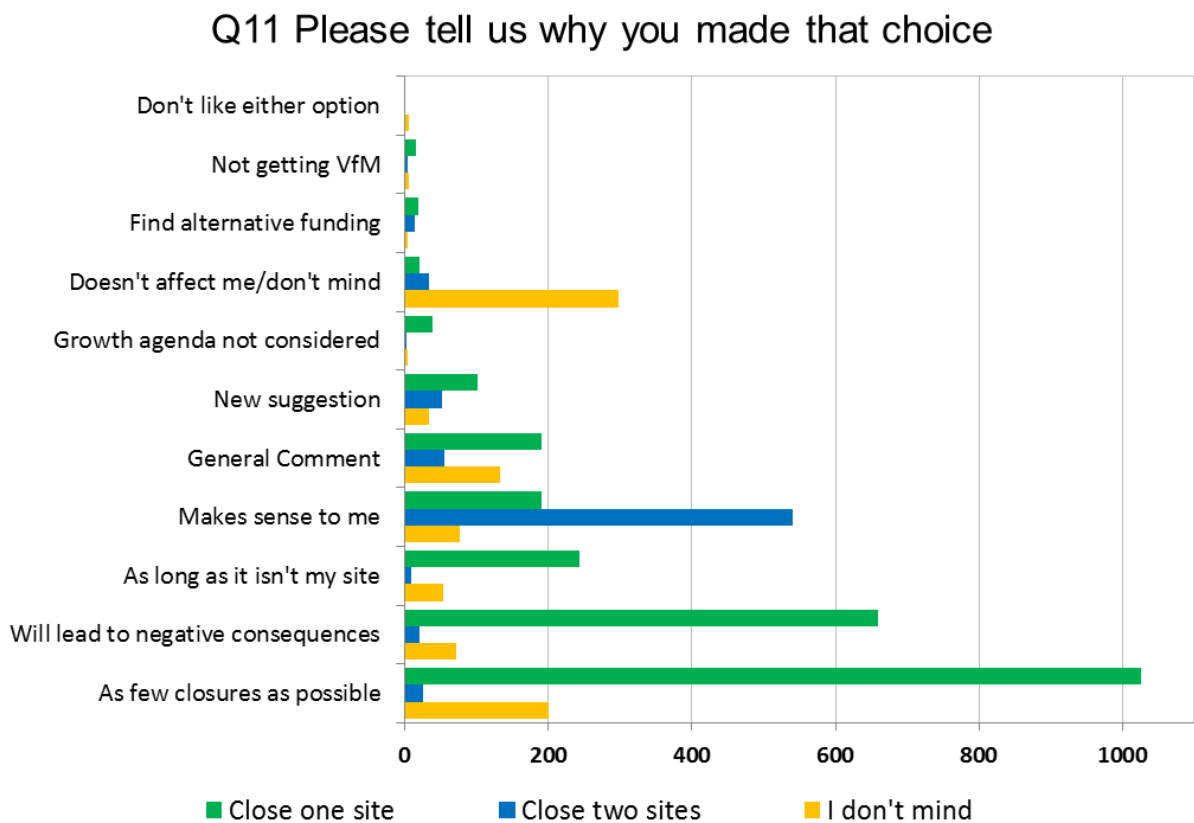


Figure 9

The total comments from this question are detailed by answer in figure 9. The detailed analysis of those selecting to close one site is below. 60% of those selecting to close two sites made comments that “it makes sense to me”, for example:

*“better to make coordinated changes now than do it piecemeal”*  
*“To give the council a better chance of balancing their books”*

25% of those who said that they did not mind commented that “it doesn't affect me, or I don't mind”. 17% said that they would like to see as few closures as possible.

### Q10 Comments from respondents selecting "Close one site"

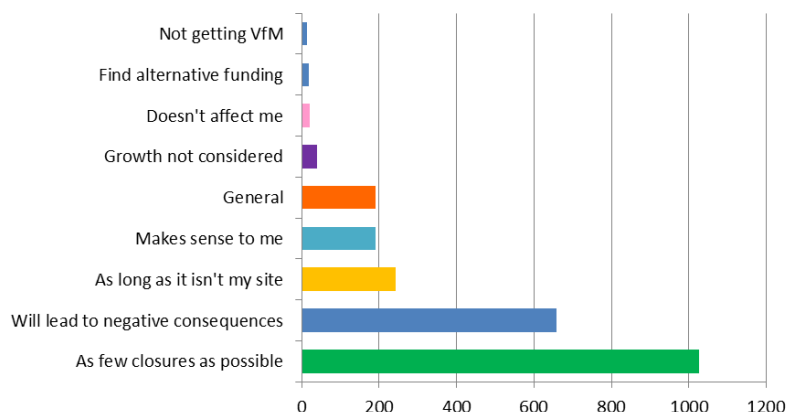


Figure 10

Figure 10 shows the coded<sup>1</sup> comments given by those who selected to close one site. 42.6% of respondents made clear in their comments that they wanted as few closures as possible and 27.4% said that any closures would lead to negative consequences, for example:

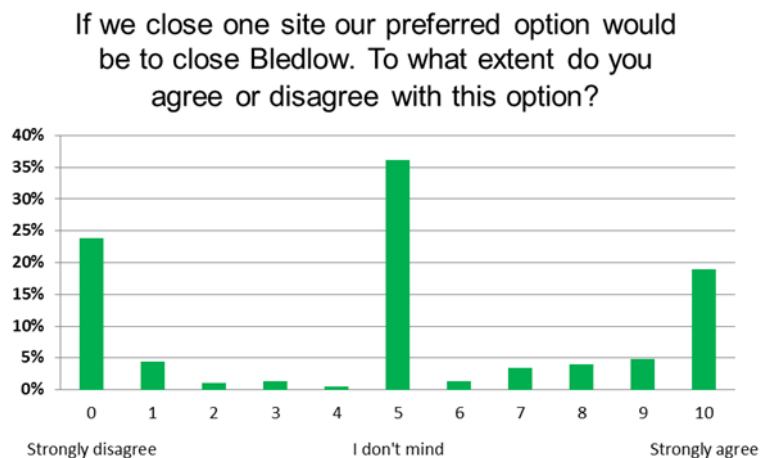
*"would prefer that none are closed"*  
*"will lead to more fly tipping"*  
*"It is the least worst option. However I wish to record that I do not agree with the position that at least one HRC should be closed."*  
*"will make other sites busier"*

Comments made demonstrate that whilst the initial data shows 60% of respondents chose to close one site the general feeling is against closures of any type. In fact, 24% of all comments on this question said they would prefer as few closures as possible. Whilst the question did not allow for an option to keep all sites open, the survey was designed to understand residents' reasons for their choices and the responses have made it clear that if there was a choice to keep all sites open many residents would have selected it.

<sup>1</sup> The coding methodology and examples can be seen in Appendix E

**i. Q12 - If we close one site our preferred option would be to close Bledlow. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this option?**

This questions set out to gather specific feedback on this aspect of the consultation. This will enable the Council to fully understand the impacts on local residents.



**Figure 11**

Figure 11 shows the scored responses to this question. As with question 10, responses from possibly affected sites are very different to responses from other sites. 80% of the responses that strongly disagreed with the option came from users of Bledlow HRC. This shows the strong opposition to possible closure of this site from users of this site. The responses between score 2 and 8 are spread evenly between users of other sites, however, 48% of responses between 9-10 were from users of the Burnham HRC. This again shows the feeling of those affected by possible closures, compared to those who use other sites who “don’t mind”.

**j. Q13 - Please tell us why you made that choice (in response to Q12)**

The comments supplied in response to Q12 above, enforce the results shown above. Of those selecting between a score of 2 and 8, 46% of the comments were that it did not affect them. A further 16% said that the option made sense to them. Of all the responses strongly disagreeing with the option (score 0-1), 56% said that it “negatively affected them”, for example:

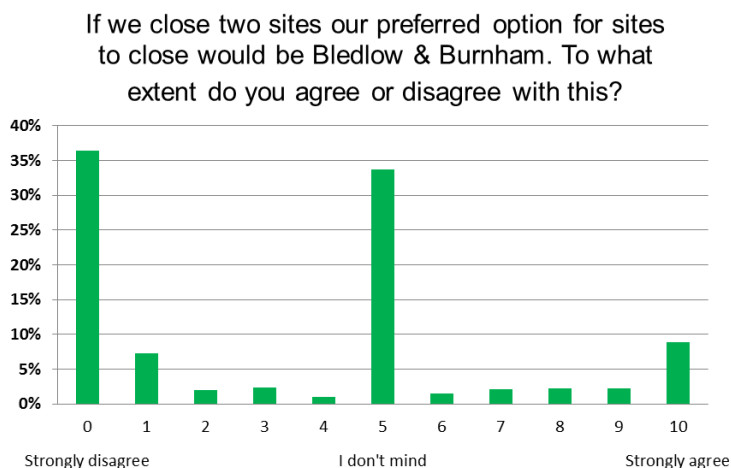
*“It’s my local site, distance to other sites would put me off recycling”*  
*“That is the nearest site to me and would mean I would have to travel over 20 miles radius trip”*  
*“It’s my very local centre and I rely heavily on it to dispose of my garden waste”*  
*“Bledlow ridge is so handy as any other centres are miles away it would be so inconvenient”*

and 16% said it negatively affected the local area, for example:

*“Bledlow provides a service to a rural area of Bucks”.*  
*“It’s our local site meaning we would have to travel further and cause more pollution and traffic as it would force people to all go the next site causing congestion and extra queues at sites”*  
*“people will just dump their waste if they have to go further to dispose of it”*



**k. Q14 - If we close two sites our preferred option for sites to close would be Bledlow & Burnham. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this?**



**Figure 12**

The graph above (figure 12) shows the responses from question 14. It can be seen that there is a drop in those strongly agreeing with the option. Only 11% answered with a score of 9 or 10, to indicate strong agreement, compared to 23.9% in the previous question. As with the previous question, the type of respondent is pertinent to understand the change. Respondents who use Bledlow strongly disagreed with this option as they did with the previous question, but respondents whose usual site is Burnham also expressed strong disagreement to this option. In the previous question they had been supportive of closing Bledlow. The responses with scores between 2 and 8 are evenly spread between usual users of HRCs not affected by possible closures.

**l. Q15 - Please tell us why you made that choice (in response to Q14)**

Of those selecting a score between 2 and 8, 61% said “it didn’t affect them”, 18% said that “it makes sense to me”. As above it is important to fully understand the impacts on and feelings of those who have strongly disagreed with this option. 60% of the comments of those who scored 0-1 said that it negatively affects them, for example:

*“Because I live in the southernmost tip of the County, which would be less convenient travel”*  
*“I do not want to lose Burnham site. It would more than double my journey time to drive to an alternative site.”*  
*“My local site. Much too many rubbish miles to drive to Beaconsfield”*

16% of those scoring either 0 or 1 said that it would negatively affect the local area, for example:

*“Burnham is also in a rural area and next to a nature reserve. It is likely fly tippers would use this as an alternative dumping ground if Burnham was to close”*  
*“If it closed flytipping around the local lanes would increase despite what your consultation says.”*  
*“Think you're having a laugh even considering closing sites with the current housing developments in our area.”*

**m. Q16 - Click here to read about all the things we've looked at during our review. If there are any other realistic options or potential impacts from our proposals that we should consider, please provide details below.**

The key questions asked were designed to understand residents' thoughts on the service, offering free text boxes alongside the quantifiable answers. Question 16 was used to ask residents if there were any other impacts that the consultation and supporting information had not considered, or if there were alternatives to the current options. 3,024 comments were recorded in this question, and as with previous comments, all were read and coded to allow for analysis. The analysis is broken into two sections. Just over half of respondents commented on specific impacts that should be considered, with the remainder highlighting alternatives.

**i. Potential impacts from the proposals that residents stated should be considered**

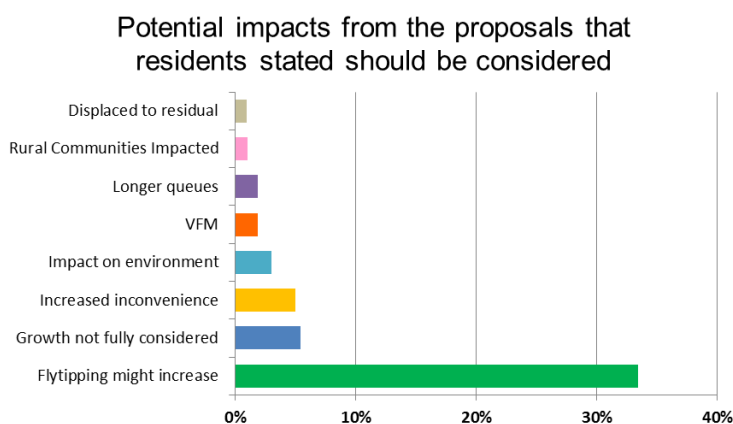


Figure 13

Figure 13 shows the percentage of responses in each coded category. Despite the supporting information addressing possible concerns about increases in fly tipping, the comments across all questions show that it remains the biggest concern and potential impact of the possible options. 33.4% of comments suggested that fly tipping was a concern and that despite the Council's information provided respondents still believed it will be an issue. It must also be noted that respondents' fly tipping concerns are expressed whatever possible change was suggested. Site closures, weekday closures, charging for some types of waste and options for non-Buckinghamshire users all raised concerns about fly tipping. Respondents disagreed with the Council's assertion that HRC provision is not directly linked to fly tipping reductions. Examples of comments received regarding fly tipping are below:

*"Closing the Burnham site is likely to save a small amount but this is likely to be very much reduced by the cost of the fly tipping clear up"*  
*"The open sites will become busy & I fear people will give up trying to dispose of their items & will be more cases of fly tipping from foolish people"*  
*"Charging out of county users may result in people not bothering and them dumping waste on their return journey. This would have a cost impact as bcc would need to collect from hedgerow/country lane etc"*

The strength of feeling around fly tipping should not be underestimated. Of all the coded responses it represented three times more of the comments than any other

suggestion or impact.

Other key comments on possible impacts suggested that the significant growth in Buckinghamshire and reducing service provision are not compatible, for example:

*“All new housing going on, lots more rubbish not enough places to cope with it.”*  
*“The future impact from massive development projects needs to be considered.”*  
*“More housing being built means more waste”*

Respondents also highlighted that the supporting information has not included details on the impact of more journeys to the local and wider environment, for example:

*“Have you considered the impact on the environment of more car journeys to reach sites further away?”*  
*“We should be making recycling easier not harder”*

Responses commenting that there would be an impact on the environment also raised concerns about possible impacts if recycling were made harder. Respondents suggested that residents will not recycle as much if HRCs are closed or opening days reduced, for example:

*“Recycling and the environment are key issues going forwards. If you do not offer satisfactory means of disposal for recyclable items, it will only be deposited in less desirable methods.”*  
*“If you don't make recycling easy then folks won't do it”*

## ii. Other realistic options that residents stated should be considered

Potential impacts from the proposals that residents stated should be considered

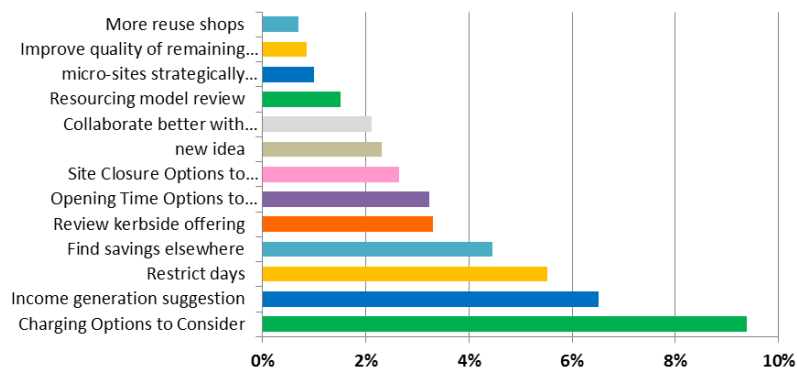


Figure 14

Just under half of the comments for Question 16 were suggestions of alternative options the Council should consider. A key outcome of any consultation should always be the opportunity to look at alternative options. The most frequent comments in this section were regarding finding sources of income to offset the need for HRC reductions, and collectively they made up half of the suggestions for alternative options. Residents suggested charging all users of sites a small fee to keep all sites open:

*“Happy to pay a £1-2 charge per visit to keep it open”*

*"Would prefer an annual license (charged) with proof of residence"  
"I think you charging people from outside Buckinghamshire County Council is a brilliant idea."*

Some comments suggested options that are not legally available, such as charging Buckinghamshire residents entry fees.

Income generation suggestions differ from charging options, as they often involve different Council departments, authorities and central government policies. Suggestions were made that the Council generate income elsewhere to support the current HRC service. Suggestions included:

*"Increase Council tax to cover costs"  
"Press Govt. for realistic financial allocations - waste is a national concern"  
"Increase energy from waste to generate more income"*

The last section of comments suggests the Council find the money elsewhere, often other Council departments, for example:

*"Find savings from elsewhere in the Council e.g. reduce Chief Exec salary, Members luncheons, Stop HS2"  
"Look at wasted spending in other areas such as Social Care"*

Whilst the specifics of the suggestions in each category are different, the tone is the same, i.e. that the service is important and many respondents believe it should be supported through other means.

Other suggestions are based around different models for achieving the savings needed, residents suggested changes to opening hours, opening days, alternative site closures and general changes to the service that may achieve the savings. It is important to note that in all formats of feedback, residents offered similar alternatives, which are detailed below.

### **Close other sites**

Closing other sites was often suggested by respondents who use HRCs affected by possible closures. 2.6% of comments suggested to look to other sites that represent a better option, often based on proximity to other sites, for example:

*"The Amersham and Chesham facilities look to overlap. Why not close one of these?"  
"Shutting various sites for trial periods and evaluate the impact."*

### **Reduce opening hours**

3.2% of suggestions in Question 16 were to reduce hours across the service as a whole to mitigate the need for site closures. Respondents highlighted that having a site available even for fewer hours would be preferable to complete closure, for example:

*"Keep all sites open in some capacity. Reduce opening hours and days for all sites, stagger days so staff can rotate between sites."  
"Reduced hours preferable over losing a service altogether"*

### **Reduce opening days**

5.5% of comments suggested closing on certain days across the service to meet or contribute to the savings needed. As with suggestions about reducing hours, respondents thought that losing opening days at more sites would help meet savings and possibly avoid site closures.

The above specific options were not included in the consultation or supporting information. However, the consultation did state “[The Council] have assessed 50 different options for the service”.

#### n. Demographic questions 17-22

The demographic questions 17-21 were collected to understand potential impacts on different groups of residents. The age of respondents is similar in profile to that of Buckinghamshire as a whole, when residents under 18 are not included. 28.1% of respondents were aged over 65, compared to 23% across Buckinghamshire as whole. Question 19 showed that 11.9% said that their daily activities were ‘limited a little or a lot’ because of a health problem or disability, which is slightly less than the 2011 census, which reported 13.4%. The remaining answers to demographic questions can be seen in [Appendix A](#)

## 9. Summary of all other Feedback

- a. 16 organisations officially responded to the consultation, listed in [Appendix F](#). All but three were Councils, (Parish, Town, District or County) responding on behalf of their residents. Of the three, Princes Risborough Women’s Institute (WI) and the North East Burnham Residents Association (NEBRA) both expressed concern for possible increases in fly tipping in their local areas, if their respective nearest HRCs were to close. NEBRA stated *“It is our view that the closure of the Burnham Centre will lead to a further exacerbation [of the fly tipping problem]”*.

Councils from Neighbouring authorities were broadly supportive of the overall aims. They made clear that they would be concerned if any changes were to impact their residents, specifically Herts County Council’s concern if local residents were stopped from using Buckinghamshire HRCs completely. Slough Borough Council said that they *“would prefer Burnham HRC to remain open but should the outcome of the consultation process conclude that it needs to shut then SBC will continue to work collaboratively with Bucks CC”*.

Parish and Town Councils who responded were worried about the possible impact fly tipping may have on their local community, which echoes residents views in general. Those affected by possible site closures or reductions in weekday opening stated their concern about residents having to drive further across the county, increasing traffic and pollution. Granborough Parish Council stated *“Environmental sustainability will be impacted as people who need to travel to Aylesbury for other reasons on a “closed day” will not be able to combine the trip with use of the HWRC”*.

All four District Councils in Buckinghamshire responded to the consultation (with Chiltern, Wycombe & South Bucks District Councils jointly responding). The relationship with Districts Councils and close links between waste collection and waste disposal are important, so the Council has detailed the key points made in the two letters. There was an expectation that the Council should engage the Districts earlier in the project, and before the official consultation period. In addition, District Officers and Cabinet Members were informed of direction of travel at the Waste Partnership meeting in May 2018.

All four District Councils expressed concern that the potential impacts on collection authorities have not been considered, and changes could affect their budgets and service provision. This was clearest with regard to fly tipping, where Collection Authorities cover the collection costs. Chiltern, Wycombe & South Bucks Districts objected to any site closures or reduced hours and charging for some types of waste, citing possible fly tipping impacts, convenience of residents, environmental impacts and overall cost to their local tax payers.

- b. Drop-in sessions were held by officers and the Cabinet Member for Planning & Environment. They were designed to give residents the opportunity to ask questions about the consultation and help inform their response. The initial events planned were added to throughout the consultation process to ensure there was adequate chance for residents to speak face to face with Council representatives. 755 residents visited the 18 events (this figure does not include elected Members or Council staff).

Common themes were identified from the events, which have been detailed below:

- I. The service is very well used and residents thought highly of the service offered at their local site. There was not much awareness of the network as a whole, with attendees often preferring “their” site to any neighbouring sites.
  - II. Fly tipping is a huge concern to residents, and there is a perception that any changes to the HRC service will make that issue worse. The perceived cost of clearing fly tipping far exceeds the reality, many stating that any saving made will be negated in increased clearance costs. Attendees were clear on their belief that any changes that looked to reduce the HRC network would be detrimental to the local area and the overall budget.
  - III. Public perception was that the decisions have already been made, alongside general comments regarding local government, which highlighted a lack of trust in decision making processes.
  - IV. Residents often cited a lack of publicity about the consultation. There was a perception that the Council could have done more to let people know about events and the consultation in general.
  - V. **Charging for some types of waste:** General opinion was that in the current context of possible site closures and reduction in service, the charging for some types of waste was a pragmatic solution. Attendees wanted confirmation on the wastes that couldn't be charged for and the likely amounts of the charges.
  - VI. **Weekday Closures:** Attendees were concerned about the knock on effect of weekday closures, especially in the towns directly affected, citing traffic on site and possible fly tipping as likely consequences. Attendees understood the reason for Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday being selected, and preferred this option to any site closures.
  - VII. **Non-Buckinghamshire users:** Attendees seemed mixed on this proposal and influenced by the affect options may have locally. For example, those in areas affected by a possible site closure were supportive of charging, often in the view that this would stop the need for a site closure. Many also thought that as council tax is paid across all counties, the services balance each other out and charging is unnecessary.
  - VIII. **Site Closures:** Attendances in areas affected by possible closures was much higher than in other areas. Site closures often dominated events in these areas with many opposed to any closure at all. Attendees regularly asked what other options could be put forward to avoid closures and expressed many of the above concerns if closures were to happen.
- c. A petition was organised in the Princes Risborough area, running from 11<sup>th</sup> September – 22<sup>nd</sup> October, hosted on Change.org, but also placed on the BCC e-petitions page.



Residents also signed paper copies of the petition with 1,285 signatures gathered. In total 4,453 signatures were received (3,168 online). The petition was titled *“Proposed Closure of Bledlow Household Recycling Facility”* with further information stating: *“This petition is to oppose the proposal by Buckinghamshire County Council to close Bledlow Household Recycling Centre facility at Bledlow Ridge. Please lend your support and ask your friends to do the same.”* In addition to the signatures, some signatories provided comments, which are summarised below:

- I. Fly tipping is likely to increase if the site were to be closed  
*“This attempt to cut costs will just mean more fly tipping at greater social and environmental cost”*  
*“We're trying to prevent fly tipping, so how does shutting down a recycling facility help?”*
- II. It is a valuable local resource and well used  
*“Losing this recycling plant would be a huge loss to the community”*
- III. Closing the site would lead to extra travel/congestion  
*“adding to congestion and pollution by having the travel further to recycle and dispose of items appropriately”*
- IV. Extra homes planned in the area would increase the demand for the site  
*“With the vast expansion of PR and surrounding villages it would be a ill time to close the recycling centre here.”*

Another petition was requested via the BCC e-petition webpage a week before the consultation closed. It was rejected on the basis that there was already a petition in place, which would cause duplication. The resident who requested it was informed of the above petition and the Council’s online survey.

- d. Other feedback was received via social media, emails to the Waste Strategy mailbox and letters. The responses, whilst varied, echoed the feedback detailed above, with primary concern for fly tipping in the local area, general opposition to changing a service that is well liked and the likely impact on residents who have to drive further if sites were to close.

The Country Land and Business Association posted an article on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2018 which *“concerns that proposals to close and cut the opening hours of recycling centres, as well as introducing charges for certain items, may lead to an increase in fly-tipping in the Thames Valley area”*. The article can be seen [here](#)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cla.org.uk/events/your-area/south-east/regional-news/closing-and-cutting-opening-hours-recycling-centres-sparks-concerns-over-fly-tipping-buckinghamshire>



## 10. Charging for other types of waste

The Council included details in the consultation of the intention to introduce charges for waste that could be charged for. It included reasons for not consulting directly as per the screenshot below (figure 15):

### Why aren't we consulting on charges?

We cannot make the savings needed without charging for non-household waste. It will reduce our costs by approximately £800,000 every year. The alternative is to permanently close even more sites, which we don't believe is the right thing for residents.

During our review, we have taken on board resident views about charges, which have been taken from our annual customer survey and recent discussion groups. There were mixed views but residents were happier with charges when they understood why they're needed and the scale of savings achievable.

Figure 15

Despite the specific question not being asked, the analysis of the consultation survey results demonstrated the general opposition to charging for some types of waste, and specifically the possible impacts that it may have. As mentioned above, many respondents believed any changes to the HRC service would affect fly tipping in the area and charging for some types of waste is a key factor in this belief, for example:

*“Charging for non- household waste has the capacity to increase fly-tipping irrespective of what you say”*  
*“I strongly believe that charging for certain wastes will increase fly tipping”*  
*“With regard to potentially charging, please consider the unintended consequences. Fly tipping and other forms of illegal disposal of rubbish would likely increase. The cost to the council of clearing illegal tipping could outweigh any charging offset. Furthermore, as articulated already, we should be doing all we can to encourage responsible waste disposal, charging will inevitably have a negative effect”*

Question 16 gave residents the options to suggest other impacts or alternative ideas the council should consider. Further analysis of these responses can show opinion of charging in general at HRCs, see figure 18.

## Q16 Comments which mention charging

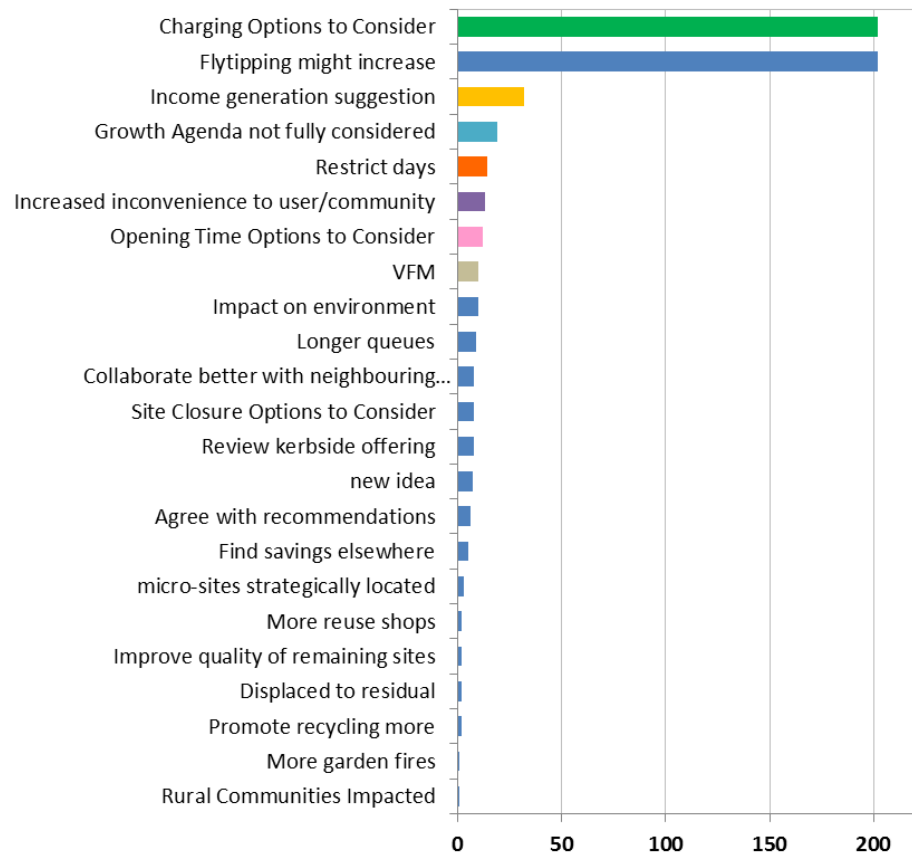


Figure 16

This graph shows the number of comments that included the terms “charging”, “charges” or “charge”. The comments coded as “Charging options to consider” are alternative options suggested to the current options, the majority of the 202 comments listed above suggest some form of charge to offset the need for closures or service reduction. 202 comments were also made about the negative impact charges might have on fly tipping, which mirrors the thoughts in the pre-engagement research.

The data collected in this consultation process, through annual surveys, pre-engagement work and through responses to the eight week consultation make clear that there is no clear majority of support behind charging for some types of waste, the exception being when it is seen as an alternative to site closures or reducing the network. The possible savings achievable do make the option more palatable, but concerns on fly tipping, the implementation of charging and the ability of residents to avoid the charges are key considerations.

## 11. Conclusion

This consultation has received a significant amount of interest and has been widely promoted, leading to a very high response rate to the official survey, public events and online supporting information. The methods used proved to be effective and ensured a significant response to help inform future decisions.

The specifics of each key question and outcomes have been detailed in the main body of the report, but some common themes can be taken from the consultation as a whole.

- a. Possible HRC closures have been the main focus of the consultation responses, and as such many comments are framed through possible HRC closures. A clear message is that residents would prefer no reductions in the service as it stands, and this feeling is strongest when site closures are discussed.
- b. There is a clear view that any change to HRCs will have a negative impact on fly tipping, which is seen as a big problem already in Buckinghamshire. Respondents see the proposed changes as very detrimental to the local and wider environment. Residents considered the costs of clearing fly tipping to be much higher than the reality and as such assume any savings made may not be realised after the assumed increase in fly tipping. Respondents expressed this opinion whether discussing weekday closures, site closures, charging for some types of waste or restricting non-Buckinghamshire users.
- c. Whilst the Council stated that work done prior to the public consultation had investigated alternative methods, respondents still expressed the need to look at other options (specifically the options of reducing opening hours or days across the network to avoid the need for complete site closures).
- d. Wider impacts on residents and the local environment are very important to respondents. The additional travel times to alternative sites are deemed by many to be too far and make recycling harder. The same journeys are believed to have an increased detrimental impact on air quality and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
- e. There is a clear understanding of the need to save money, but analysis of comments suggest many respondents are willing to pay more and/or want the Council to find the money from other sources.

Over 23,000 comments have been reviewed and officers have spoken to hundreds of residents at public events. Whilst it is impossible to quantify, it is clear that the HRC service is seen by residents as an important local service.

## 12. Appendices

- A. Survey results**
- B. Communication plan (inc. Stakeholder list)**
- C. Survey issued**
- D. Ipsos MORI Pre-engagement**
- E. Coding Methodology & Examples**
- F. Organisational responses**

Please note: All 23,000 written free text comments from the consultation are readily available by contacting [democracy@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckscc.gov.uk)