

Appendix 2

Subject: Reuse activities at the KCC Household Waste Recycling Centres

Electoral Division: All divisions

Summary:

Kent County Council (KCC) operates as the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA) and, in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990, provides Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). KCC currently operates a network of 19 HWRCs providing facilities for re-use, recycling, and safe disposal for a range of materials delivered by Kent residents.

This report describes the various reuse opportunities and aspirations to be delivered at the HWRCs. Reuse sits higher in the waste hierarchy than recycling. It is where items are reused in their current state or undergo minor repair or refurbishment in order to be reused, rather than undergoing treatment or reprocessing into new items.

In addition to meeting legislative drivers, there are a number of benefits of increasing reuse, including reduced disposal costs, diversion from recovery, environmental and carbon benefits, maximising value and use of resources, and social value benefits including possible employment, training, reskilling, and support to / partnering with third sector and charity organisations.

It is important to appreciate that re-use may affect recycling rates and income for certain materials or conversely lesser residual waste rates and cost reduction.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Working with the Providers who operate the HWRC under contract to KCC (FCC Environment and Commercial Services Kent Limited), a new programme of reuse activities is being introduced at the HWRCs. This paper describes the various activities already in operation, as well as plans for the introduction of future initiatives.
- 1.2 Typical items that might be captured for reuse at HWRCs may include furniture, bric-a-brac, waste electrical & electronic equipment (WEEE), textiles and bicycles. These waste streams currently contribute to KCC's recycling figures, if they are diverted to reuse, and therefore no longer form part of the waste disposal process, there is the possibility that recycling levels may change as some items are currently recycled.
- 1.3 Options for reuse can include a light touch approach such as directing customers to local charities or online reuse networks, and / or providing containers at HWRCs to segregate specific items for reuse, through to more in-depth approaches such as the provision of reuse shops.
- 1.4 In addition to meeting legislative drivers, there are a number of different benefits of increasing reuse, including; reduced disposal costs, diversion from recovery, environmental and carbon benefits, maximising value and use of resources, and

social value benefits including possible employment, training, reskilling, and support to / partnering with third sector and charity organisations.

- 1.5 There are a number of other considerations including; available budget for development and ongoing running costs, the availability of suitable sites / space for reuse activities, availability of local reuse opportunities, assessing the sustainability of such projects, and the role of KCC, third sector organisations and waste management companies in any reuse activities.
- 1.6 This paper describes the varied opportunities for re-use, which does not necessarily rely upon retail type environments, it therefore provides a reuse service with little overhead costs or the need for immediate capital investment.

2. Reuse Containers

- 2.1 Commencing in October 2022, residents using the Maidstone (Tovil) HWRC are now able to donate good quality furniture for reuse. The furniture reuse project is arranged between KCC and Making A Difference to Maidstone (MADM) charity, which supports individuals and families who find themselves in crisis through homelessness, domestic abuse, addiction, financial need, unemployment, relationship breakdown and more.
- 2.2 Residents are able to deliver furniture to the HWRC, and after being assessed by site staff, reusable furniture items are placed into a dedicated 'reuse container.' MADM will also provide collections upon request. Where residents are unable to deliver furniture to the HWRC (due to size, no transport etc), they can contact MADM who may be able to collect directly from the resident (information is available at the HWRC).
- 2.3 Furniture will then be sold in MADM's shops to raise money for their outreach work, and some will be gifted to local residents in crisis, ensuring items are provided to those who really need them. MADM works with clients based on referrals from social services, probation, housing associations, community wardens, Kent Police, local councils, churches, and others.
- 2.4 In the first 6 weeks of operation alone, over 30 items of good quality furniture were collected, accounting for approximately 660kg in weight. Not only have these items been diverted to reuse from being destined for disposal, but they will also provide a real difference to the individuals that MADM help.
- 2.5 If this 6-month trial proves to be successful, similar initiatives will be introduced at other HWRCs, partnering with other local charities and organisations. The key outcome from this project is the social value benefits to the community. Whilst minimal savings can be made via waste diversion by keeping items out of the waste stream and therefore avoiding disposal costs, this is not the key driver for this project. This is proving to be a positive, and yet low-cost option which is most practical option which yields a variety of benefits.

3. Material specific reuse initiatives

- 3.1 **Bicycles:** Together with FCC Environment, KCC hosted its first ever bike reuse event at the Ashford HWRC, between 15 October and 6 November 22. Customers were able to bring in unwanted or broken bikes that can be repaired and sold on or used for parts. KCC worked with a local Community Interest Company (CIC) called Cycle Circle who collect the bikes from the HWRC and take them back to the workshop to be fixed and sold at affordable prices. Proceeds were used to fund the repair shop, as well as funding the roll out of the re-cycling programme called 'Cycle Community' with many community activities including bicycle training for all ages, as well as workshops for people to learn how to maintain and do simple repairs on their bikes. Across the event, 54 bikes were collected at the HWRC for reuse rather than recycling. It is hoped to provide similar one-off activities at other HWRCs in the network in the coming months.
- 3.2 **Non-electrical medical equipment:** KCC Waste Management and Adult Social Care and Health have teamed up to work in partnership with NRS Healthcare to reuse old and unwanted medical equipment. It is expected the initiative will launch in early 2023. Residents will be able to take their unwanted medical equipment to HWRCs across Kent (participating HWRCs tbc) where there will be a designated storage container for items including walking aids (frames, crutches, and sticks), and anything from grab rails and handles to furniture raisers and wheelchairs. NRS Healthcare will collect, sort, clean and reuse equipment for the benefit of residents.
- 3.3 **Books:** From early 2023, the majority of the HWRCs will be taking part in a book reuse trial. Customers will be able to leave their books for reuse in a dedicated container, rather than placing in the paper and card containers for recycling or in the residual waste bin for energy recovery. The books will be sent to the Precycle Group to be checked for their physical quality, and if condition allows them to be re-read, they will sell to retail and wholesale customers. They also donate books via their literacy programmes to promote reading.

4. **Pop-up reuse shops**

- 4.1 Again, led by FCC, items which can be reused, are currently being collected at Canterbury, Herne Bay, and Margate HWRCs, to then be sold at a pop-up reuse shop in Canterbury in early 2023, close to the university. The initial trial of pop-up reuse shops is being run in partnership with the Pilgrims Hospice appeal.

5. **Next steps**

Due to current financial pressures, some reuse projects have had to be put on hold. Most notably the proposal to introduce a permanent reuse shop / facility at the Allington HWRC. A shop is not possible at this time as forward capital funding is unavailable, the Allington HWRC will be a prime site to introduce other, more affordable reuse projects in the coming months, which are being considered. The waste service has developer contribution agreements that may be able to fund this provision in the years to come, however, not currently at levels enough to cover costs.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The container used for the furniture reuse trial at Tovil HWRC was already available on site so the only set-up cost was for signage. If the pilot scheme is successful, the cost to extend the scheme to other sites will be limited to containers (where not already available) and signage.
- 6.2 FCC ran the bike reuse event and are leading on the pop-up reuse shops as part of their contractual commitments to reuse / education / and social value, so no cost to KCC.
- 6.3 The costs associated with the medical equipment reuse scheme i.e., containers and collection will be provided by NRS Healthcare.
- 6.4 There are minimal financial benefits to the Authority associated with the reuse activities described in this paper, rather the primary aim of the activities is to realise the many social and environmental benefits. To put the financial benefits into perspective, there is an estimated costs avoidance of circa £100 per tonne, in saved disposal costs for items that are reused, which by way of example when applied to the first 6 weeks of the furniture trial at Tovil, would have resulted in a saving of approximately £66 in disposal cost avoidance.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 KCC is the statutory Waste Disposal Authority (WDA) for the county. There has been a duty on the WDA to provide HWRCs since the Civic Amenity Act 1967. The duty is now embodied within section 51 of the Environmental Protection act 1990.
- 7.2 Within the Waste Regulations 2011, it is a requirement for any business or public body that produces or handles waste materials or products to take reasonable measure to apply the waste hierarchy, which gives priority to preparing waste for re-use, then recycling, then recovery, and last of all disposal (e.g., landfill).

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 All waste operations undertaken at the KCC HWRCs, are subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment, and as such reuse trials and initiatives form part of these overall operations.

Other corporate implications

- 8.2 Delivering reuse initiatives at the HWRCs has no negative implications on other areas of the Council's work. It does, however, have the potential to create opportunities for joint working with other areas, for example Adult Social Care and Health as demonstrated with the medical equipment reuse project.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 In accordance with the Waste Regulations, KCC strives to move waste higher up the hierarchy where possible and practical to do so. A whole host of reuse activities have been introduced as pilot / trial projects at the HWRCs.
- 9.2 Whilst costs for development and ongoing running costs, along with space limitations at many of the HWRCs need to be carefully considered, the projects described in this paper, are all options that overcome these issues.
- 9.3 There is a real emphasis on the social and environmental benefits that delivering projects of this nature can bring. KCC will continue to build upon these initial trials to increase the reuse offering to its customers, whilst delivering benefits to the wider population of Kent.

10. Contact details

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