

From: Susan Carey, Cabinet Member for Environment
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 5 July 2023

Subject: Household Waste Recycling Centre Review

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee
– 23 May 2023

Electoral Division: Whole County

Summary: This report provides an update on the preparation of the consultation document on proposals for budgeted cost savings required to be delivered for 2023/24 and 2024/25 through consideration of the number and operation of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs).

The report also provides the Committee with an update on the recent announcement from Environment Minister Rebecca Pow to prohibit Authorities charging for non-household waste materials at the HWRCs and the likely resultant impact on the service.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and measures planned to obtain public and stakeholder views on the proposals to meet budgeted cost savings required for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Further to the recommendation from the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 23 May 2023 to the Cabinet Member for Environment, an Informal Member Group (IMG) was created to consider in more detail the review of the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), which is taking place to deliver a budgeted cost saving of £1.5m across 2023/24 and 2024/25. All Members of the Committee were invited to attend a series of three meetings held in June.
- 1.2 In addition to those above, the medium-term financial plan already requires savings to be delivered by HWRC operations of £700k, through greater waste material segregation for recycling, increased reuse, black bag splitting to prevent materials going into residual waste and increasing trade waste recycling.
- 1.3 At the IMG meetings, details regarding the financial savings that could be achieved from service reduction and/or site closures were discussed in detail, the methodology for selecting sites for potential closure was set out and alternative ideas for delivering the required level of savings were debated.

1.4 The meetings then considered the information that will form part of the consultation pack and the questions that will be asked.

2. Potential full site closures

2.1 In terms of the methodology for selecting sites for potential closure, appendix 1 shows the off-peak drive times to each site and shows the four 'zones' where there are sites in close proximity where closures could be considered.

2.2 Following the IMG discussions, it was felt that given the finely balanced nature of the modelling work for each zone, it would be useful to seek the views of residents and stakeholders on sites that are relatively close to each other and could both deliver the required level of savings.

2.3 With further consideration of usage levels, the consultation will seek views on the potential closure of either the Dartford or Swanley site in the west of the county, and either the Richborough or Deal site in the east. The proposal to close the sites at Maidstone and Faversham remain due to the close proximity of a site that is co-located with a transfer station.

2.4 As a result, the following four options will be consulted upon;

- Option 1: Closure of Faversham, Maidstone (Tovil), Dartford and Richborough
- Option 2: Closure of Faversham, Maidstone (Tovil), Dartford and Deal
- Option 3: Closure of Faversham, Maidstone (Tovil), Swanley and Deal
- Option 4: Closure of Faversham, Maidstone (Tovil), Swanley and Richborough

2.5 Full analysis of the impact upon the wider HWRC network will be documented and provided as part of the information provided within the consultation pack.

3. Update of new legislative burdens

3.1 On Sunday 18 June, without notice to local authorities, DEFRA issued a press release on behalf of Environment Minister, Rebecca Pow to prohibit Authorities from charging for non-household waste materials at HWRCs. Government has also made it clear that local authorities will not receive new burdens funding resulting from this decision. A charging policy was endorsed by this Committee in 2019, prior to the decision being taken by the Cabinet Member. Government intends to make the required changes to the Controlled Waste Regulations 2012 later this year.

3.2 This matter was discussed at the third meeting of the IMG, where it was explained that this will create further financial pressures of c.£1m per annum and an additional 10% increase in visits to the HWRCs. Whilst the Service is of the view that sufficient capacity within a reduced network can be met, this creates an unbudgeted financial pressure to the county council.

3.3 Given the increased demands, it is no longer recommended that multiple sites should be considered for a two-day mid-week closure as an alternative to a permanent site closure. This would result in the overall booking capacity of the HWRC network being reduced to an unsustainable level.

3.4 This change means that further savings may be required from the network in future years, in addition to the £1.5m savings required over the next two years.

3.5 It is important to note this proposal is primarily intended to deliver the financial savings required, with the least impact to residents who utilise the service.

4. Consultation timeline

4.1 As a result of the further discussions at the IMG, together with the recent announcement by Government on the abolition of charges for non-household waste, this has required additional modelling to be undertaken.

4.2 The IMG have had sight of and commented on a previous iteration of the draft consultation document, and a number of amendments were made in light of discussions at these meetings.

4.3 The consultation is planned to be at the end of the month and will run for a period of ten weeks.

5. Recommendation(s):

5.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and measures planned to obtain public and stakeholder views on the proposals to meet budgeted cost savings required for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

6. Contact details

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