

New opening times for the Salisbury Waste and Recycling Centre

Dear Councillor Dalton

I refer to your e-mail of 8 September regarding the reservations of Salisbury Area Board about revised opening times for the Churchfields Recycling Centre.

Many of the problems initially resulted from residents arriving at the site from 09:00 and deciding to wait until 10:00 for the gates to open. Despite the work we had done to notify people of the new opening times, some residents were not aware.

We have monitored vehicle movements at the household recycling centres for some time.

This data informed the decisions on opening hours and days at each site. We have compared the vehicle numbers from the first weekend of the new opening hours to the numbers of visits to Churchfields for the same weekend last year. In 2014, on the Saturday, 580 vehicles visited the site over a period of 11 hours. On the Sunday the number was 538 over the same period. On the first weekend with the opening hours reduced to six from 10:00 to 16:00, 692 vehicles visited on Saturday and 786 on Sunday. We had a very busy weekend coinciding with the first weekend of the new opening hours.

We are continuing to monitor this. Last weekend 550 vehicles visited Churchfields on Saturday and 565 on Sunday, so the numbers are reducing.

We will continue to monitor this and have been working with the Communications team to provide information for local media. The Salisbury Journal has covered this issue and myself and Councillor Wickham have been interviewed by local radio stations. Although there is some criticism in the coverage, hopefully this has helped us to communicate the changes to residents. In the meantime we continue to monitor use of the sites and any ongoing queuing issues. We hope that residents will become aware of the quieter times to visit the sites so we manage the traffic issues down over time. The Portfolio Holder for Waste has visited the sites to investigate and we are continually reviewing the situation.

Wiltshire Council currently spends around £900 million each year on more than 350 services. Changing demographics, such as people living longer, coupled with inflation and ongoing cuts in funding from central government mean significant savings need to be found.

Last year the council received £119 million from the Government – this year it will get £103.8 million. This cut of more than £15 million, combined with the rise in demand for some key front line services and inflation costs, means the council needs to find a further £30 million of savings this financial year. Unfortunately due to the budget situation the council faces we have been forced to consider savings from all council services. This includes making £300,000 savings from reviewing household recycling centre opening hours.

In order to make these savings the council took into consideration information on how many people visit the sites each day to ensure that the sites are open when the majority of residents use the service. A summary of this information is attached. This shows that sites were busiest on Saturday, Sunday and Monday and therefore all of the household recycling centres remain open on these days.

Each site is also open on a further two days during the week. The pattern of opening days has been designed to ensure there is always one site available locally for residents, for example, if Salisbury was closed then Amesbury would be open. In addition, swapping full waste containers for empty ones is being done, wherever possible, on the days when sites are closed.

## New opening times for the Salisbury Waste and Recycling Centre

From the end of May we have actively promoted the service changes to Wiltshire residents and encouraged residents to check the new opening times of their local household recycling centres. We have issued press releases and website updates, put up signs and provided information leaflets at each household recycling centre.

The reduced opening hours mean increased pressure on the sites when they are open, however, we have tried to utilise the information available to reduce the impact of the changes where possible. We are continuing to monitor the use of the sites and the associated impact of the changes, and are considering a series of measures to relieve the pressure on the sites. These include the following.

- A number of charities have discretionary passes to use household recycling centres. These organisations often use larger vehicles and can take a considerable period of time to unload. As these passes are discretionary we have contacted all the charities concerned to tell them to take their waste direct to the transfer station at Amesbury.
- We are working with our contractor, Hills, to discuss options for improving traffic management within the sites. In the short term this may require employment of additional staff. We will also work with Hills to review the layout of the sites to see if anything could be changed to improve access and the traffic flow through the sites. A member of staff now assists with traffic management at the busiest times at Churchfields to maintain vehicle movement into and out of the site. This is particularly useful at this site where the layout means that drivers may not be able to see when spaces become available at the upper level.
- Household recycling centres are for the use of residents to dispose of their own waste. The sites are not licensed to accept waste from businesses. Enforcement Officers are attending sites to advise those businesses that may not be aware, that they shouldn't take their business waste to recycling centres and to inform them of the arrangements they need to put in place to manage their waste lawfully.
- We continue to review the messages we put out through the media, reminding people of the new opening time of 10:00 and advising residents to visit sites during quieter periods where possible.

We would like to remind residents that they should make use of their kerbside recycling services as much as possible. Any resident could request additional blue lidded bins and black boxes for recycling a wide range of materials through kerbside collections. They could also sign up for the kerbside garden waste collection service rather than queue to deliver these materials to a household recycling centre. Alternatively, the council offers residents subsidised food waste digesters which will also compost garden waste. This is a good alternative to paying for a collection or taking garden waste to the household recycling centre and it creates great compost to use at home. The digester is called a green Johanna and is currently priced at £25, including free delivery. More information can be found at – <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/home-composting>

I hope this explains how we are aiming to relieve the pressure on the household recycling centres but if there is anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards

Toby Sturgis  
Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management,  
Strategic Housing, Property, Waste