

**Wiltshire Council**

**Environment Select Committee**

**13 September 2016**

---

**Final Report of the Waste Service Changes Task Group**

**Purpose of the report**

1. To present the findings and recommendations of the task group for endorsement by the committee and referral to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Operational Property and Waste for response.

**Background**

2. On 27 October 2015 the Environment Select Committee asked the Waste Group Task Group to investigate the impact of reduced Household Recycling Centres' hours and traffic management issues and to investigate the impact of the new green waste collection service particularly in relation to fly-tipping.
3. The Waste Service Changes task group was approved by the OS Management Committee in September 2015 with a remit to look at the impact of changes to HRCs and implementation of garden waste fees.
4. On 17 November 2015 the chair of the Waste Communications Task Group and the Senior Scrutiny Officer met with the Associate Director for Waste and Environment to discuss the task group's remit and approach. From this draft terms of reference were created.

**Terms of reference**

5. The following terms of reference for the task group were endorsed by the Environment Select Committee on 12 April 2016:
  - i. To consider the impact of changes to Household Recycling Centre (HRC) locations and opening times on:
    - a. Volume of waste received and recycled
    - b. Incidences of fly-tipping
    - c. Customer experience
  - ii. To consider the impact of the introduction of fees for garden waste collections on:
    - a. garden waste recycling rates
    - b. residual waste volumes
    - c. incidences of fly-tipping.

- iii. To monitor implementation of the council's Mobilisation Plan preparing for the commencement in August 2017 of new contracts for waste collection and HRCs.

### **Membership**

6. The task group comprised the following membership:  
Cllr Jose Green (Chair)  
Cllr Pat Aves  
Cllr Rosemary Brown  
Cllr Peter Evans  
Cllr Mollie Groom  
Cllr Jacqui Lay

### **Methodology**

7. The task group received initial evidence from the following witnesses:

#### Wiltshire Council witnesses:

Tracy Carter	Associate Director for Waste and Environment
Martin Litherland	Head of Waste Management
Jo Riley	Waste Management Team Leader
Sandra Truscott	Waste Management Officer
Peter White	Enforcement Manager
Cllr Toby Sturgis	Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Operational Property and Waste
Cllr Alan Macrae	Portfolio Holder for Waste

#### External witnesses:

Henry Newbery	Hills Waste Management
Danny Everson	Hills Waste Management

The Task Group is grateful to all witnesses for giving their time to contribute to this scrutiny review.

8. The following written evidence was received by the task group:
  - Household Recycling Centre Data 2014/15 and 2015/16
  - Garden Waste Collection Data 2014/15 and 2015/16
  - Fly-Tipping Data 2010-2016
  - Wiltshire Council Mobilisation Plan Briefing and Summary
9. The task group performed visits to the following Household Recycling Centres within Wiltshire:
  - i. Churchfields Industrial Estate, Salisbury,
  - ii. Trowbridge,

iii. Warminster.

The aims of the meetings were to gather evidence of existing resident engagement arrangements outside of Wiltshire Council in order to learn from particular areas of good practice within the organisations, and to note any improvements which had been performed regarding engagement methods and the lessons which had been learnt from them.

Task group members also carried out informal visits to HRC's as follows:

Cllr Pat Aves – Melksham Bowerhill  
Cllr Rosemary Brown – Trowbridge  
Cllr Peter Evans – Devizes Industrial Estate  
Cllr Jacqui Lay – Purton

10. The Task Group met nine times with the aims of each meeting demonstrated in the table below:

Date of meetings	Item / topic
25 Nov	Scoping
03 Feb	Household Recycling Centres
17 Feb	Garden Waste Collection
	Visit to HRC's:
29 Feb 10.30am	Churchfields (Salisbury) site
07 March	Trowbridge & Warminster sites
31 March	HRC Visit Wash-up and Wiltshire Council Mobilisation Plan
15 April	Interim Report Meeting
26 May	Meeting with Enforcement Officers
22 July	Final Report

## Key Findings

### Household Recycling Centres (HRCs)

11. Figures provided to the task group from 2014 demonstrated that all HRC site usage was at its highest on Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays. Usage by hour was at its highest between 10am – 4pm. The new opening times were designed to reflect these findings. HRC's had been assessed to establish when usage was lowest and they were then closed on these days. All HRC's remained open on the three busiest days (Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays). The closures

were staggered in order to allow residents to always access a site within a distance of 15 miles.

**New HRC operating times - effective 13 July 2015**

Hub	Site	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
West	Trowbridge	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓
	Melksham	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Warminster	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
North	SSQ	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓
	Purton	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Honeyball	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
East	Devizes	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓
	Everleigh	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
	Marlborough	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
South	Salisbury	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓
	Amesbury	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓

HRCs available	11	7	4	4	7	11	11
	100%	64%	36%	36%	64%	100%	100%

12. During member's visits to Wiltshire HRC's it was made clear that some residents were still unclear on the new opening times. Reports were heard of residents turning up at sites on closure days, with some abandoning their waste at the HRC gates. It was noted that these incidents were decreasing. Data received by the task group indicated that only three incidents of fly-tipping had been experienced outside HRC's (all were black-bag sized drops located at the Devizes HRC).
13. Further changes to HRC opening hours could be achieved through a variation of contract, which was described as a simple process. However, it would be challenging to implement the seven day HRC opening hours due to difficulties finding funding in the available budget. In order to deliver staffing levels which allow the HRC's to be well run and provide satisfactory levels of assistance to residents a five day opening schedule needed to be maintained.
14. During visits to HRC's members spoke with several members of the public. These were generally satisfied with many aspects of the HRC's, including layout, staffing levels and helpfulness and the new opening times. It was noted however that some residents were unaware of which days the HRC's were now closed.
15. Since the service change in July 2015 a total of 68 official complaints had been received regarding HRCs up until the end of January 2016.
16. Documentation from the Purton Liaison Committee included details on compliments and complaints regarding the Purton HRC. Compliments related to the quality of work performed by staff members and the cleanliness of the site. Complaints focused on waiting times, queueing, and the new opening hours.

17. Incidents of queueing prior to HRC sites opening were experienced in varying levels during the period September 2015 – January 2016, as indicated by data received by the task group. The levels varied from no queues to queues of 65 cars. Members heard at site visits that queues at the Salisbury site often stretched down the road leading up to the HRC, blocking entrances to local businesses.
18. In a survey all HRC staff members were asked what they would improve if the sites could be completely redesigned. The answers focused on a reconfiguration of the sites and the reworking of signage.
19. The development or redevelopment of a HRC could receive funding from the community infrastructure levy (CIL) through being added to the Regulation 123 list, which lists projects which may potentially receive CIL funding.
20. Instances of potential “sign blindness” were noted where too many signs were placed around the site, leading to customers ignoring them. A large sign was placed at the entrance of each HRC detailing what materials could be recycled, however it was noted that this information ideally needed to be known by the customer prior to their arrival, particularly materials such as asbestos which needed to be pre-arranged with the HRC staff before disposal.
21. As witnessed on site by task group members, the identification of potential commercial waste disposal is the responsibility of HRC staff. They are required to identify any customer or vehicle which may be attempting to dispose of commercial waste. This can be made through identifying a van with a company logo, or that a customer’s waste appears mainly to comprise of a material which would be produced by a commercial job. The customer may then be asked to fill in a paper “trade waste disclaimer form” by staff. The form declares that what they are disposing is household waste and will be held responsible if it is later found to be commercial. This was seen to be a time consuming process for HRC staff and the customer, and as such exacerbated the queueing at the site.
22. The task group was informed about the free van permit scheme whilst it was being investigated for potential implementation in Wiltshire. The scheme had previously been introduced by the Borough of Poole and required permits for van users depositing household waste at HRC’s. The scheme was signed off for implementation in Wiltshire by the Cabinet Member on 14th July with implementation scheduled for the 4th September. Users would be able to apply for a free permit online, by phone, or post with proof of their household van or hire van, and would be limited to twelve HRC visits per year. It was noted that Poole had not experienced an increase in fly-tipping since the scheme’s introduction. As part of the Poole scheme a member of staff was employed to provide general guidance to customers whilst checking for valid permits.

### Garden Waste Collection

23. Garden waste collection charges were introduced in June 2015 for an annual fee of £40. Bins were emptied fortnightly except for two weeks over the

Christmas and New Year holiday period. Current take-up of the garden waste collection scheme is at 80,000 customers. At this level the scheme is a self-funding service. A target to retain 90% of subscribers, with the expectation to obtain more new sign-ups, was in place to ensure that this figure could be maintained and that the service would remain self-funding.

24. The total tonnage of garden waste collected had dropped between May and October 2015 (chargeable service starting in June 2015) before matching the previous year's statistics in November and December 2015. It was noted that with garden waste there would be other factors along with the new charges influencing the amount of garden waste produced by residents, including weather conditions that year.
25. A total of 1900 unwanted garden waste bins were collected by Wiltshire Council. Those bins collected were either reissued or auctioned off to bin manufacturers, dependant on their model. The cost of collection for the 1900 bins was £14,301. It was noted that it was more cost efficient to encourage bin owners to retain their bins regardless of whether or not they intended to sign up to the garden waste collection service.
26. There remained 51,500 garden waste bins in circulation which were not signed up to the collection service. Promotion for these unused bins included encouraging residents to retain the bins for other uses (e.g. composting) regardless of whether they signed up to the service.
27. Residents who were currently subscribed to the garden waste service would receive a unique reference number via email. The number could be used to easily re-subscribe to the service. It was hoped that this would provide an increase in repeat subscriptions. The service was also promoted through a flyer circulated with residents' Council Tax bill, a method which would be repeated.
28. It was noted that the chargeable garden waste collection was a service which could not be automatically included as part of a resident's total council tax bill. This was because residents were required to be given the option of refusing the service. There were many strict restrictions on what could and could not be included within a council tax bill.
29. Residents weren't immediately advised to take garden waste to their local HRC as an alternative to signing up to the collection scheme. However it was given as a response to any direct queries and listed online as an option. Promotion focused mainly on composting as the best alternative to collection.
30. Wiltshire Council had teamed up with Great Green Systems to offer discounted rates for two food digesters: a hot composter (Green Johanna) and a standard food digester (Green Cone). The total number of food digesters sold by Wiltshire Council in 2015 had increased on previous years. Data showed a decrease in the number sold since the introduction of garden waste fees in June until the end of 2015.

## Fly Tipping



The above photos depict two examples of fly tipping in Wiltshire: commercial (left) and green (right).

31. Household waste remained the biggest single material of fly-tips. In 2014/15 this reached over 900 incidents, with over 700 in the year to date for 2015/16. Overall, the size of the fly tips indicated that most were of a commercial nature e.g. 'Man with a Van' offering to remove household waste for cash. Fly-tipping of household waste however remained a serious factor.
32. In total there had been an increase in fly-tipping incidents reported during the months where data was available for the 2015/16 year (table below). As of the start of the chargeable garden waste service a sharp spike had been experienced in the incidences of "green type" fly-tipping during the summer period July – September 2015. This reduced to average levels by November 2015.

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
2014/15	178	163	164	194	148	173
2015/16	211	203	177	184	276	211

Total fly-tipping incidents reported, 2010 – 2016 (extract).

33. Data from 2010-2016 demonstrated that green waste tips made up a small portion of the total fly-tip incidents (around 10%). Since the introduction of garden waste collection charges there had been an increase to 14.9%, however green-type tips still constituted a small portion. The largest incidents of fly-tipping remained various types of commercial waste, which should not be disposed of at HRCs.
34. The majority of green waste fly-tipped is of a volume too large to fit into a household green waste bin. This trend matches commercial waste being the most common type of fly-tip as loads of this size would need to be disposed of through a process other than the green waste bin. The most common load sizes were either a small van or a transit load size. Fly-tips of single black bags and single items constituted 15% of fly-tips in 2015/16, with fly-tips of a small van load or larger making up 64%. The remaining 21% came from car boot loads or smaller.

35. Waste could be generated from a household but if a contractor has been employed to carry out work or to remove waste from a property the household waste becomes commercial.
36. With regards to fly-tipped hazardous waste material, asbestos was the highest in report terms.
37. It was noted that due to the nature of those who fly-tip the best way to prevent many was through catching and prosecuting. However problems were noted where many witnesses were unwilling to put their name on a statement to assist in the prosecution of offenders.
38. Regarding public “naming and shaming” of fly-tippers a few methods were already active. Prosecution numbers for fly-tipping were available through the council’s citizen’s dashboard website. Press releases were also sent out in the cases of successful prosecution.
39. The number of prosecutions for fly-tipping cases remained small, with only one during the period April 2015 – February 2016. However fixed penalty notices (FPNs) were also used as a deterrent when a fly-tipper was caught. A total of 31 had been issued during the same time period. The fixed penalty notice could be used as an instant punishment which deters the individual from offending again. The new provisions for FPNs provide for a fine of not less than £150 and not more than £400.
40. A mobile covert camera system was in use which could be deployed across Wiltshire. Camera operations required approval from the Magistrates Court for usage at no cost for the process. The current system had been deployed since May 2016. Successes had been experienced with similar covert cameras kits previously. The price for each fully equipped camera unit was £3200.
41. Manpower was currently available for the use and operation of further camera units.
42. Signage could be installed in areas where camera recording was active. However, signs were generally not used due to the covert nature of the system. There was also no requirement to place signage in areas under surveillance.

#### Mobilisation Plan

43. The task group received a briefing on the mobilisation plan for lots 1-4 and lot 5 of the waste services contract. Timetables detailing key milestones were provided to the members. The deadline for Hills to submit the final service delivery plan, exit plan, and business continuity and disaster recovery was set for the end of April 2017.
44. Updates were offered to the task group to allow members to monitor the process of the delivery of the plan.

#### **Conclusions**



## Household Recycling Centres (HRC)

45. During visits to HRC's it was felt that signage could be improved in a number of ways. Churchfields HRC in Salisbury was particularly noted as having inadequate signage to direct users to the relevant disposal area for each material classification. Signs located at HRC entrances and exits were noted as needing to be carefully selected to avoid incidences of "sign blindness": where there are too many or irrelevant signs and residents take no notice of them.
46. It is important to ensure householders are aware of their own responsibility to check that anyone they employ to remove their waste is in possession of the appropriate license to legally dispose of their waste. This is in order to avoid situations where people are paid to take away waste and then illegally dispose of it through fly-tipping or disposal at HRC's.
47. HRCs needed to be clearly promoted as only being available for the disposal of *household* waste. The distinction between commercial and household waste and the routes available for the disposal of both needed to be made clear to customers.
48. When residents are performing home improvements which create large quantities of waste it would be beneficial to ensure that they are aware of the various means the waste created can be disposed of, such as the hiring of a skip.
49. It was observed during visits that staff members at HRCs were a valuable source of information for customers and worked well to direct them efficiently through the site, provide advice and general assistance. This could be improved by ensuring that public are aware of who staff members are through clearly labelled high-visibility jackets which indicate that staff are there to assist.
50. HRC's helped build awareness of recycling through connections to local charities such as the Repair Academy, which collected white goods left at HRC's to provide education in repairs. Further connections would continue to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and help increase recycling awareness.
51. Waste at HRCs which is sorted and distributed by residents into the various recyclable bins does not get sent to landfill. As such it is important that residents are aware of this so that waste which could be sorted and recycled is not black-bagged with general waste and disposed of into the general waste bin.
52. Further promotion should include ensuring that the public are aware of the waste hierarchy "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recovery", and the various recycling opportunities available which would avoid the need for visiting HRCs. These include materials which many residents are unaware can be collected from the kerbside for recycling and the use of mini recycling centres or "bring

bank sites”, of which there are 8 council-provided sites located across the county.

53. The introduction of the van permit scheme, scheduled for implementation on 4<sup>th</sup> September, is expected to create a system which helps address the number of incidents of disposal, or attempted disposal, of commercial waste at HRCs.

#### Garden Waste Collection

54. Information on the continued progress with the changes or promotion of waste collection should be communicated to communities across Wiltshire. Area Boards were noted as a useful function for the communication and continued promotion of recycling or encouraging the uptake of garden waste collection, as it acted as route into parish and town councils. Other alternate forms of communication could be found through social media, parish magazines and newsletters, and the MyWiltshire system.
55. The Wiltshire Council website was a valuable source of information for providing information on alternatives to the garden waste collection, such as HRCs and home composting.
56. Alternative forms of disposal for green waste should be effectively communicated to residents through the variety of communication routes open to the council.
57. It was important to ensure that when advising residents to engage in composting as an alternative to the garden waste collection that they are aware of or directed to instructions on the process of composting. Those who are not signed up to the garden waste collection service and also do not have unused garden waste bins should be offered the option to buy a Green Johanna hot composter and/or a Green Cone food waste digester.
58. It was noted that the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, part-funded by Wiltshire Council, performed work around waste, recycling, and education for children. This link with the Trust builds awareness on how to and the benefits of composting.

#### Fly-Tipping

59. Whilst household waste comprised of the largest single type of fly-tip, it should be noted that whilst the material may be sourced from households it could have potentially been collected and tipped by contractors without waste transfer licences or were avoiding paying the cost of disposal at a waste transfer site. Therefore this would classify it as commercial waste.
60. Householders who allowed the unlicensed removal of waste were also responsible for the crime of any fly-tipping conducted with their collected waste. As such it is important to advertise this fact along with the need for anyone taking away waste to be in possession of a Waste Carrier's License and to also declare where their waste will be disposed, such as an authorised waste disposal site.

61. The most effective forms of deterrent were fines (either FPNs or fines resulting from prosecutions); as such these should be promoted in order to raise awareness of how many have been successfully issued to fly-tippers.
62. Potential fly-tippers could also be deterred from illegally dumping waste by others being caught in the act. Hence “naming and shaming” and publishing press releases after all successful prosecutions would help as a deterrent.
63. Links with the Highways team, area boards, and parishes would provide closer working with the areas where fly-tipping is worst. Awareness could be spread to the localities where fly-tipping is taking place in order to promote monitoring by communities and to deter or catch fly-tippers in the act.
64. The previous success of covert camera units in Wiltshire demonstrates that the purchasing of further camera units would reduce incidents of fly-tipping.
65. Incidents of fly-tipping should be reported to the Council through the use of the My Wiltshire system. The report creates an issue which can be tracked through the use of a mobile smartphone or other device.
66. Asbestos along with certain other materials commonly fly-tipped can be disposed of at 3 HRC sites subject to prior arrangement with the centre, provided they are disposed of by the householder who produced the waste and not by a commercial operator. Householders need further guidance on this and to be made aware of all materials that can be accepted at the HRC's and the process required for disposal. Better communication and advertising would be advantageous.
67. Investigation into the possibility for parish councils to provide a form of community disposal, such as hiring a subsidised skip or compactor lorry would help provide a form of local amnesty to residents to dispose of waste some of which may have been fly-tipped. This reflects a previous scheme performed by Salisbury District Council.

### **Proposal**

68. To endorse the report of the Task Group and refer it to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Operational Property and Waste for response at the Committee's next meeting.

### **Recommendations**

#### **The Task Group recommends that the Cabinet Member:**

- 1. That the council ensures that a minimum of 11 HRC's are retained and operational.**

- 2. To acknowledge that the advantages of reduced opening hours at HRCs include providing time for HRC staff to remove and replace full waste containers.**
- 3. For the council to monitor the usage of HRC sites in the future in order to determine whether the new opening times are fit for purpose and capable of coping with the demand.**
- 4. To explore the possibility of funding a redevelopment of the Churchfields depot through the CIL by placing it on the Regulation 123 list; and for consideration to be given to using CIL to fund the development of any new HRCs.**
- 5. For any future HRC site development or redevelopment to take into account proximity to businesses in order to avoid incurring negative impacts from the HRC site.**
- 6. To ensure that all signage at HRCs is appropriately chosen to ensure that customers are well guided through the site, and that the number and type of signs at entrances and exits avoids creating “sign blindness”.**
- 7. To install “percentage recycled” signs at all HRC’s, as demonstrated at Warminster HRC, and to expand the statistics to illustrate the savings achieved as a result of recycling.**
- 8. To provide relevant HRC workers with high visibility jackets which clearly state that they are able to assist customers with queries.**
- 9. To support the implementation of the Van Permit Scheme in Wiltshire scheduled for 4<sup>th</sup> September to reduce the number of small businesses illegally disposing of commercial waste at Wiltshire HRCs.**
- 10. To improve current and further links with companies and charities, such as the Repair Academy link with HRCs to improve the recycling of bulky goods which can be repaired or reused.**
- 11. To promote “bring bank sites” and awareness of the items which they are able to accept to help reduce the demand on HRCs and prevent potential fly-tipping.**
- 12. To create a communication strategy that raises public awareness of what can and cannot be disposed of and the processes required, as well as ensuring they are aware of the cost and impact of abusing the system.**
- 13. To continue promotion of the garden waste collection service, with a focus on promotion to those who were previously signed up but have not renewed online using their personal renewal number.**

14. To utilise Area Boards as a form of communication for key information regarding HRC's, further waste changes, and the promotion of garden waste collection, recycling, and composting.
  15. To support Wiltshire Council's relations with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust in order to promote the benefits and awareness of recycling and composting.
  16. To explore the purchase of further covert camera recording units for the enforcement of fly-tipping.
  17. To promote the installation of signs as a fly-tipping deterrent in relevant areas and hotspots.
  18. For the task group to continue to monitor the implementation of the mobilisation plan for the HRC contract with Hills Waste Management.
- 

**Cllr Jose Green, Chairman of the Waste Service Changes Task Group**

Report author: Adam Brown, Senior Scrutiny Officer, 01225718038,  
[adam.brown@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:adam.brown@wiltshire.gov.uk)

#### **Appendices**

None

#### **Background documents**

None