

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

8 January 2018

Final Report of the Waste Contracts 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 Highways, Transport and Waste for a response.

Background

2. In September 2017 during the Environment Select Committee's (ESC) annual meeting with the Executive on the 'waste' portfolio, the idea of a Waste Contracts Task Group was first mooted. The discussion had been around Overview and Scrutiny (OS) supporting the Council in the development of a commercial waste policy, as well as focusing on the contracts for Lots 1, 3, 4 and 5; which related to the council's waste contracts for collecting and managing waste and recyclables.
3. The task group aligned with the Business Plan 2017-27 priorities of 'Growing the Economy' and 'Strong Communities' and the aspirations of 'high recycling rates' and 'reduced litter'.

Terms of reference

4. The following terms of reference for the task group were endorsed by the Environment Select Committee on [16 January 2018](#). Term of Reference '1F' below was added to the task group's programme of work by the Environment Select Committee on [26 June 2018](#), following the Committee's consideration of the Council's 'Waste Management Strategy'.
 1. *To support the delivery of the Business Plan 2017-27 objective(s) of high recycling rates and reducing litter by monitoring, scrutinising and supporting:*
 - a) *A review of the council's commercial waste policy*
 - b) *Increased awareness of changes to waste collections*
 - c) *The implementation and performance of the council's waste contracts for collecting and managing waste and recyclables (Lot 1, Lot 3, Lot 4 and Lot 5 - commencing 30 July 2018)*
 - d) *The performance of the contract for managing council-owned HRCs (commenced October 2017 – Lot 2)*
 - e) *The potential development of services within the council's waste contracts*

- f) *The Council's plans to address fly-tipping and littering.*
2. *To hold quarterly meetings to focus on the waste contracts (following their commencement), with further ad-hoc meetings convened, when appropriate, to consider other areas within the terms of reference above.*
 5. As the planning permission for a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) to be built at the Lower Compton Landfill in Calne, had been delayed (but has now been granted), this meant that the task group were unable to fully consider Term of Reference 1C above.
 6. The contracts for Lots 1, 3, 4 and 5 came into force on 30 July 2018; which meant that more plastic items could be recycled by Wiltshire residents. However, as the MRF has not yet been built, additional non-plastic items are not currently being recycled in Wiltshire. When the MRF has been built, the contracts for Lots 1, 3, 4 and 5 will become fully operational and Wiltshire residents will be able to recycle more items and collection days are likely to change for residents.

Membership

7. The task group comprised the following membership:

- Cllr Peter Evans
- Cllr Sven Hocking (Chairman)
- Cllr Ruth Hopkinson
- Cllr Bob Jones, MBE
- Cllr Jacqui Lay
- Cllr Nick Murry

Cllr Robert Yuill had been a member of the task group and was initially elected as Chairman, however, upon his appointment to the Executive as Portfolio Holder for Waste at [22 May 2018](#) Full Council, he stepped down from the task group and Cllr Sven Hocking took up the role as Chairman.

Methodology

8. The task group is grateful to the following witnesses for their contribution to the scrutiny review:

Cllr Bridget Wayman	Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste
Cllr Tom Rounds	Former Portfolio Holder for Waste
Cllr Robert Yuill	Portfolio Holder for Waste
Tracy Carter	Director for Waste and Environment
Martin Litherland	Head of Service for Waste Management
Vicki Harris	Interim Principal Waste Services Officer

Andrew Holyoake	Data Protection Lead
Melksham Household Recycling Centre (HRC)	Site staff and the management team from FCC Environment, responsible for the Melksham Household Recycling Centre
Trowbridge Household Recycling Centre (HRC)	Site staff and the management team from FCC Environment, responsible for the Trowbridge Household Recycling Centre

9. The task group considered Waste Services' marketing and communication plan in relation to the changes to household waste collections, the Council's commercial waste policy, survey results from the task group's 'Commercial Waste Questionnaire', as well as the issuing of fixed penalty notices and prosecutions for fly-tipping.
10. The 'Commercial Waste Questionnaire' was available from 4 September 2018 until 21 September 2018 on the Council's website and e-mails were sent to all of Wiltshire's Community Areas or Chambers of Commerce, asking if a link would be circulated to members to encourage responses. Only three full responses were received to the survey; two of the respondents were from the retail sector and the third was from the manufacturing and engineering sector.
11. A site visit was also undertaken in June to Trowbridge HRC and then to Melksham HRC, for those Cllrs unable to attend the Trowbridge visit.
12. The task group met six times between February 2018 and November 2018 (including a site visit).
13. The task group's recommendations have been discussed with the Portfolio Holder for Waste and the Director for Waste and Environment. The draft final report has been discussed with the Executive and Director informally.

Evidence

Terms of Reference 1B and 1E:

B: Increased awareness of changes to waste collections

E: The potential development of services within the council's waste contracts

14. The task group felt that the bin stickers that were to be sent to householders to inform them of the changes to their household recycling service should be durable enough to withstand a significant period of time and a variety of weathers. It was also agreed that, to be most effective at educating residents about the changes to their waste collections, these stickers should be predominantly image based.
15. Additionally, the task group felt strongly that these stickers should not be posted out to residents; as this risked householders not placing them on their bins. Instead, the task group advised that agency staff should be employed to place

these stickers on each household's bin and that special care and attention should be given to householders who have communal waste bins, such as blocks of flats or some housing estates.

16. Following the discussions held around the bin stickers, the Executive maintained their view that bin stickers should be posted out to householders for householders to decide where to place these stickers: either inside their residence, or directly on to their external waste bin. The reasoning that the Executive gave was that previous sticker campaigns had been implemented via the postage approach and had presented no issues, also, after conducting a cost-benefit analysis, employing agency staff to fulfil this role would not achieve any savings.
17. As a result of the differing views between scrutiny and the Executive, an interim report was considered by the Environment Select Committee on [4 September 2018](#). The purpose of this report was for the task group to ascertain whether they had the mandate from their parent committee to continue lobbying the Executive about re-considering their standpoint on the bin stickers. The Select Committee did not endorse the task group's view.

Term of Reference 1A

A: A review of the council's commercial waste policy

18. The task group heard that the majority of Wiltshire's commercial businesses and tradespeople were aware that the Council had adopted a more 'hands-off' approach to commercial waste collection. The Council no longer collects businesses' commercial waste, however, it continues to fulfil its statutory obligation of *organising* businesses' commercial waste collection.
19. This is a process whereby the Council refers the business to their waste collector, in this case Hills Waste Solutions (HWS). HWS then contact the business to arrange for the waste collection and the Council charge a proportional administration fee for this service. However, businesses can approach HWS direct and this does not incur the Council's administration fee. No business had asked for the Council to organise for their commercial waste collection and this was seen to be due to the additional administration charge.
20. Results from the task group's 'Commercial Waste Questionnaire' suggested that commercial businesses found it more challenging to recycle commercial waste in Wiltshire in comparison to other local authorities. The Director and Cabinet Member highlighted that there was not seen to be the demand for a commercial recycling facility in Wiltshire and that, in any case, this would be a service for the private sector to provide. The task group felt that in its aim to improve recycling rates and reduce litter, the Council still had a duty to encourage commercial businesses to recycle their waste and to help make this process as smooth as possible.

21. As the responses to the survey were so low despite a successful communication strategy, the task group took this as an indication that commercial businesses were satisfied with the commercial waste service that they were receiving in Wiltshire and accepted that Wiltshire Council was no longer directly fulfilling this role. Seven out of the 12 community areas had responded to say that they would circulate a link to the survey to their members and HWS's Group Communications Manager also contacted the task group with an interest in the survey, after viewing the webcast to 4 September's Environment Select Committee. For these reasons the task group were satisfied that their advertisement of the survey had been successful.

Term of Reference 1D:

D: The performance of the contract for managing council-owned HRCs (commenced October 2017 – Lot 2)

22. The task group heard that a large volume of recent work undertaken by Waste Services centred on attempting to reduce queues at the county's HRCs. One such example of this was the 'Proof of Address Scheme'. It was accepted that queues for HRCs would always present a problem at certain times of the year, such as the Easter Bank Holiday.
23. The task group felt that Wiltshire's HRCs were well managed: signage was clear and orientated around the customer; sites were clean; site staff were friendly and helpful and a large proportion of waste had been diverted away from landfill, as a result of the successful operating of the HRC. HRCs were hoping to pilot a 'Re-use' scheme, whereby HRC users can place items that are still in working order in a cabin and other customers are free to take the item away with them, if they feel that they could make good use of it. The task group felt that this scheme was an important initiative, which would help to improve landfill tonnages even further and alleviate the challenge of disposing of certain white goods, such as fridge freezers. This function could also lead to a reduction in fly-tipping incidences.

Term of Reference: 1F

F: The Council's plans to address fly-tipping and littering

24. The task group heard how fly-tipping had decreased over the past 12 months in Wiltshire. The prosecution process was also shown to be a resource-intensive and lengthy process; whereby a significant amount of evidence was required to secure a conviction. However in certain instances, covert surveillance was a helpful mechanism in catching repeat offenders. All in all, gathering the necessary evidence was often a stumbling block in issuing penalties to those suspected of fly-tipping.
25. Fly-tipping is not as big an issue in Wiltshire as for some other local authorities, nevertheless, the Council ensures that it works closely with the county's largest landowners, such as the Ministry of Defence, as well as the Longleat and Wilton Estates.

26. The task group felt that the process for punishing a fly-tipper was unnecessarily complex and would benefit from being shortened. However, it was stressed by the Director for Waste and Environment that this process needed to be robust, as the end result could mean an individual receiving a criminal record.

Conclusions

27. The task group was disappointed that their parent committee and the Executive had decided not to support their recommendation of having agency staff place bin stickers on householders' bins. It also expressed discontent at not being made aware of the issue surrounding planning permission for the MRF until late into their work.
28. The task group was pleased that businesses had reported no concern with the Council's commercial waste policy. However, it felt that the Council had a duty to encourage recycling as far as possible – even if certain services are not directly operated by the Council.
29. The county's HRCs appeared to be an asset and were clearly operating well. The task group are optimistic about the value that the 'Re-use' sections will add to the recycling service.
30. It is promising to see that the incidences of fly-tipping had decreased in the county over the past 12 months, however, the task group felt that it was unfortunate that the amount of evidence required to bring about a successful punishment for fly-tipping required a significant resource investment from Waste Services.

Proposal

31. To endorse the report of the Task Group and refer it to the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste for response at the Committee's next meeting.

Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste consider implementing the following recommendations:

- 1. In order to support the delivery of the Business Plan 2017-27 objective(s) of high recycling rates and reducing litter, the Council to:**
 - A) Regularly communicate the duties and responsibilities of businesses for disposing of their commercial waste, through a variety of means, such as:**
 - I) Leaflet drop-offs to businesses**
 - II) Social media channels**
 - III) Parish/Town Council Newsletters**
 - IV) Regularly maintaining and updating the Council's commercial waste webpages**

- B) Create a ‘Commercial Waste Directory’ for Wiltshire, which details which individuals/organisations can collect and recycle commercial waste for Wiltshire’s businesses. This Directory to also be regularly publicised through the above channels listed in I to IV.**
- C) For a ‘Re-Use’ section to be introduced at all Wiltshire’s HRCs and, at the HRCs where it already exists, for this section to become operational. This facility to be widely and regularly publicised, so that residents are aware of it and can begin to take advantage of it.**
- D) Regularly communicate to residents, as well as town and parish councils the need for and importance of segregating recycling materials, in order to continue to ensure that the quality of Wiltshire’s recyclate remains at a high level. Such communication to be facilitated through the above channels listed in I to IV.**
- 2. Utilise fixed penalty notices (FPNs) instead of warning letters and report back to the Environment Select Committee after a 12 month period, including the amount of FPNs issued in comparison to warning letters and the effect that this has had on fly-tipping/reducing litter in Wiltshire.**
 - 3. Formulate a public relations campaign which seeks to encourage residents to come forward with evidence and information, if they see waste being fly-tipped.**
 - 4. Amend the MyWiltshire App, so that reporting of fly-tipping/waste incidents becomes a simpler and more user-friendly process.**
 - 5. The Environment Select Committee to reconvene a Waste Contracts Task Group to consider ‘The implementation and performance of the council’s waste contracts for collecting and managing waste and recyclables’ when Lots 1, 3, 4 and 5 become fully operational.**

Cllr Sven Hocking, Chairman of the Waste Contracts Task Group

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Appendices

None

Background documents

None