

Comments and Questions

Colin Gale - Pewsey Community Area Partnership (PCAP), Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and Pewsey Parish Council (PPC) Comments and Questions on the proposed closure of Everleigh Household Recycling Centre

To Councillor Bridget Wayman – Cabinet member for Highways, Transport and Waste

Comment and Question 1

The Executive Summary acknowledges that the consultation had a good response with a large majority in favour of retaining Everleigh. A proposal is then made for the closure of Everleigh which makes an absolute mockery out of holding a consultation and turns the democratic process into a laughing stock.

Response

The consultation was carried out to seek residents' views on the consequences of the proposed closure and identify any actions which may mitigate any negative consequences.

Note! The significant level of response was achieved despite the issues that the public endured to complete the consultation. These are reflected in the report.

Comment and Question 2

It is clearly apparent that the Council conducted the consultation with a set objective to close Everleigh and that the Council were not open to persuasion.

Response

The council's proposal was to close Everleigh HRC but any final decision would be made in light of the consultation responses and the Council would have been open to persuasion had any issues been identified which the council had not already considered.

Comment and Question 3

If the Council's objective is to cut costs there would be evidence of a comparison between all of the sites showing the cost drivers for each site. No such comparison has been carried out.

Response

The council's objective is to make savings while impacting the lowest number of residents.

Comment and Question 4

The background information provided in the report is economic with the facts and fails to mention that the current issues at Everleigh are a direct result of the Council's original decision not to install the drainage in accordance with the original drawings presumably as a cost saving exercise. The background also fails to state that no maintenance has been performed at Everleigh since 1997.

Response

There is no record of the decision not to install the drainage in accordance with the original drawing.

Comment and Question 5

The main argument from the start has been that since the impact of closure falls on a fewer number of people then closure is acceptable. The impact of having to travel over twice the distance and taking twice the time was trivialised in the consultation by being categorised as 'Minor' which respondents will take exception to.

Response

This concern has been set out in the report.

Comment and Question 6

The Council ran a campaign earlier in the year with banners outside County Hall on the increase in fly tipping. The report trivialises fly tipping and states that reported fly tipping has decreased. The Council plays fast and loose with fly tipping in rural areas where the land is either farm land or MOD training areas, where such fly tipping is not counted in the Council statistics. It was very noticeable that when the reduced HRC hours were first introduced the level of fly tipping significantly increased.

Response

The council has reported an increase in fly-tipping over several years in line with a national trend. The number of reports received to date this year is slightly lower than the number reported for the same period last year.

Comment and Question 7

The report acknowledges that: *"There has been no specific engagement with Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or Environmental Select Committee (ESC) on this issue. The task group agreed that no further overview and scrutiny*

engagement was required.” It is possible that the important scrutiny committee process may have taken a different view if they knew that the public response would be trivialised by the report and effectively brushed aside.

Response

This response has been sent by Mr Gale to Councillor Dean in his capacity as chair of Environment Select Committee and to Councillor Wright, chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Comment and Question 8

The report incorrectly identifies that the three alternative facilities are within a 10 mile radius. A google map check was performed and found Amesbury 14 miles distance, Devizes 16.6 miles distance and Marlborough 11 miles distance.

Response

It is accepted that the ten mile radius was based on a straight line distance and should instead have reflected the distance to be travelled. All alternatives are within approximately 30 minutes’ drive of Everleigh.

Comment and Question 9

The conclusion that ‘The proposed option is the one that generates the combination of the greatest annual revenue saving’ is not substantiated. No comparison has been published showing the annual revenue cost for all of the 11 sites. The argument that the closure of Everleigh generates the greatest annual revenue saving is clearly false as Everleigh operates for the least number of hours out of all of the HRC sites, and therefore cannot have the largest annual revenue cost.

Response

The sentence in full reads ‘The proposed option is the one that generates the combination of the greatest annual revenue saving coupled with avoidance of additional in-year capital spend to ensure the site is made safe and can comply fully with relevant environmental legislation.’. Closing the site generates the greatest revenue saving of the options considered based on the saving from the current operation and the avoided cost incurred should the site remain open and further investment be required. Everleigh was selected because it has the lowest number of visitors and collects and diverts from landfill the lowest number of tonnes of waste.

Comment and Question 10

The Council’s Business Plan is identified as relevant to the consultation report and identifies a number of goals, priorities and commitments. How have the following been addressed in the report by closing Everleigh:

1. **High recycling rates and reduced litter.** The report acknowledges the risk that recycling rates may decrease (paragraph 42) as a result of closure of Everleigh. How can Wiltshire Council claim achievement of this goal, priority and commitment in their Business Plan if Everleigh is closed?

Response

The council continues to improve the kerbside collection service for recyclable materials and will continue to collect the full range of recyclable materials at the household recycling centres which will remain open.

- 2. Community involvement.** The community gave a significant input into this consultation with an overwhelming 94% in favour of retention of the site. If the Council votes to ignore the public consultation input how can the Council claim that they want and respect community involvement?

Response

Councillors and officers have attended meetings with the local community and endeavoured to answer all questions asked through exchanges of correspondence. In carrying out the consultation the council sought residents' views on the implications of the proposed closure and proposals for mitigating these. It was a consultation not a referendum.

- 3. Robust decision making which is open, inclusive, flexible and responsive.** If the Council votes to ignore the public input and disregard the 94% public vote to retain the Everleigh site open how can Wiltshire Council claim that despite their proposal to close the HRC site the Council is flexible and responsive to the public's input?

Response

The council has endeavoured to be open and inclusive in carrying out the consultation and in meeting with representatives of the local community. Had the responses to the consultation identified issues which outweighed the need to make savings the council would have endeavoured to be flexible and responsive to the demand to retain the site.