

**Wiltshire Council**

**Environment Select Committee**

**21 July 2011**

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### **Waste Collection Service Harmonisation Update**

#### **Executive Summary**

An ambitious project is currently being managed to harmonise and improve the Waste Collection and Recycling services residents receive. This report highlights progress made and some of the key issues and risks.

The report includes a brief update on the project to construct a Mechanical Biological Treatment plant to divert some of Wiltshire's waste away from landfill.

#### **Proposal**

That the Committee note this update.

#### **Reason for Proposal**

The Committee requested an update on progress in introducing the service changes to Waste Collection and Recycling. Also requested was a brief update on the project to construct a Mechanical Biological Treatment plant.

**MARK BODEN**

Corporate Director

Department of Neighbourhood and Planning

**Waste Collection Service Harmonisation Update**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To:
  - (i) Respond to the request received from the Committee to provide an update on the work taking place to deliver a single Waste Collection and Recycling Service across Wiltshire.
  - (ii) Provide a brief update on progress toward the construction of a Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) plant.

**Background**

2. The One Council bid document 'next steps' contained commitments to harmonise waste collection and recycling arrangements across Wiltshire where currently different materials are collected, at often different intervals, as a legacy of the different approaches taken by the four former District Councils. Potential cost savings were identified, with the commitment that these would be reinvested in the form of service enhancements to provide a consistent service across the whole Council area.
3. Public consultation on a preferred service option was carried out over the summer period, 2010, and results indicated broad based support with 72% of those responding in favour.
4. Work to progress the implementation of the preferred option was authorised by Cabinet on 19 October 2010. The key features of the new service package agreed by Cabinet are:
  - (i) Collection of residual waste becomes fortnightly across all areas (currently still collected weekly in the north and south of the county);
  - (ii) A kerbside collection of plastic bottles and card will be introduced to all areas (currently only the south receives this service);
  - (iii) A non-chargeable opt-in garden waste kerbside collection will be introduced across all areas (currently this service is chargeable in the north, east and south of the county);
  - (iv) Black box collections of dry mixed recyclables will continue as now for all households.

5. Following the announcement of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in October 2010 the Council was advised that savings required were likely to be front-loaded into 2011-12. Further work was carried out on a range of proposals that would help delay expenditure. Following the detailed settlement, these were considered on 10 January at both Cabinet Capital Assets Committee and a further Cabinet sub-group meeting. This resulted in a revised implementation timetable for rollout of the new service package during the latter half of 2011-12.
6. Table 1 below sets out the proposed new implementation timetable.

**Table 1**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>
October 2011	Plastic bottles and card collections commence in the north of the county.
November 2011	Plastic bottles and card collections commence in the east and west of the county.
February 2012	Garden waste collections (opt-in) commence in the north and east of the county.  Alternate weekly collections of residual waste commence in the north of the county.
March 2012	Garden waste collections (opt-in) commence in the south of the county.  Alternate weekly collections of residual waste commence in the south of the county.

7. A key element in Wiltshire's strategy to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill has been identified as being fulfilled by the building of a MBT plant which will allow 60,000 tonnes of household waste to be treated, rather than sent for deposit in landfill.
8. The Hills Group received planning permission for the MBT plant to be constructed on the Northacre Trading Estate, Westbury in March 2009. Wiltshire Cabinet approved the signing of the Waste Management (Landfill Diversion) Contract at their meeting on 15 February 2011.
9. The contract was signed in April and gives approval for the construction of the £20 million facility on the Northacre Trading Estate, Westbury. Building works are scheduled to commence in August 2011 and the plant is expected to be fully operational by the late summer of 2013.

### **Main Considerations for the Committee**

10. The service changes and the MBT plant will help drive considerable improvements in the Council's performance on a range of measures.

- (i) Wiltshire's Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy sets a target for an increase in recycling to 50% of all household waste by 2020. Current performance is 41%. The service changes should allow the 50% target to be achieved by 2014-15. This will place Wiltshire Council in the top quartile for all Unitary and County Waste Disposal Authorities.
  - (ii) The changes will drive significant reductions in volumes of waste being sent to landfill and should place the Council in the top quartile of comparable authorities.
  - (iii) The MBT facility will receive 60,000 tonnes each year of municipal waste from households in the county, and in doing so help the county's taxpayers avoid Landfill Tax, which will cost £80 per tonne by 2014. It will reduce the proportion of Wiltshire's municipal waste sent to landfill to less than 20%, from a current performance of about 37%.
11. The following paragraphs set out current progress and some of the issues being experienced and managed.

#### Procurement

12. Orders for new vehicles, totalling 14 large (26 tonne) refuse collection vehicles (RCVs) and 7 small (12 tonne) vehicles were placed in March. The smaller vehicles are necessary to service properties where access is limited and smaller, narrow bodied vehicles are required. We have now started to take delivery of the first new vehicles.
13. Contracts were signed in May with our bin supplier for the new services (MGB – a UK company) and the new blue-lidded plastic bottle and cardboard bins will be delivered and deployed to households from September in readiness for October collections. Residents are currently able (and encouraged) to opt-in to the new garden waste collection service via the Council's website and various publications and leaflets (many of which will be distributed at scheduled road show events). This will lead to a further order in October for garden waste bins with rollout commencing in February 2012.

#### Variations to existing contracts

14. Some current inefficiencies in collection rounds in the north and south of the county will be addressed during July which will result in changes to collection days for some residents. These will be completed in advance of the period that new services are being rolled out. The changes will affect approximately 1,700 properties in the north and 24,000 in the south. These have been discussed and agreed with the Cabinet Member. In the south, Hills will change their black box rounds to ensure their collection days match with those of the Council's rounds, to ensure the service is as straightforward as possible for residents.
15. Hills were invited to submit a price for delivering black box collections in the east (currently this service is delivered in-house in this one area only). Transferring this service would leave the in-house crews with the capacity to take on the new plastic bottles and card collection in that area without the need

for further recruitment. A price which offers the Council value for money has been received and a contract variation order is being progressed.

16. Focsa, who currently provide collection of residual and garden waste in the west, were invited to submit a price for delivering the plastic bottle and card collections in this area from November. The price received again offers value for money to the Council and a contract variation is being progressed.

#### Planning and Development

17. Officers have been working with Hills to ensure the required treatment capacity and end markets are in place to cope with the anticipated increases in volumes of both plastic bottles and card and garden waste. Each requires both short and long-term solutions with a number of proposals, subject to achieving planning consent from Wiltshire Council as the Waste Planning Authority.
18. In the short term, the key planning application required to support the service changes is for a temporary change of use of a warehouse at Portemmarsh Trading Estate, Calne, to deal with the delivery and bulking of plastic bottles and cardboard collected in east, north and west Wiltshire. The planning application has been submitted and consultation has commenced. A decision is expected by September.
19. Also in the short term, implementation of the current planning permission for a composting pad at Parkgate Farm, Purton, will be progressed to provide capacity for the new garden waste collections. The current pad at Lower Compton is used almost to capacity. Hills have completed a tendering exercise for the works and a Council contribution has been agreed in principle.
20. Other more major proposals are being considered to provide longer-term capacity for the increased quantity of recyclable materials. Hills are consulting on a proposal to provide a waste and recycling transfer station at Castledown Business Park, Ludgershall. This is proposed to provide a replacement for existing transfer stations at Thorny Down (east of Salisbury) and Everleigh (between Tidworth and Pewsey), both of which have planning permissions and Environment Agency consents until 2016 only. They do not meet current Environment Agency standards or current best practice for the design of waste management facilities. They have to be replaced by an enclosed building that cannot be provided at either existing site, due to a combination of ground conditions (former landfill and, at Thorny Down, steep slopes) and planning constraints. The proposal would also provide an opportunity to base the south area kerbside collections at Ludgershall. These vehicles currently have to travel from Lower Compton each day. Following a pre-application assessment, other potential sites are also being considered by Hills. Progress will be communicated to the Council at the earliest opportunity.
21. Hills are also consulting on a proposed planning application for further development at their Lower Compton site, east of Calne, which will help deal with the increased volumes of recyclable materials arising from the Council's service changes. The new development would provide long-term capacity to deal with the delivery and bulking of plastic bottles and cardboard collected in east, north and west Wiltshire, for which the Portemmarsh proposal (described in

paragraph 18 above) is a temporary solution. The current recycling building would be expanded, to deal with increased tonnages from the black box kerbside collection services expected as alternate weekly collection of non-recycled waste commences in north and south Wiltshire. A permanent, enclosed waste transfer station is also proposed to provide capacity to transfer non recycled waste to both the Lakeside energy from waste plant and the MBT plant at Westbury. Again, Hills intend to submit their planning application by the end of July. Members can find further details of these proposals and planning applications on Hills website at <http://www.hills-group.co.uk/consult/planning.html>

### Communications

22. Multiple channels are being used to both inform and promote the new services to as many residents as possible. These include the Council's website, local newspapers, local radio, area boards, road shows and leaflets to be mailed direct to households.
23. The approach is graduated with general awareness raising first and becoming more specific and detailed as we move closer to service commencement dates. For example, 'Coming Soon' leaflets were delivered to residents early in July. These included details of how to opt-in to the new non-charged garden waste service. This will be followed approximately two weeks before new collections commence by instructional letters that will contain collection calendars that are specific to each household.
24. The service has been in discussion with the Customer Services Unit, who have agreed to field additional staff over the period of the phased roll-out of new services, when increased volumes of telephone calls are anticipated.

### Budget

25. Cabinet approved forecast revenue budget increases and capital budget for the service changes in October 2010. Officers carried out a review of revenue and capital costs during December and January, taking account of information arising from tender prices for vehicles and bins and cost estimates from contractors. The review concluded that budget provision was likely to be adequate, but that this was particularly dependent upon the degree to which the service changes resulted in a reduction in landfilled tonnage. Subsequently, the capital budget was confirmed by the Cabinet Capital Assets Committee in January 2011, with a slight re-scheduling to reflect an updated forecast of the spending timetable. The revised revenue and capital budgets were approved by full Council in February 2011.
26. A further review is now underway to take account of updated cost information. The main pressure is likely to be the increase in externally determined costs, such as fuel and general inflation, which will affect all waste collections. Also, more work is being done on forecasts of landfill tonnage following the changes, to further assess the risk associated with this factor. Regular cost updates are being produced and at present the service changes are within budget.

## Policies

27. The report to Cabinet in October 2010 explicitly recognised that special arrangements would need to be developed for residents in flats and other types of dwelling with limited access and space, such as terraced housing without gardens, where traditional bins cannot be readily accommodated. Although the report contained guidance on exceptions, and highlighted the alternatives available, it did not contain any detail of how this could be implemented. This has now been progressed by project staff and a Cabinet Member Decision has been made in accordance with the Council's constitutional procedures, which sets out a detailed process for staff to follow which will ensure that:
- The Council continues to comply fully with the requirements of the Household Waste Recycling Act 2003;
  - Residents in these types of dwelling receive a broadly equivalent suite of services to those in other types of housing;
  - Health and Safety considerations are fully observed.
28. Discussions with the Housing Associations have taken place and all such accommodation has been identified and listed for assessment where necessary. It is, however, recognised that a small number of dwellings with limited access and space, for example small flats located above shops, will be difficult to identify early in the process. To help the Council identify and reach these, a request for such residents to make contact with the Council, if they have not been contacted prior to the start of the rollout of service changes, will be included within promotional communications.
29. Due to the need for Waste Technical Officers to visit all such premises (in conjunction with an officer from Hills to ensure black box arrangements are also agreed) service changes to residents in flats may not proceed at the same pace as the main rollout. With the available resources this is unavoidable. It is expected that completion will take place within three, and certainly no more than six, months of the rollout to other households not requiring visits and special arrangements.
30. Some clarification of policies was also required in respect of both the new garden bins and residual waste bins in order that all areas of Wiltshire receive the same service in future. This was also included within the recent Cabinet Member Decision.
31. The new opt-in garden waste service allows households to purchase additional capacity at an initial annual charge of approximately £30 (the first provided bin being at no additional charge). The former District Councils each had different policies, which resulted in some households being able to purchase more than one additional bin, whilst in the west the former Council provided a non-charged service but allowed no additional bins. The proposal going forward is that residents be permitted to purchase one additional bin only. This will help contain the cost to the Council (which has to pay for additional composting

capacity) whilst allowing for the promotion of more environmentally sustainable alternatives such as home composters.

32. The issue of how to deal with households already in receipt of more than two garden bins (less than 50 properties in total) is addressed in the Cabinet Member Decision.
33. The October 2010 Cabinet report also contained broad policy advice on residual waste bin capacity where households request more than the standard sized single bin. This stopped short of defining the nature of 'additional capacity' or the process by which households would be able to request it.
34. The Cabinet Member Decision deals with this. Key points are:
  - The standard residual waste bin capacity of 180 litres will, upon request, be increased, subject to satisfaction of certain criteria, to 240 litres;
  - Where households can satisfy more stringent criteria the 180 litre bin may be swapped for a 360 litre bin (this will normally require a visit from a Waste Technical Officer);
  - Any authorised increase in capacity will be subject to regular review to ensure the circumstances warranting the increase remain in place;
  - Households with additional bins in excess of the agreed limits, due to former District Council policies, will be gradually moved to the new standard capacity, in line with the protocol, giving them some time to adjust.

### **Environmental Impact of the Proposal**

35. The impacts of the service changes on the environment are described in detail in the report to Cabinet in October 2010. In brief, they are essentially twofold.
  - (i) Recycling has a lesser environmental impact than use of waste for energy recovery, or disposal in landfill. The project will provide the means for increasing the Council's average recycling rate from 40% currently, to around 50%.
  - (ii) Whilst vehicle miles to collect the increased volumes of plastic bottles and card and garden waste will increase, this is likely to be offset by a reduction in mileage travelled by residents to local bring sites and Household Recycling Centres. Moreover, the reduced volumes of residual waste being deposited in landfill will decrease the production of harmful greenhouse gasses.
36. The environmental impacts of the MBT have formerly been fully identified in reports to the Council's Cabinet. In brief, MBT with energy recovery was identified as a best practicable environmental option in the adopted Regional Waste Strategy and as one of the appropriate secondary recovery methods in the Wiltshire Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy. It is estimated that



the Hills' Northacre facility will save significant Council lorry miles each year as waste from the west of Wiltshire will no longer need to be transported to Hills' landfill site at Lower Compton. By reducing the miles that these refuse collection vehicles travel, the facility has the potential to make a reduction in Wiltshire's carbon footprint. Initially, the refuse derived fuel (RDF) produced will be transported by road to port and then shipped to Germany for use in energy from waste plants, but it is anticipated that the production of RDF will encourage the creation of a more local market.

### **Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal**

37. No specific impacts have been identified.

### **Risk Assessment**

38. Any change to waste collection carries the risk of disruption and some adverse reaction from the public. A carefully planned rollout accompanied by a comprehensive communications campaign reduces, but cannot eliminate, this risk.
39. The delivery of new waste treatment and management facilities depend on successful planning applications for such developments. Hills are approaching this very robustly and they have much relevant experience to draw upon. Nevertheless, in the short term, delivery of the plastic bottle and card services in October and November is dependent upon the planning authority resolving to grant planning permission for temporary change of use of the warehouse at Portemarsh Trading Estate, Calne.

### **Financial Implications**

40. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

### **Legal Implications**

41. No specific additions to the implications outlined in the October 2010 report to Cabinet have been identified. Legal and procurement advice is being sought and obtained as necessary to vary existing contracts with suppliers.

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**The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:**

None

**Appendices:**

None